

Chair Cowles, Trustees, Chancellor Malhotra,

I want to begin these very brief remarks by again recognizing the incredible work that students and faculty have engaged in this semester under extreme duress. The state of Minnesota itself called upon educators and other front-line workers to help make our state safe, and in response educators rose to the challenge in finding innovative ways to help students stay home and still learn. Students, many of whom already faced severe barriers to educational success, managed to find ways to continue to learn during a global pandemic. I don't know how we will ever fully recognize and value what has happened this semester, but we must continue to try.

As summer arrives, all eyes are now turning to what is ahead, including the Fall 2020 semester. I must admit, the concern I have—which I know many others share—is the extent to which organizations will attempt to use the solutions and processes from non-crisis periods of time to address situations caused by this extraordinary crisis we are now facing.

Students and faculty have already realized there are no ready-made or easy translation of solutions to deal with the unique situations we are now facing. What worked before suddenly doesn't work now. Navigating this crisis requires returning to fundamental values and principles and rebuilding from there. Failure to do this, as one colleague recently pointed out to me, all but locks you in to a predetermined result as if there are no other options.

The darkest projections of what this could mean to higher-education are very dark indeed, and we must be willing to consider different responses, other options, and new methods to prevent getting trapped in a pathway that doesn't leave public higher education in a better position than it is now.

For me, this means returning to the most basic, most fundamental element of education: the connection between student and teacher. We must be doing everything we can to support both students and educators—for without either we are no longer an educational institution. Anything that takes away support from students and educators must be an absolute last resort. This means everything else must up for conversation, regardless of how uncomfortable those conversations might be. For example, many institutions and systems are having painful conversations about financial reserves and endowments. Unfortunately, there are those who believe an institution's endowment or reserves matter more than taking care of students or the educators, and so support for students and educators are removed before even considering other avenues. We too, as Minnesota State, must have these tough conversations.

Crises have an uncanny ability to make an organization's true values clear. Let us make sure when the values of Minnesota State are made clear, that they show an unwavering commitment to high quality education for all Minnesotans.

Thank you.