



Students United's three officers of the board will begin testimony by formally introducing themselves to the Trustees.

Chair Cowles & members of the Board of Trustees,

Back in Nov. 2019 I got the privilege to share my story with the trustees at the November board meeting at Bemidji State University, during which I shared my fears of leaving my undergraduate experience with large piles of debt and the fear of not being able to attend Graduate School because of the massive financial strain it will put on me in the pursuit of following my dreams. Instead of going into my story again I would prefer to talk about what we have been working on to change this experience for the students who will come through our institutions long past myself, as well as how we can work together to make meaningful system change in order to provide them with the opportunity to gain the knowledge and skills that I have in my time here without the many struggles that comes with issues inside our higher education system.

Throughout March, Students United has been actively involved in the legislative arena advocating on our state and federal agendas. At the federal level, our Board of Directors—composed of the student body presidents of each of the seven campuses—have spoken with our U.S Senators and Representatives on issues that impact students such as the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act, funding to Pell grants, technology and broadband access, funding for states, affordable course materials, among other topics.

At the state level, we have connected nearly 40 students from across all seven universities with state representatives through virtual meetings where they have been advocating for Minnesota State's \$120 million budget request. Students understand that full funding for this request is critical to current and future students' experience and we feel very proud that our students have volunteered so much time to act as partners to the system office, all of you, faculty, and staff in this effort.

Shifting towards system-level efforts, Students United had two student representatives on the Law Enforcement Curriculum Review Taskforce, after advocating that the student associations have two each. Overall, our student representatives are in agreement with the taskforce's recommendations and think it's a step in the right direction but feel the taskforce process was "*transactional and not transformative.*" With that said, we have some feedback about the process that we hope, moving forward, will create more consensus, trust, and meaningful engagement in critical work like this. We think it's important that when work is about harm reduction that those who have experienced that harm be centered, so we want to acknowledge and support the students and other taskforce members who pushed for these recommendations to be reviewed by key community partners, including those directly connected to George Floyd and South Minneapolis. Additionally, Students United's team of staff and board officers, who were



not the appointed student representatives, were unable to listen into the meetings, receive meeting materials, or take notes. This meant we were not able to gather broad student feedback on these recommendations prior to their presentation because we received them at the same time you all did. This normally wouldn't be an issue but because we wanted key student feedback to inform this work, we wish we could have had more consultation prior to it being ready for presentation. Finally, we support all the Trustees and partners asking for there to be periodic updates about the implementation and assessment of these curriculum changes. We appreciate that the system office is working with us to engage students' feedback on these recommendations over the next few weeks, but hoped, alongside our student representatives, for a deeper engagement throughout the taskforce's work.

The opportunity to testify during these Board of Trustees meetings is one of the only opportunities for dialogue we have and we really value it. Student leaders look forward to these opportunities and the chance to inform your decision-making, answer your questions, and put faces and names to the people whom your decisions will impact! We would gladly answer any questions.

Regards,

Students United FY21 Officers

Jonathan McNicholes

Emma Zellmer

Victor Ayemobuwa