



September 22, 2020

Chair Cowles, Chancellor Malhotra, and Trustees:

My name is Tracy Rahim and I just started my 5th year as the Statewide President and current Grievance Officer for the Minnesota State University Association of Administrative and Service Faculty (MSUAASF). I also work as the Associate Director of Student Activities at Winona State University (20-year employee) where I also received by bachelor's and Master's degrees. I would first like to welcome the newly appointed trustees and look forward to your membership at the Minnesota State table to continue to make this one of the best public higher education systems in the country! For those who are not aware, the Minnesota State University Association of Administrative and Service Faculty is a faculty bargaining unit who provides direction, coordination, management, and provision of student services, academic resources, and/or professional services that support student recruitment, retention and graduation. Our unit also includes professional services in the areas of alumni relations, foundation activities, athletics administration and support, and student activities.

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss with you our priorities for FY21. Like all other groups, COVID-19 has taken over so much of the work that we do. While it may appear we have few priorities that aren't just connected to work we do on a daily basis to protect the provisions of our collective bargaining agreement, they touch all aspects of the employee base who comprise the Administrative and Service Faculty.

1. **COVID-19 Safety & Security.** We have spent, and continue to spend, a great deal of time advocating for the health and safety of our members and students and do anything we can to assist our students achieve their goals. All ASF members have re-envisioned how they can connect and engage with students and still provide them with a semblance of a university experience to the extent the students need and desire. Some ASF members work in front line departments such as health services, housing & residence life, and athletic training where they encounter COVID-19 positive cases each day due to the nature of their work. While many of our members are able to successfully telework while still serving students with the same commitment and dedication as if they were face-to-face. This includes areas such as advising, financial aid, records and registration, and various other student life programs. Our universities have had different responses to members' ability to telework in some fashion, even with the Governor's Executive Order which states that employees who can still work from home should work from home unless there is a business case built for why they should be on campus. Some campuses have been very flexible and taken a humanistic approach (while ensuring that student needs are still being met) while others have taken a more rigid approach in not wanting to treat employees inconsistently regardless of personal health circumstances. All employees, regardless of bargaining unit and regardless of campus, should be afforded the same opportunities and consideration to ensure their own personal health and safety.

2. **Diversity of Student Life & Academic Support Professionals.** If you recall last year, there was a study and subsequent presentation to the Board of Trustees last Spring on the diversity profile of the teaching faculty within Minnesota State. Does the teaching faculty mirror what our student population looks like? As part of our work with Equity 2030, ASF would like to work with Minnesota State to do a deeper dive in the diversity profile of student life and academic support professionals in the system overall to look at how other areas on campus mirror the student population. There has not been a study done in recent years that I am aware of that looked at the diversity profile of professionals who work with students in a variety of ways to get them across the proverbial finish line. We know that if it was not for many of our ASF members (and members of other bargaining units) who invest time and energy in assisting students in their success outside the classroom, they would leave the campus as they didn't feel a connection with anyone. We want to mitigate that risk by looking at how and where we can do better to recruit and retain a more diverse base of professionals in all areas of the campuses. I look forward to connecting with Human Resources and Equity & Inclusion on how we can launch this important study this year.

COVID-19, the unfortunate racism atrocities, natural disasters, and untimely deaths of important national leaders have forced all of us to look at the work we do, how we do it, the impact it has, and where we can do better. ASF looks forward to continuing the partnership with Minnesota State to always strive to do better in the best interests of our members and our students.

Sincerely

Tracy Rahim
State ASF President/Grievance Officer