



MINNESOTA STATE

Student Involvement in Decision-Making Guide

A guide to support student, college, and university leaders

Student Affairs
June 2024

Contents

- Introduction 1
 - Strengthening Student Involvement on Committees 2
 - Fostering Trust through Proactive Communication..... 2
 - Cultivating Collaboration through Common Goals 2
- Student Consultation 3
 - General Consultation Tips 3
 - Budget Consultation Tips for Campus Leaders 3
- Campus Student Association Letter..... 4
- Policy and Procedure Highlights 4
- Consultation Letter Guidance 6
- Contact 7
- Additional Reference 7

Introduction

This guide was created to support both students and college and university leaders in their work connected to [Board Policy 2.3](#) and [System Procedure 2.3.1](#) – Student Involvement in Decision-Making. Student involvement in decision-making is an important learning experience for student leaders at all Minnesota State colleges and universities.

Board Policy 2.3 and System Procedure 2.3.1 outline minimum requirements for the student review and consultation processes. College and university leaders are encouraged to go beyond the minimum requirements to increase the educational impact of this experience for student leaders at their college or university. This guide provides ideas to support campuses that want to go beyond the minimum requirements.

Across Minnesota State, student participation and involvement are integral parts of student leadership and development. Student representatives are a part of the decision-making process on campus, at the system office, and on the Board of Trustees. Some issues require ongoing student representation while others require consultation or review. Two key elements to student participation and involvement are **trust** and **collaboration**.

Strengthening Student Involvement on Committees

- Provide students with a written description of each committee and the work it does (e.g. charge document, purpose, membership, meeting schedule)
- Create opportunities for students to have a mentor
- Have someone who knows the students introduce them to the committee leader prior to their first meeting
- Host a brief orientation to a committee's operations and structure at the first committee meeting of the year
- Plan committee meetings to accommodate student schedules where possible
- Ensure that student representatives are asked for their perspectives during committee meetings
- Fill vacancies that occur during the academic year, where appropriate
- Invite students to appoint members to all appropriate committees and allow student leadership to decide which committees to prioritize for appointment
- Provide a timely summary of committee meetings so information can be shared as necessary

Fostering Trust through Proactive Communication

- Build relationships with student leaders through informal visits and discussions throughout the year
- Ensure students are informed about pertinent issues
- Keep conversations straightforward to ensure participants have a clear and mutual understanding of the process and their role
- Explain jargon and acronyms related to meetings, Higher Learning Commission requirements, statutes, or administrative matters
- Actively seek to improve the consultation process
- Set shared improvement goals and fulfill commitments
- College and university leaders should actively listen to student concerns and address them promptly
- Students should be encouraged to share suggestions for improvement with college and university leaders to foster transparency and collaboration

Cultivating Collaboration through Common Goals

- Establish clear collaboration expectations and support mechanisms
- Outline achievable timelines and resource needs
- Develop a system for sharing progress updates on shared goals

- Seek input from student leaders on how college and university leaders can support student government objectives
- Recognize mutually beneficial achievements
- Identify common interests to encourage joint efforts
- Promote and share successes widely to inspire further collaboration and engagement

Student Consultation

Consultation happens *during* the decision-making process to ensure:

- Awareness
- Input
- Feedback
- Recommendations
- Respect

General Consultation Tips

- Maintain open lines of communication regarding the consultation process and its significance.
- Meet with student leaders early in the fall semester to kickstart the engagement process, align goals, and emphasize the importance of staying informed.
- Consider having a leadership transition meeting after student association elections have occurred with both outgoing and incoming student leaders.
- Provide agendas and supporting materials, in advance of the meeting to all parties.
- Student association advisors and college and university leaders should provide regular updates to each other related to consultation conversations, meetings, and communications.
- Encourage students to ask questions freely during meetings and provide sufficient time for thorough discussion and consideration of the topic before any recommendation is proposed.
- Address unanswered questions from previous meetings in subsequent meetings.
- Stay informed about the legislative budget cycle; writing letters can be challenging if the legislative session is ongoing. Be prepared to adapt to legislative changes.

Budget Consultation Tips for Campus Leaders

- Initiate discussions about the budget process with the college or university finance officer in early fall to develop a consultation plan to educate student leaders about the financial picture of the institution.
- Schedule consultation meetings to reserve calendar dates and times as early as possible, ensuring everyone's availability for timely meetings.
- Create and provide a "Budget Guide" for students to easily reference during meetings.

Campus Student Association Letter

When a college or university proposal requires student consultation and board approval, a letter written by the campus student association to the Board of Trustees is required.

This letter could include the following elements:

- How many meetings took place and what were they like?
- What materials were provided to you?
- Were your questions answered?
- Do you understand the financial constraints and budget opportunities facing your college or university?
- Do you believe the college and university leaders understand your concerns and are respectfully considering them?
- Do you have any other feedback to share?
- Please note that taking a formal position (i.e. vote) on the issue(s) involved is not required and is at the discretion of the campus student association.
- The letter should state if the campus student association has taken a formal position, has no position, or is neutral on the issue(s) involved.

The college or university's administration will communicate the letter's submission deadline to the campus student association.

The campus student association should discuss and determine who will coordinate the sending of the final letter to the Board of Trustees via email or the United States Postal Service.

Board of Trustees email address

C/O Kari Campbell, Executive Director, Office of the Board of Trustees
Kari.campbell@minnstate.edu

Board of Trustees mailing address

Board of Trustees
Minnesota State Colleges and Universities
30 East 7th Street
St. Paul, MN 55101-7804

Policy and Procedure Highlights

Students must be provided the opportunity and encouraged to serve as full members of appropriate college, university, or system office committees through the entire process of that committee. An effort should be made to accommodate student schedules and obligations (academic, work, family, etc.) when scheduling meetings.

Example committees include, but are not limited to:

- Search committees for certain positions (e.g. senior administrators, student affairs/student development professionals)
- Policy development committees
- Strategic planning and budgeting committees
- Food service and other third-party vendor selection committees
- Student insurance vendor selection committees, etc. (as stated in [System Procedure 2.3.1](#))

Topics that may be reviewed include, but are not limited to:

- Statutory changes that impact students
- Campus budget information
- Campus bonding requests
- Remodeling and construction projects that are being formulated
- Fees not charged to all students
- Substantial changes to academic programs and non-curricular campus proposals

Topics that require consultation include, but are not limited to:

- Changing tuition rates
- Establishing or changing fees charged to all students, including revenue fund fees
- Presidential exemptions from campus discretionary fees
- Changing student wage rates
- Food service contracts
- Acquisition and disposition of real estate
- Non-curricular proposals that have significant impact on students
- Use of general or auxiliary funds for scholarships

The entire [Board Policy](#) and [System Procedure](#) can be viewed on the Minnesota State website.

Consultation Letter Guidance for Students

Use a letterhead that identifies the college or university if possible.

YOUR NAME, YOUR TITLE
COLLEGE/UNIVERSITY NAME
COLLEGE/UNIVERSITY ADDRESS
CITY, STATE, ZIP
DATE

Board of Trustees
Minnesota State Colleges and Universities
30 East 7th Street
St. Paul, MN 55101-7804

Dear Trustees,

The first paragraph might be a brief introduction. Repeat what college or university you are from, what role you fill within your campus association, and why you are sending this letter. For example, *“My name is John/Jane Q. Public and I am the campus student association president from XYZ College or University. This letter will describe the consultation process our campus student association experienced this year.”*

The second paragraph could describe your experience. How frequently have you met with college or university leaders to discuss the topic on which you were being consulted? Did you have sufficient notice of the time and location of the meeting(s)? Were you given materials ahead of time? Did you understand the opportunities and constraints facing your institution regarding the topic? Were your questions answered, either at the meeting or by follow-up contact?

The third paragraph might describe your opinion on the quality of the consultation. Was the conversation respectful and do you believe the college or university leaders in attendance listened to your input and concerns?

The fourth paragraph could give you the opportunity to register any formal position (i.e., vote) your campus student association has taken on the issue(s) involved. If your campus student association has not taken a position (i.e., vote) you could state that. ***Please note that taking an official position or vote is not required and is at the discretion of the campus student association.***

A fifth paragraph might provide an opportunity to mention any other feedback or concerns about the issue(s).

In closing, you may wish to thank the trustees for the opportunity to provide the board with information about the consultation process at your college or university and provide your contact information.

Sincerely,

YOUR NAME, YOUR TITLE
YOUR EMAIL ADDRESS

Given the time of year this letter is submitted, you may wish to provide both your school email address and an alternate address you check more frequently during the summer.

Cc: College or University President
Executive Director, Board of Trustees
Student Association Advisor
College or University Financial Officer

Contact

For questions about student involvement in decision-making, please contact:

Shawn Anderson

Interim System Director for Student Development and Success

Shawn.Anderson@MinnState.edu

Paul Shepherd

Associate Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs and Enrollment Management

Paul.Shepherd@MinnState.edu

Additional Reference

[System Procedure 7.3.12 Scholarships](#)



MINNESOTA STATE

30 East 7th Street, Suite 350 | St. Paul, MN 55101-7804

651-201-1800 | 888-667-2848

[MinnState.edu](https://www.mnstate.edu)

This document is available in alternative formats to individuals with disabilities. To request an alternate format, contact Human Resources at 651-201-1664. Individuals with hearing or speech disabilities may contact us via their preferred Telecommunications Relay Service.

Minnesota State is an affirmative action, equal opportunity employer and educator.