



March 18, 2020

Minnesota State Board of Trustees

Chancellor's Update

Given the extenuating circumstances and the need to make changes in our standard meeting schedule, the delivery of my remarks for the Board meeting were modified to solely address COVID-19. Below you will find updates on other important efforts and events.

Day at the Capitol

The second annual Minnesota State Day at the Capitol, held on February 24, was an absolute success. The Capitol Rotunda was transformed to include student success posters from each of the 37 Minnesota State colleges and universities, as well as interactive demonstrations from students and faculty from seven of our colleges and universities, showcasing their innovation, creativity, and talent with elected officials, policymakers, and others.

Social media extended the reach of the day, with photos posted on Twitter and a full photo gallery added to the [Minnesota State Facebook page](#) following the event. The hashtag #FundMinnesotaState was used and retweeted throughout the day.

Those attending included: Governor Walz, Commissioners Olson and Frans, and roughly 75 legislators. Several college and university presidents and trustees participated as well. I extend my thanks to those trustees who participated: Trustees Alwal, Anderson, Erlandson, Hoffman, Soule, Sundin, and Tefer.

Legislative Session

The Legislative session kicked off on February 11 and Minnesota State has testified at eight hearings to date. I appreciated the presence of trustees and presidents who attended the hearings including: Chair Cowles, Vice Chair Moe, Trustee Sundin, and presidents Scott Olson, Angelia Millender, Kent Hanson, Joe Mulford, Pat Rogers, Ginny Arthur, Richard Davenport, and Larry Lundblad.

On March 16, legislators announced they are scaling back operations, effectively planning for a recess and coming in only on an as-needed basis to pass legislation related to the COVID-19 situation through April 14. Last week, Governor Walz scaled back his supplemental budget request to leave reserves so the state could respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Washington D.C.

On February 11, Minnesota State hosted a reception to honor Trustee Erlandson, who has been named Chair of the Association of Community College Trustees. The reception was attended by approximately 25 guests including: myself, Vice Chair Moe, Trustee Erlandson, Central Lakes College President Charlier, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Community Colleges for the Department of Education Casey K. Sack, and several Minnesota Congressional staffers. Additionally, Former Chancellor McCormick and his Chief of Staff Janise Fitzgerald attended along with the President and CEO of AGB, Henry Stoeber. It was a great opportunity to connect with long-time friends and colleagues while celebrating Trustee Erlandson and her accomplishments.

On February 10 and 11, we visited with legislators to discuss Minnesota State's federal policy goals for 2020. During the two days of meetings we met with John Kroger, the Chief Learning Officer for the Department of the Navy, as well as Michael Brickman, Senior Advisor to Under Secretary of Education Diane Jones. We also met with Senator Tina Smith and staff from the office of Senator Amy Klobuchar to discuss system-wide priorities, in addition to meeting with members and staff from all eight of Minnesota's congressional districts. The three main opportunities the group discussed were:

- A partnership with the in-development United States Naval Community College
- Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Network Grant funding
- Investment in Open Education Resources and the Open Textbook Pilot grant funding

Equity 2030

We continue to lay important foundational work for the Equity 2030 Initiative. We have hired four Chancellor's Fellows to lead the foundational framework. Their work provides the underpinnings of the operational structure needed to accomplish Equity 2030. We have also hired a Senior Director of Strategic Initiatives, Dr. Teri Hinds. Dr. Hinds' first day was March 11.

Dr. Hinds comes to Minnesota State from NASPA, where she served as the Director of Policy Research and Advocacy. She is also familiar with Minnesota State having served as Director of Institutional Planning, Assessment, and Research at Winona State University earlier in her career. Her work will focus primarily on Equity 2030.

I am pleased by ongoing conversations with presidents and stakeholders, including on campus work led by presidents, that will help us move forward as a system. Earlier this month, we hosted a Grassroots Advocacy webinar on Equity 2030, introducing the Equity 2030 framework and goal to campus leaders and advocates.

Tribal Colleges Update

I have met with leaders from Red Lake Nation College and Leech Lake Tribal College late last year and postponed my visit with White Earth Tribal and Community College due to COVID-19.

Senior Vice Chancellor Ron Anderson has been charged to work with our seven state universities to develop memoranda of understanding (MOUs). Based on the agreements already in place at Bemidji State University, these MOUs will provide a pathway for Native students to seamlessly transfer to any of our state universities.

The goal is to have these MOUs signed and executed by the end of this month, so students who are preparing for graduation from those tribal colleges this spring, know they have the opportunity and pathway to continue their education at Minnesota State.

Sexual Harassment

Last month, Minnesota State was included in an article published by the Minneapolis Star Tribune regarding sexual harassment occurring at colleges and university campuses. This issue is vitally important to me. We must provide our students, faculty, and staff with a safe, respectful, and supportive learning and working environment. Sexual harassment in any form is not acceptable and will not be tolerated.

The Star Tribune article spawned important discussions at Minnesota State and our colleges and universities. I appreciate the work that is already underway. We will continue to take action categorized under three main umbrellas:

- Education and training,
- Strengthening protocols,
- Reviewing related policies and processes.

In addition, I plan to convene a small group of leaders that will be led by a president and will include members of the Leadership Council, faculty, staff, and students. This group's work will be two-pronged:

- they will review existing policies, protocols, and current structures in place, and
- they will make recommendations on the expansion of awareness and prevention efforts and on strengthening our operational structures.

A final report from the group is expected by June 1, 2020, and I will present it, along with next steps, to the Board.

Thank you and be safe

During this difficult time, it is critical that we work together to safeguard the health, safety, and wellbeing of our faculty, staff, and students – and ourselves.

I am grateful for our dedicated employees, at the system office and across our campuses, who are working collaboratively and tirelessly, across multiple platforms and levels of government.

I believe in the creativity and spirit of our faculty, students, and our staff, and of Minnesota State. It is their creativity, passion, commitment, and energy which will enable us to overcome these challenges and provide the needed resiliency to successfully navigate our campuses through these difficult times.