



Chair Moe, Members of the Board of Trustees,

Good afternoon! I am excited to be back with you all today. While we are here in Saint Paul, Students United staff and our treasurer are conducting our Bemidji campus visit [Go Beavers!]. While I am here today our staff and treasurer have had a very fulfilling day so far at Bemidji! They've had the opportunity to meet with staff and students from several student centers and have one-on-one conversations to discuss our priorities and opportunities to get involved with Students United, which I will be expanding on shortly. We will be continuing our campus visits to the remaining six universities in the following weeks. Our goal is to increase student engagement with our organization and bring awareness to our leadership opportunities and financial resources. These include the Student Leadership Program fellow applications, officer elections, spring town hall, scholarships, Board committees, and student representation on System committees/councils.

Since we last spoke in November, Students United has been working diligently to prepare for a busy and eventful semester ahead. I'd like to provide you all with some updates:

We are excited to announce that our Student Leadership Program (SLP) fellows have successfully completed their first semester at Students United and have transitioned into their intern roles. With this transition, each intern was paired with a staff member and are now working directly with them in their respective fields (Ex. System Relations, Government Relations, Operations). Before the start of their internship, we sent our SLP fellows a beginning and end-of-the-year survey to track and measure learning outcomes and success. We are pleased to report we received a lot of great feedback regarding the program and are seeing significant growth in our fellows in different knowledge areas, such as public speaking, personal budgeting, and teamwork/collaboration. We are eager to see the growth of our fellows throughout their internships as well.

For this legislative session, I and other staff members are working to extend our advocacy at the state and federal levels. Myself and our Director of Government Relations [Ben Reimler] met with several legislators to inform them of our agenda/legislative priorities. To reiterate, our focus this year is on the ABCs of higher education: to increase affordability, widen access to basic needs, and encourage civic engagement among our students. We are excited to see progress being made by our legislators that reflect these priorities, including Governor Walz's signing of the tax conformity bill, which I had the honor and pleasure of attending. Student debt continues to be an immense burden that halts financial growth, but this is a welcome step.

Students United will also be continuing our advocacy at the state capital during our State Advocacy Day on February 21st! During State Advocacy Day, students from the seven state universities will be joining us at the Capitol to meet with their elected officials and share their experiences with and perspectives on higher education. We encourage Board members to support our students as they engage in the critical work of advancing students' interests.



Students United and officers will also be flying out to D.C. in early March for our federal advocacy week. As our advocacy is centered around the ABCs of education, SU will be advocating on behalf of policies that support this, including the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act, support for increasing mental health resources, and increasing TRIO funding to support student retention.

Going forward into the semester, we are eager to collaborate with the System office and our partner organizations to further our goal of making our campuses equitable for our students. We are also hopeful and excited about the search process for our next chancellor. Students United and several other organizations from the Equity 2030 Coalition came together to create a letter for the Chancellor's search committee requesting the process and candidate exhibit a strong commitment to Equity and Inclusion. As a member of the search committee, I will continue to refer to this letter throughout the chancellor's search process, and I am hopeful other members of the committee will, too.

Lastly, we are excited to announce that the Students United Scholarship and Alumni Advisory Board is putting on a spring scholarship fundraiser: A Night of Black Excellence. Proceeds from this event will directly fund our scholarships that support Black, Indigenous, other students of color, and low-income university students. Tickets are now available, and we would like to extend an invitation to all members present. We look forward to you joining us for a night of art and community celebration. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Kaileigh Weber