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October 17, 2022

Chair Moe and Trustees,

Thank you for your interest in our feedback of the proposed MinnState FY24-FY25 Legislative request. Our faculty have long encouraged the system to work closely with campus presidents to determine what our campuses need, rather than developing a request that seems politically feasible. The request in front of you today goes a long way toward accomplishing that goal, and we are appreciative of the size and focus of the request. The request is bold in size and appropriate to meet the needs of the students, staff, faculty, and communities we serve.

There are a few points of feedback we wish to share with the Board, and have already shared with Vice Chancellor Maki:

1) Student Support

We applaud the system for listening loud and clear to the student organizations on the need for additional support. The Emergency Grants and proposal to expand student support services is something that is undoubtedly needed as students continue to face increasing challenges due to an inaction in several areas outside the control of the system or this Board. We stand with the students in supporting resources to rebuild and expand the student support offerings on our campuses.

However, the proposal must acknowledge each campus in the system faces unique challenges. This part of the proposed budget “fences” large amounts of new investment. This will limit the opportunities for campus presidents, in coordination with bargaining units and students, to determine the unique needs of their campus community. On many campuses, additional mental health resources are desperately needed. However, if resources from the legislature are tied to that, it severely limits the campus from making needed investments in other areas. We recommend maintaining the description of the need but rolling the entirety of the proposed investment into the campus support section to provide for more local decision making.

2) Return Tuition Authority Back to Students, Campuses, and Trustees

For almost 10 years the legislature has consistently placed an unfunded freeze (except for 2013-14), tuition cap, or other restrictions on tuition. Our campuses have developed a very robust conversation locally for setting tuition and the legislature’s continued involvement in the process undermines the ability of our administrators to run their campus. We have ceded control of the only major

budget item that was firmly in our control. We must stop promising to freeze tuition and instead focus the conversation on the needs of the campuses, the very real impacts of underfunding (including increasing tuition), and the need for campuses to exercise local control. In addition, university students often have different expectations of their educational experience than students at our community and technical colleges. Let's respect those differences and allow the students to work with campus leadership to help develop a vision of what the campus should be and then develop a budget around the vision rather than just trying our best to manage ongoing cuts.

3) Focus on State Universities

It was apparent in the document that attention was paid to the challenges of State Universities coming out of COVID. The Transfer Scholarship request would go a long way to helping incentive students to continue their journey at a MinnState University rather than one of our competing institutions. Faculty have done immense work to develop the disciplinary Transfer Pathways. Those pathways paired with a financial incentive will be a gamechanger as we work to increase the number of MinnState transfer students. In addition, expanding the industry sector programming to include more bachelor's degrees is also much appreciated. Although that is not additional money for our campuses, it does provide a great opportunity to work with students interested in those fields to find available resources and perhaps retain or recruit students more effectively. While we have reservations about the limiting of programs for current workforce needs, we also understand the political reality and usefulness of a program like this.

Although we have outlined some minor differences, we are looking forward to partnering with the Trustees and system leadership to secure the investments our campuses need. We can and should accomplish a lot together. The framework of this request lines up with the values and priorities of our faculty and we will continue to provide our feedback throughout the process and before the second reading in November.

Sincerely,



Jenna Chernega
IFO President