

Good morning Chair Cowles, Board members, and Chancellor Malhotra. Thank you for the opportunity to speak this morning. I am Jennifer Erwin, President-Elect of the Minn State Policy Committee. I am the 1st Vice President of Local 4001, Chief Steward for Saint Paul College, Inver Hills Community College, and Dakota County and Technical College, and campus steward at Rochester Community and Technical College. On behalf of the Executive Board, we look forward to working with you this coming year.

2020 has been a difficult year for all. My mind finds it hard to believe that we are at the end of September already. With the explosion of COVID-19 in March, no commencements in the spring, no fairs and festivals this summer, school being offered online and hybrid, teleworking for the last seven months and continuing on for the foreseeable future, as well as the guidance this week on the upcoming trick or treating season, it has been, at the very least, strange. Add the number of hurricanes and wildfires, the loss of Ruth Bader Ginsburg, the social injustices facing our nation and world, and the protests that were sparked this summer due to the death of George Floyd, I think I can speak for everyone when I say we will be happy when 2020 ends on December 31.

Among our organizational priorities for FY2021, we passionately support voting rights, finding ways to resolve social injustice, the Governor's Budget, and Minn State's legislative funding priorities. I, along with others, spend much time at the Capitol moving your legislative priorities forward and speaking with our local representatives. This support means funding at the local two and four-year schools, as well as the local communities and regions they serve.

We would also like to continue working on a shared governance at both the campus and system level, especially where administration seeks and listens to the voices of the bargaining units. That seems to be one of the hardest areas to improve on over the years, and we have to keep working toward making these voices rise up.

Now is the time, with new members of our committee and new Trustees, to continue working together to make Minn State the educator of choice, providing an affordable and accessible education, by serving a diverse student body. Our students continue to change and grow each year, and we're prepared to adapt, change, and grow with them, as we've demonstrated during the past several months. Higher education today is not the higher education of yesterday.

Our members serve on the frontlines, and during this difficult year, have kept our colleges open and accessible to our communities and students. Let us not forget them now and the hard work they have put in to get our students registered, on campus, feeling safe and comfortable, and making sure our campuses are safe for everyone. Let us work together to help our employees, students, and communities continue improving and growing.