



Hello Board of Trustees,

As part of my job, I find it within my responsibility to help bring you a deeper understanding of the thoughts, feelings, and experiences of current students.

One growing trend I have been observing and had students express to me is the consideration many students are giving to taking a break from their education during Spring 2021 in response to the struggles of an online education in the middle of a pandemic.

To be clear, this is not Students United advocating for the return to in-person classes during this public health crisis. We feel it's important to recognize and respond to the reality that we as an organization, and us as a system, face. It's important to acknowledge that students are concerned they are not receiving the same level of an education from distance learning compared to in-person classes and many are concerned about their success and ability to complete their education.

I ask, how are we collectively preparing for a drop in enrollment over the next semester? How are we going to give students the resources they need so they want to continue their education? What is the plan to bring the value of our education back to students who choose to leave or take a break?

Numerous studies have shown, once students leave higher education, they are unlikely to return. For students of color, this number only increases. Historically, students who leave often cite their mental wellbeing and lack of access to basic needs. That concern is now greater than ever, as many students worry about how they will pay bills and tuition. Basic human needs must be met for anyone to focus in their zoom classroom, what is our urgent plan to meet those needs?

Students United is here to ask these questions and share the thoughts, experiences, and concerns of students with you. We wish we could implement the solutions to serve all students on our own. But both the responsibility, and the resources necessary, belong to our system and university leaders. So, while we cannot solve these problems on our own, we are committed to being a resource and partner to powerful leaders like you all so that we can all make Minnesota State the strongest, most accessible system it can be.

Please share any questions or thoughts you have. We would love to provide insight and have a conversation.