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Chairman Jay Cowles
Minnesota State Board of Trustees
30 East 7th Street
St. Paul, MN 55101

May 15, 2020

Chair Cowles;

The last few months have brought our students, faculty, staff, and administrators together to meet the needs of our students in the face of an unprecedented international health crisis. The impacts of the pandemic will linger for years, and perhaps even lead to irreparable changes to our institutions. Faculty have made significant sacrifices and efforts to ensure students had the opportunity to complete their Spring semester coursework. They will continue to alter their delivery methods or change the focus of their job duties as long as needed to keep everyone safe. Our students also have made a tremendous effort and overcome many obstacles to achieve success.

During the 2019-2021 legislative biennium, the IFO partnered with the Board of Trustees, the Chancellor, both student organizations, and our colleagues in Labor to seek the funding that was necessary to freeze tuition. Although we were successful in securing additional investment from the State for our campuses, the new revenues fell short of what was needed to protect our students and campuses from the negative impacts of campus budget crises.

The IFO urges the Board of Trustees to approve a 3% tuition increase for the 2020-2021 academic year. This action is necessary to protect students from reduced course offerings, fewer opportunities to receive the support they need to succeed, and a diminishing quality of the educational experience we can offer. These resources will also be needed to help maintain a focus on the important work being done around the Equity 2030 goal set by Chancellor Malhotra. Our State, communities, and campuses are facing a confluence of crises that could not have been imagined. MinnState campuses must have the flexibility – up to the level set by the legislature – to manage their budgets and protect the programs and unique educational experiences which today's students, families, employers, and our communities demand. Without these resources, we will not be able to fulfill our mission and meet the demands of all those that rely on us for access to a better life.

We understand the difficulty of increasing tuition during a time like this. However, faculty believe a tuition increase will be less impactful than the negative consequences of further budget deficits on our campuses. The resources collected through tuition help ensure that students have classes, tutors, counselors, janitorial staff, IT support, librarians, coaches, and the many other professionals who go to work every day to ensure the success of each student.

Faculty, coaches, librarians, and counselors represented by the IFO ask you to consider the negative impacts to our students if the Board does not support the flexibility our campuses need.

Sincerely,

Brent Jeffers
IFO President