



Good afternoon, Chair Moe, Trustees, and Chancellor Malhotra. Thank you for the opportunity to provide remarks at this month's meeting.

Let's get right to the point. I'm worried. Scared for what the future holds for Minn State and its employees and students. At our recent Labor Management meeting, Vice Chancellor Maki explained to us that even if we get our entire ask from the legislature, which more than likely won't happen, and they fund the tuition freeze, we will still have a tens of millions of dollars shortfall in our system budget. How do we even begin to adjust for that? The federal COVID funding is no longer available after June this year, which has been a band-aid for our campuses. We have campuses that are seven and eight figures in the red. Enrollment has not recovered like planned or hope for, and with the cost of just plain living skyrocketing, who can afford to go to college? AFSCME employees are working two and three jobs to be able to feed their families and not have to live paycheck to paycheck. Our students can't schedule their lives around multiple jobs and still find time, and energy, to go to school. We have put a band-aid on declining enrollment for 20 years now. We need to realize as a system that our enrollment numbers aren't going to go back to what they were 20 years ago. The funding we get from the state isn't going to get back to where it was 20 years ago. Public state education shouldn't be on the colleges to front the cost; unfortunately, that's the way it's become, and we need to figure out how to get out of debt. I know our ask this year as astronomical compared to prior years and it felt like we were asking for enough. But according to the spreadsheet shared by Vice Chancellor Maki, we should have asked for over a million. Maybe we'd balance our budget then.

How do we dig out from more than 50 million dollars in the red? What are the options being looked at? We can't go year by year getting deeper and deeper in debt and not have some plan to get out from under it. AFSCME staff are already doing their job, plus in most cases, an open position or two as well. Our staffing levels are already so thin, I don't know how the colleges can justify laying off any employees, although we know that's going to happen. AFSCME are on the front lines – cleaning our ever-expanding campuses and square footage; enrolling our students; helping them with financial aid; supporting faculty and middle management. The work of the college lands squarely on our backs. Administration, who have two or five or ten or twenty staff under them, continue to grow at most institutions. One administrator job would pay for three or four AFSCME jobs. I'm hearing of AFSCME layoffs across the system, and I expect it will only get worse.

The band-aids aren't working anymore. I don't know what the answer is, but the system needs to figure out real solutions. Not giving wage increases is also not an answer. Not filling jobs is not an answer. When I got hired by Minn State 18 years ago, I felt like I had won the lottery. Good wages, stable income, respectful career choice, great benefits, and a pension! I still love my job and hope to retire from here in twenty years. But will there be a Minn State system to retire from?? That seems to be the question.

Thank you, Board, and I will stand for any questions.

**Jennifer L. Erwin, President**  
**AFSCME Minnesota State Policy Committee**