



LEADMN
COLLEGE STUDENTS
CONNECTING FOR CHANGE

May 20, 2020

Dear Chair Cowles, Chancellor Malhotra, and members of the Board of Trustees,

I would like to take this opportunity to introduce the next LeadMN President, Priscilla Mayowa. Over the last two years I have worked with Priscilla, first in her role as North Hennepin Community College Senate's Legislative Coordinator and as a LeadMN Platform Committee member, and then this past year as the LeadMN Vice President. During that time, Priscilla has been an outspoken advocate for our students, working to ensure that students' voices are heard on campus, at the system office, and at the state legislature. Having spent the last two years working with her, I look forward to seeing all of things that she will accomplish as LeadMN President.

Sincerely,
Oballa Oballa
President
LeadMN – College Students Connecting for Change

Chair Cowles, Chancellor Malhotra, and members of the Board of Trustees,

My name is Priscilla Mayowa and I will be serving as the next LeadMN President. I am currently a student at North Hennepin Community College and Bemidji State University, which shows I'm a child of the system. Working as LeadMN Vice President has really taught me a lot about diverse student issues and I'm glad that I get another year to advocate for them. As the next President of LeadMN, there are many successes to build on that President Oballa, the rest of the LeadMN cabinet, and all of our students have worked so hard this past year. It is with great pleasure that I announce to you today, the 16 campuses that have been designated Hunger Free by LeadMN this year:

Anoka Technical College, Central Lakes College, Inver Hills Community College, South Central College, Dakota County Technical College, Hennepin Technical College, Itasca Community College, Lake Superior College, Mesabi Range College, Minnesota State Community and Technical College, Minneapolis Community and Technical College, Minnesota State College Southeast – Winona, Normandale Community College, Pine Technical & Community College, Rainy River Community College, and Rochester Community and Technical College.



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The Hunger Free Campus initiative began when Frankie Becerra and Oballa Oballa who both experienced food insecurity during their time in college stepped forward to raise awareness on the challenges students were facing with basic needs and to make sure students had access to food so they could focus on their education, rather than where their next meal would come from. In just one year, the Hunger Free Campus act has proven to be highly successful in both motivating and recognizing the work that campuses are doing to end college hunger. This initiative, created and lobbied for by students to help their peers, is a testament to the seriousness of this issue and the power of the student voice. And from what I've heard first hand, it has helped many of our campuses start thinking about or re-thinking basic needs as a serious issue.

But there is more work to do this upcoming year. Covid-19 is exacerbating existing inequalities among our students and has created an even greater urgency to address student basic needs and equity issues on our campuses. In 2020, we are decades away from closing the opportunity gap at our colleges. Our three-year graduation rate fails to hit fifty percent, and is abysmal for many students of color. We have to continue the work of addressing basic needs like mental health and food insecurity through initiatives like the Hunger Free Campus Act. Increased support from Minnesota State and the creation of a basic needs policy across all state colleges and universities will ensure that all students get the support they need to be successful in college.

Covid-19 is changing the way we do things, and it creates many major unknowns for students, faculty, and staff this fall. What is clear, however, is that business as usual in higher education is going to change, and students' voices need to be included in that change for it to be successful. As I have done this year, I will continue fighting to make sure that our voices are heard and that students are a part of the decision-making process. I look forward to working with all of you in this upcoming year to make sure that students have the support that they need and a voice that is valued as our system confronts the many challenges that face us.

Sincerely,

Priscilla Mayowa
Vice President & President-Elect
LeadMN – College Students Connecting for Change