6 Recommendations for Building the Anticipatory Thinking and Leadership of the Twin Cities Metropolitan Region

An informal paper reporting the recommendations from the Anoka-Ramsey Community College
Anticipatory Summit, July 2017

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Context

In July 2017, Anoka-Ramsey Community College (ARCC) and Academic Impressions sponsored an "Anticipatory Summit" at Anoka-Ramsey's campus. Forty-five diverse regional leaders from higher education, other nonprofit organizations, business, and government convened for a half-day to identify future issues, trends, and events facing their region. They also created an informal but informative *Leadership Skill Set*, which leaders will need if they are to manage these complex future issues and trends strategically and effectively.

This paper is the outcome of that Anticipatory Summit, documenting the recommendations of the group in order to extend their thinking into actionable next steps. The following set of informal recommendations is submitted for leaders in the Twin Cities Metropolitan Region (TCMR) to consider, discuss, prioritize, and hopefully consider implementing. We assume that there is a strategic need for leaders to continually scan and assess the larger environment *and* build the leadership capacity of the region.

ARCC will not be an "owner" of any of the mechanisms and practices we are suggesting—but will act as more of a *trusted sponsor* or *facilitator* of these events in the first few years. We would hope that other campuses and organizations would be interested in becoming trusted sponsors of these initiatives over time.

In the following pages we will explore five possible learning and capacity-building initiatives that the TCMR leadership should consider implementing. These are:

- 1. Create an "Advisory/Coordinating" group for the region
- 2. Conduct a yearly Student's Summit
- 3. Establish a regional "Future Thinking Roundtable"
- 4. Create the "Curriculum of the Future" for regional leaders
- 5. Establish a yearly "Leadership Development Institute," with a robust assessment process to measure the positive impact of these suggested activities

Food for Thought

All the suggestions we are making are quite doable and could be established within the next year. This will not require a lot of financial resources, as long as leaders in TCMR adapt a "prototype" mentality regarding them: piloting and then iterating. Rather than establish complex, detailed planning processes to set these suggested mechanisms in place, which could take years, we recommend creating a set of "prototypes" to test if these notions add value for leaders in TCMR.

For example: The Anticipatory Summit itself was such a prototype initiative. It required significant logistical planning behind the scenes, conducted mostly by Don Lewis, the CFO of Anoka-Ramsey Community College, along with some dedicated staff. We were able to convene a diverse set of 45 leaders across the region for an excellent conversation about the future. We did not *know* in advance if this anticipatory summit was going to be successful or not; we tried something new and different, tested it, and we were successful in our initial attempt. (Participants overwhelmingly reported that the half day together was a success.)

The Anticipatory Summit generated interest and information that can *potentially* create powerful and strategic opportunities for the TCMR. We solicited funds from a foundation to pay all relevant costs (e.g., consulting, an artist who could visually capture our ideas, and food), and Anoka-Ramsey Community College hosted the event at their campus. This provides the prototype for a simple, effective process that can now be replicated by different organizations and institutions in the region.

Similarly, many of the suggestions and recommendations we are proposing could be supported by a variety of "sponsoring" institutions, so that resource allocation and responsibility are shared equitably. There doesn't need to be a specific "owner" of the processes we are suggesting. The TCMR leadership, over time, might decide on a more traditional and institutional approach; however, all these practices and initiatives we are suggesting could be implemented with effective collaboration and coordination of efforts. We *don't* need a great deal of money, offices, administration, overhead, or detailed planning. It is important to keep these ideas simple, agile, and doable.

The following set of recommendations are presented in order of priority, from simple to more complex mechanisms and protocols. Some will take little time, attention, and resources. Others will require greater investments and will need some real planning and organization. All of them are quite doable, if the leadership commitment is present.

1) An Advisory/Coordinating Group for the Region

To ensure that appropriate coordination (not *control*) of these recommendations takes place, we are suggesting a small oversight/coordinating group be established. Its main purpose would *not* be governance but, rather, the organization of efforts among the many different forums we are suggesting. This group would:

- Maximize efficiency
- Ensure quality control regarding information collection and distribution
- Assist with any logistical challenges that might emerge in establishing and implementing the different forums
- Act as strategic thinking partners for all these efforts.

An Advisory Group could be formed to ensure a sense of coherence is embedded in the implementation of all these suggestions. The last thing we need is a bunch of disconnected activities that will confuse stakeholders, create redundancy of efforts, and not be strategic in nature.

Initially, perhaps, this Advisory Group could be co-chaired by Don Lewis, the CFO of Anoka-Ramsey Community College, and a highly credible community or business leader to model a collaborative regional effort. This group would be an important quality control mechanism and would meet quarterly during the first year to establish organization and continuity.

2) Conduct a Yearly Student Summit

We recognize that students are at the core of what many of these collaborative recommendations are all about. If TCMR can continue to produce a well-educated, resilient, ethical, and creative student workforce, the TCMR will have a powerful and successful economic engine with a social conscience.

The notion behind a "Student Summit" (SS) is that regional leaders need to understand deeply five things about their higher education students:

- **1.** The demographic shifts that are taking place and their implications for our campuses. What does the "new" student look like?
- 2. **Workforce demands and changes**—so that we can design relevant and practical learning experiences for students. ("Most of the jobs of the future don't exist yet." Future Smart, 2015).
- 3. The challenges and barriers our students face in their daily lives as they pursue an educational journey and prepare themselves for the workplace (e.g. costs of tuition, financial debt, balancing multiple jobs, and family responsibilities).
- 4. **How students see the future**—both the opportunities and the challenges they see coming over the next few years. This kind of information is often missing from traditional environmental scanning, but understanding students' perspectives on the future will make us smarter as a region.
- 5. **How students see "leadership" in the future**—What do they want from their leaders? How can students develop their own leadership skill set?

Leadership can only understand the lives of our diverse students by listening to them. This SS can provide regional leadership with the *qualitative* information they need to plan for the future of higher education and serve the multiple communities in the TCMR.

This SS could be organized by one of our higher education leaders because they have access to the students, and the SS can be hosted by different institutions on a rotational basis. Kent Hanson, the president of Anoka-Ramsey Community College, has committed his college to be a resource for the region. We are assuming that ARCC would act as a convener and facilitator of some of these suggestions in the first year of operation. Other campus leaders could take responsibility over time, but we want to build quickly on our initial success.

Each campus "host" would also be responsible for producing an informal but informative report from the SS findings. Such a report could look much like this paper, which is reporting the proceedings of the initial Anticipatory Summit. These reports would be distributed to regional leaders and could inform specific groups, like the Futures Regional Roundtable, which we will discuss later in this paper.

The SS could be designed and facilitated by local faculty or administrators from each hosting institution. This would be relatively easy to do and would be value added in many ways. Keep it simple.

3) A Regional "Future Thinking Roundtable"

One of the TCMR college campuses could sponsor/host a biannual "Future Thinking Roundtable" for leaders in business, higher education, community, government, and the non-profit sectors. This would be similar to our Anticipatory Thinking Summit at ARCC and would offer a one-half day to full day of well-organized and professionally facilitated discussions.

We could invite one or two "futurists" who have a reputation for being both strategic and accurate about how they perceive the future. There are a number of high-quality and credible individuals who have deep expertise about future trends and issues facing regional stakeholders, as well as about the potential implications of these trends for organizations and institutions.

The key is not for these futurists to *provide answers* but to ignite and inform the thinking of the Future Thinking Roundtable participants. Once the futurists share their information and perspective, a professionally facilitated discussion would take place, where participants engage in *sense making*, identifying and highlighting specific implications for the regional leadership to consider and possibly implement over time.

For example, we might find out that artificial intelligence will eliminate many of the middle management jobs over the next decade. This is an inevitable trend that will have huge implications for employers and employees across the region. The Roundtable might recommend that tailored training for the "jobs of the future" needs to be established quickly by the business and higher education community, so that the negative impact of artificial intelligence will not damage the region; in fact, we will prepare our citizens for the future in dramatic ways.

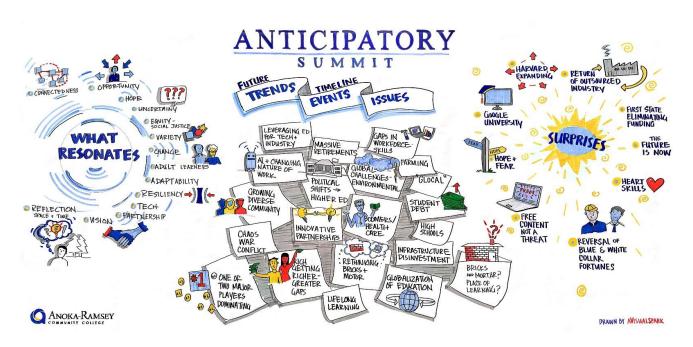
The "Future Thinking Roundtable" could also be another effective way to conduct informal environmental scanning on a biannual basis. The proceedings from their discussions could be organized and documented in an informal report about the "state of the future" for TCMR.

Once again, this biannual roundtable could be hosted by a regional organization (e.g. The Chamber of Commerce, an institution of higher education, a senator's office, or a business, such as Target/Medtronic) that could take responsibility for organizing the meetings and ensuring that the proceedings are distributed throughout the regional organizations and their leadership.

Over time, this is the one group that might need a "home" to meet and discuss, and to coordinate and produce reports. It would be helpful if this group would be co-chaired by a high-level business leader and a college president, at least initially. This would establish it as an institutional entity, and the co-chairs would then be rotated on a regular basis (e.g. between non-profit, government, and community leaders) to model the collaborative spirit of this group.

4) Creating the Leadership Development "Curriculum for the Future"

At the ARCC Anticipatory Summit, we conducted a <u>Future Timeline planning design</u> (NACUBO, 2003) to identify scores of challenges and opportunities facing the region. We also prioritized these events, issues, and trends, using a transparent voting technique. Below is the prioritized list along with a small set of "surprises and discoveries," which we defined as emerging ideas and themes that were unexpected but helpful to think about as we consider the future.



Most Important Future Events, Trends, and Issues	# of votes prioritizing this item
Addressing gaps in workforce – numbers, skills	13
Political shifts and impact on higher education economics	12
Growing diverse communities	11
Innovative partnerships	9
Difference between rich and poor growing bigger	9
Leveraging technology for education and industry	7
Brick and mortar – infrastructure, place of learning	6
Artificial intelligence and changing nature of work	4
Massive retirements	4

Anticipated Surprises and Discoveries:

Harvard expanding, growing "franchises"

Google University, they "buy" a major university

Return of industries that had been outsourced

Blue collar / white collar reversal of fortune (plumbers and electricians making more than white-collar workers) First state eliminates all funding for higher education

This "future" timeline is actually a NOW timeline (all these issues seem to be current, not "in the future")

Lots of fear on the timeline; we need to pay attention to "seismic shifts" that are occurring

Soft skills/dealing with change/teaching people how to think—this is not reflected on the timeline

With this prioritized list, along with our "surprises and discoveries," we then asked Summit participants to create a *Leadership Skill Set Model*. We asked them, "Given that these are potential challenges and issues facing the leaders of the TCMR, what skills and qualities will our leaders need in order to lead us in the future?"

Participants worked in small, diverse groups and created an emerging leadership model for the Future. Although this is beginning thinking, it is quite informative:

FUTURE LEADERSHIP MODEL

Required Leadership Skill	What This Skill Consists of
Taking risks and having the courage to try and win, knowing that there are times you will fail	 Being accepting of failing for themselves, their staff, and their organizations Capacity for dealing with ambiguity Need to be agile/flexible/adaptable Able to create a flexible and nimble culture (i.e. culture of change) Financial acumen to achieve sustainability Ability to sunset programs and products from an operational perspective – What's the plan that is fair to all stakeholders? Conviction of their beliefs Decision making skills that integrate data (big) and the human element Altruism and focus on greater good
Visionary	 Creating bold visions Supporting Innovation Visionary – globally and technologically Systems thinking (understand how the parts interact with each other) Resourceful Connecting ideas and strategy to a future goal and being comfortable with ambiguity in the current state
Collaborator	 Networker/collaborator Empowering others Good at developing and sustaining relationships – identifying and connecting people/organizations Relationship builder Supporting collaboration Emotional intelligence Developing teamwork Open and collaborative with others
Cultural competency – relationship building skills	 Cultural competence Values cultural diversity Globally savvy Embrace and advance diversity and equity
Communication – persuasion	 Listening – active, appreciative Humble Open and accepting of others Advocacy – able to advocate for themselves and others
Curiosity/creativity – "right brain"	 Curiosity Informed inquiry Able to adapt to emergent situations – without freaking out Creativity and flexibility Fully developed right brain/curiosity Fiscally creative Inspires creativity in others

After we created the Summit's leadership model, we shared The World Economic Forum's "Top Ten Leadership Skills for 2020," from the Forum's Future of Jobs report. The Forum is an internationally respected, cuttingedge organization that provides strategic information and advice about the future for leaders all over the world.

	World Economic Forum's Top 10 Skills
1	Complex problem solving
2	Critical thinking
3	Creativity
4	People management
5	Coordinating with others
6	Emotional intelligence
7	Judgment and decision making
8	Service orientation
9	Negotiation
10	Cognitive flexibility

As one can see, the Summit's leadership list is aligned with some off the best thinking about leadership in the world; in fact, we think that our list is more "robust." Both our list and the Forum's Top 10 Skills help create a framework for developing what we consider is the **Leadership Curriculum of The Future**. If we are going to identify, develop, and nurture leaders throughout the TCMR, it will take an extraordinary, intelligent, and collaborative effort to design and deliver a set of exceptional leadership learning experiences.

For example, the Summit participants stated that we need leaders who have the capacity to deal with *ambiguity*. It takes real courage to lead when there is no clear path going forward and when everybody is looking for the leader to provide clarity and direction. It's hard for leaders to say "I don't know"—and harder still to ask for help. How do you teach leaders to do that?

Our Summit participants also talked about how our leaders of the future "need the courage of their convictions when tough and difficult decisions need to be made." How do you teach leaders to make the tough and courageous decisions knowing the backlash and resistance will be harsh and they might get beat up in the process, even when they do the right thing?

This takes real tenacity, grit (Duckworth 2016), and persistence. How do you teach leaders to build their personal resilience, endure difficult times, and never lose faith (Coutu, 2002)? Who teaches this? What learning practices can we develop to help build these essential capacities for the leaders of the future?

We also talked about leaders needing to be "agile, flexible, and adaptable, and able to create organizational cultures that are flexible and nimble." That sounds great, but how to you do that? Who does this currently? How can we learn from others the best practices to help leaders develop these attributes?

If we can help our current and emerging leaders learn these important leadership skills and qualities, the TCMR will thrive in the future. We need leaders who understand how to move forward when there is no clear roadmap because the future is uncertain, complex, and things are moving way too fast (Mrig & Sanaghan, 2017). We will need an attitude of risk-taking, creativity, aspiration, and collaboration across all stakeholder

groups. We believe that there can't be one "owner" of this kind of initiative, because no one has all the answers; it needs to be a collective effort and needs to tap the resources and talents of leaders throughout the TCMR.

For example, it would be easy to say that our institutions of higher learning should be the "owners" of this kind of effort, but that would be a misdirection for several reasons:

- 1. This assumes that our higher education institutions have the right faculty to teach this "emerging" leadership skill set. We have great and dedicated faculty throughout the region. However, while they can be helpful with this initiative, they are not experts in this kind of leadership. Nobody is.
- 2. Higher education itself is going through unprecedented change and is having great difficulty managing and coping with the pace of change and the complex challenges that institutions are facing currently. How can they teach our leaders to deal with complexity and ambiguity and change while they are struggling with their own challenges?
- 3. We simply cannot wait for the slow-paced, complex, and often convoluted governance processes that often exist on our campuses to design, "validate," deliver, and assess a robust set of leadership learning experiences. We don't have that kind of time available.

On the other hand, we also cannot assume that the business world has the current expertise to teach this diverse and challenging set of leadership skills. They don't. They too are experiencing many difficult challenges and disruptions with little success. This is not to say that they don't have expertise that can be shared with others; it is just important to realize that there are no expert groups to design this "curriculum of the future." All of us will be needed to develop to create a leadership curriculum that will prepare our leaders to meet the many challenges we face.

Preparing leaders for the future is not about building a leadership pipeline for the business community. It's about building and delivering a leadership platform for all stakeholder groups in the TCMR. It will take the collective efforts of current leaders to think about *how* to prepare our leaders for the future. How do you design and deliver a robust, reality-based (not theoretical) set of exceptional leadership building experiences? That's the collective challenge.

5) The Establishment of the Twin Cities Regional Leadership Institute

The final recommendation of this informal paper is the boldest, most strategic, and most important. The other suggestions in this paper will help build the "anticipatory thinking" of the region, but this by itself will not be enough. We need highly trained leaders who deeply understand the challenges facing the region and have the ability to deal with them effectively. This will not be easy to accomplish.

If TCMR leaders are interested in identifying and developing their emerging and future leaders, we strongly recommend that some kind of robust and *different* "Leadership Institute" (LI) be established. The Institute would be designed to serve the many different stakeholder groups in the region (non-profit, business, government, and higher education). It needs to be cross-boundary in nature, not silo-based, and collaboration needs to be a guiding principle (i.e., no one owner). The Institute needs to be designed around the "Curriculum"

of the Future." The Institute could be one of *the* leadership engines for the region and could prepare leaders for a fast-paced and complex future. We will discuss some of the specific elements of the Institute below.

Some beginning thinking: Guiding principles for designing the Institute

As we think about designing a new, *different*, and highly effective leadership development program and process, we want to suggest some beginning thinking about a set of guiding principles to consider. For example, we *aren't* suggesting long lectures about leadership from "experts," the extensive use of case studies, or online courses on leadership. These might have their place somewhere else, but not with the Institute.

Guiding principles for designing the Institute:

- We believe that experiential learning will be an important element of the curriculum of the Institute.
 This means that participating leaders will have to engage in complex workplace simulations that mirror real organizational challenges, as well as receive constructive feedback and coaching about their performance in real time. They will learn by doing, not by listening to long lectures. They must be challenged to think creatively and strategically about solving complex issues, and they must learn as they go.
- 2. The learning experience will be built around dealing with **real challenges** facing the region. Participants might engage in an <u>Implementation Clinic</u> problem solving design. In this design, they bring real organizational problems and challenges they are wrestling with to the table, and seek real advice from other participants in order to manage these tough challenges back home. Addressing these "unscripted problems" (Cavagnaro & Fasihuddin, 2016) will build the creative problem solving and diagnostic skills of participants, *and* will hopefully help solve real problems in the region.
- 3. **Design thinking** is another approach that will be helpful in building the leadership capacity of our Institute leaders. Design thinking can be considered a problem/opportunity solving process where one deals with real issues and problems and continually "learns" by doing. We can no longer wait until all the "evidence" is in, or until all the details have been considered, before we begin to tackle some of the challenges facing us. With design thinking, you iterate continually, seek feedback, learn to listen carefully to others (e.g., to clients, customers, or students), and incorporate their feedback into next steps. This is an iterative and solution-based process that has been used all over the world (Kelley & Kelley, 2013).
- 4. We also believe that leaders need **honest feedback** about their effectiveness in their current roles. We would strongly suggest that any participant in the Institute engage in a validated, 360°, anonymous feedback process, *along with coaching support*. This type of feedback process has been around for decades (Pieperl, 2001), has been used extensively in the corporate world, and is now seeing more participation in higher education and the non-profit sector. It is one of the most powerful (and risky) learning experiences a leader can undertake.

Lastly, the leadership program needs to be evaluated anonymously by participants, and all feedback needs to be shared with participants, members of the Advisory/Coordinating Group, and with any "sponsors" we might

have. We want to be accountable to the leaders of TCMR, and we want to ensure that the best quality of leadership learning experience is provided for their stakeholders.

So where do you begin? A proposal.

We believe that **Academic Impressions**, an organization that designs and delivers leadership programs in higher education, could act as a pilot program that would jump-start the idea of a Leadership Institute. They produce an advanced 3-day leadership program for leaders in higher education that is aligned with many of the elements of the Curriculum of the Future. This intense 3-day leadership program includes a 360° feedback process. It has been delivered to several hundred leaders in higher education and has been carefully evaluated each time it has been offered.

The results have been excellent, and the program faculty receive high marks for their expertise and teaching ability. The faculty have also taught in the corporate world, in the non-profit sector, and in government agencies.

The 3-day program could be adapted to meet the dynamic and evolving needs of TCMR leaders, which would be determined by the regional Advisory Group of leaders. This 3-day program could act as a "bookend" for an ongoing set of leadership learning experiences.

A **beginning program** might involve the following:

- 1. An initial, intensive, 3-day leadership program, including a 360° feedback process and coaching (e.g. sometime in January or February). Each participant would be required to create a "leadership action plan" before they left the initial program—and report their outcomes when the group reconvenes later in the year. The action plans will be focused on improving something back in their respective workplaces and detailing what they have learned from the process. This is key: while the faculty will share deep and current research about effective leadership, the Institute will focus on practical and applicable strategies that can be utilized back in the workplace.
- 2. A 2-day learning experience several months later (e.g. Summer 2018) that would be designed and delivered by the faculty of the 3-day program, the Advisory Group, Academic Impressions, and regional leaders. Topics could include creative problem solving, collaborative practices, dealing with ambiguity, cultural competency, and courageous decision-making. At this event, we would also review the action plans from all the participants in order to build in accountability and learn from each other.
- 3. A closing 2-day experience that would incorporate feedback from participants and be designed to meet their specific interests and needs. This could be designed and delivered by the Academic Impressions faculty, as well as other leaders and regional faculty members. The key here is to create an agile and flexible learning experience that delivers what participants in the Institute need in order to lead in the future.

With this proposal, we want to avoid a "one and done" leadership experience, where participants learn some interesting things at a workshop but are never held accountable for applying what they have learned.

Real thought needs to be invested in how the different "cohorts" of the TCMR continue to stay connected and develop a *relational and regional network* that will meet periodically to sustain their learning and support for each other. This notion of a "network" is one of the most important ideas presented. We need to connect across organizational and regional boundaries to create real leverage for the TCMR, to learn from each other, and to meet the complex challenges the TCMR will face over the next decade.

We don't want to get into more detail or assume too much at this time. We would like to talk about the important role of the regional "Design Team." We see the need for a credible, diverse group of regional leaders, along with Academic Impressions and some of their faculty, to get together for a day of collaborative work. In this meeting, we will further define and agree on the purposes of the Leadership Institute, review and build a curriculum, and identify some teaching faculty.

After this happens, many logistical details would have to be figured out (e.g. costs, places, selection of participants, sponsorships, funding, etc.). We aren't sure who will address this, but it could be a subset of the Design Team.

Suggested Next Steps: Anticipatory Summit II

We would like to convene a regional group of leaders, which would include *everyone* from the Anticipatory Summit and other invited guests. This could easily be a group of 70-80 leaders. These participants would spend 2/3 of a day accomplishing the following:

- 1. "Validating" and building upon the initial Leadership Skill Set that we created at the Anticipatory Summit. The goal here is not to do a lot of "brainstorming" and create an exhaustive list of potential leadership skills. That will not be helpful. We do want to make sure that we have a comprehensive leadership skill set that isn't based on "theory" and "ideal" thinking but is grounded in experience and takes into consideration the future events, trends, and issues facing the TCMR.
- 2. Once we "generally agree" on the skill set, we will prioritize the top 8-10 skills that leaders *must* have if they are to lead well. This will become our working model for the "Curriculum of the Future."
- 3. Once we prioritize our Leadership Skill Set, then a structured discussion needs to take place on the topic of: *How* do we teach these skills? We need informed suggestions and advice on the *how*, because we are assuming that the leadership learning experiences might be very different than what we provide and deliver today.
- 4. We will also discuss the specific recommendations presented in this informal paper, including:
 - a. The Notion of an Advisory/Coordinating group of some kind
 - b. The Yearly Student Summit
 - c. The establishment of a "Regional Futures Group"
- 5. Finally, we need to talk about the establishment of a TCMR Leadership Institute. Participants would provide honest feedback about the proposed idea and make strong recommendations about possible next steps.

We would like to reconvene the participants from the original Anticipatory Summit, held at ARCC, and invite other regional leaders who are interested in some of the ideas we are proposing. We would like to hold this meeting sometime in summer of 2018.