



May 19, 2020

Dear Chair Moe, Chancellor Molhatra, members of the Board of Trustees,

Is there ever a bad time to raise tuition?

We are facing one of the worst economic situations of our lifetime, with more than 520,000 Minnesotans facing unemployment and one in three students reporting that they have been laid off or had their hours reduced. This income is critical to helping students pay for school and without it many just won't be able to afford to continue with school.

The Board of Trustees and the Chancellor have an opportunity to show some empathy for how this global pandemic is impacting students. These are some words directly from students on how they are being impacted:

*"This coronavirus has flipped my entire world upside down. I hate online classes, it's not the way I learn and now I'm forced out of my in person class and into a online class, and this really is burdening me. Not only that it's caused me to lose my job and my child to be placed at home. This is so difficult. This is unreal!" - a student at Century College*

*"I barely have enough food to last 2 weeks and only if I skip meals. I can't do work study to pay bills and I don't even know if I'd qualify for any of this "bailout" or "unemployment" stuff congress has allegedly passed." A student at Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College*

*"Because I am out of my only job, I am not sure if I will be able to utilize daycare while I try to do my online classes, I'm not even sure if I will be able to afford daycare if I am able to keep my daughter there, I still have not heard of my work study pay news, my advisor doesn't seem to understand my questions..." A student at Ridgewater Campus*

As you consider tuition for next semester, you should be focused on strategies to keep and recruit as many students as possible. Evidence shows that when you raise tuition, it causes more students to not enroll.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "California's Tuition Policy for Higher Education - Public Policy ...." 1 Sep. 2018, <https://www.ppic.org/wp-content/uploads/californias-tuition-policy-for-higher-education-september-2018.pdf>. Accessed 18 May. 2020.

<sup>2</sup> "The impact of tuition increases on enrollment at public colleges." [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/254089874\\_The\\_Impact\\_of\\_Tuition\\_Increases\\_on\\_Enrollment\\_at\\_Public\\_Colleges\\_and\\_Universities](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/254089874_The_Impact_of_Tuition_Increases_on_Enrollment_at_Public_Colleges_and_Universities). Accessed 18 May. 2020.



If 2,092 students decide not to attend a Minnesota community college next fall because of the high cost, Minnesota State will have lost the extra revenue that the tuition increase would generate? Has Minnesota State entered a death spiral as you attempt to raise tuition to pay for enrollment declines and then send even more students for the exits to only perpetuate the cycle?

Now is an important time to follow other institutions and send a message that the board does care about college affordability. The Minnesota State Legislature is watching right now how the board manages its finances. Every session students tell state legislators that they must set tuition policy to protect students from constantly raising tuition because the Board of Trustees will raise tuition every time it is given the opportunity.

We challenge you today to prove us wrong. If there was ever a time to recognize the hardship, the financial pain, the uncertainty being inflicted on college students and their families, now is that time. If you won't stop a tuition increase now, then you never will.

Sincerely,

Oballa Oballa  
President  
LeadMN – College Students Connecting for Change