



**Board of Trustees Special Meeting
Meeting Minutes
May 9, 2023**

A special meeting of the Board of Trustees was held on May 9, 2023.

Trustees present: Roger Moe, Chair; George Soule, Vice Chair; Victor Ayemobuwa, Alex Cirillo, Jay Cowles, Dawn Erlandson, Jim Grabowska, Tim Huebsch, Jerry Janezich, Javier Morillo, April Nishimura, Kathy Sheran, Cheryl Tefer

Trustees absent: Asani Ajogun, Oballa Oballa,

Staff present: Devinder Malhotra, Chancellor

The meeting materials for this meeting are available [here](#). An audio recording of the meeting is available [here](#).

Chair Moe called the meeting to order at 10:30 a.m.

Chair's Remarks

Last October, Chancellor Malhotra announced his intention to retire on July 31, 2023 after six very successful years leading Minnesota State. Under his leadership our complex system of 26 colleges and seven universities, with its many varied stakeholders, has found common ground and commitment to: close equity gaps across the state, meet students where they are and help them find the resources they need to persevere, make transfer easier, and advocate for their needs at the legislature.

While the chancellor's last day is still a couple months away, I want to acknowledge the chancellor's contributions to Minnesota State and his service to our students and to our state. I also thank you, chancellor, for your commitment to supporting a smooth transition of leadership.

Colleagues, the most important responsibility we have, as the Board of Trustees, is the selection of the chancellor. A wise, effective, visionary, and collaborative leader is a key ingredient for the continued success of our colleges and universities and their ability to serve students and communities across the state of Minnesota. With that responsibility in mind, this board has embarked, with great care and intentionality, on a national search for the next chancellor. Greenwood Asher & Associates, a national search firm, was chosen to assist the process of identifying an outstanding pool of candidates.

The 23-person search advisory committee was co-chaired by our colleague and vice chair of this board, George Soule, and Pam Wheelock, who is well known in the community for her leadership in both the private and public sectors. The committee was comprised of trustees, students, faculty, staff, presidents, members of the chancellor's cabinet, and community leaders. I want to thank Vice Chair Soule, Pam Wheelock and every one of the search advisory committee members for their dedication to this work. The gift of your time and effort will benefit students and the state of Minnesota for years to come. Greenwood Asher spoke with over 290 potential candidates, 33 of which elected to submit application materials. From this pool, the search advisory committee selected nine individuals for initial interviews. Reference and background checks were conducted. As a result of the initial interviews, the top two candidates were invited to stand as finalists. On April 26, trustees interviewed the candidates, as did members of the chancellor's cabinet and many of our college and university presidents. The following day, members of the board of trustees, presidents, faculty, staff, employees, and students took part in forums held here in the system office and broadcast online. Those who took part in the forums were able to hear from the candidates, ask questions, and provide feedback.

The search process was robust, and I am proud of the efforts we took to hear from as many stakeholders as we could. Everyone who took part in the search cared deeply about this process and its outcome. I know I speak for the entire board when I say thank you to everyone who participated in the search, met the candidates, asked their questions, and provided their feedback. This is a critical moment for our colleges and universities. They play a central role in providing the talent businesses and communities across Minnesota need to thrive. And the chancellor is an incredibly important leader of this work. Both candidates engaged us in thoughtful discussions about the challenges our colleges and universities face, as well as the opportunities that are possible in the coming years. I want to thank them for their interest in leading our system and for their willingness to engage in this arduous process. After very careful consideration of the feedback we received from references, the employee forums, the president forums, and trustee and cabinet interviews, I am pleased to recommend the appointment of Dr. Scott Olson as the next Minnesota State chancellor.

Dr. Olson's accomplishments in higher education leadership are most impressive. He has a clear record of leadership at every level of administration and experience in the classroom as a tenure-track member of the faculty as well.

Dr. Olson's accomplishments include having served since 2012 as president of Winona State University, during which time the institution earned a reputation for academic excellence and become known for delivering high rates of student success. The University has appeared in several regional rankings including the "Top 40 institutions in the Midwest" by U.S. News, and the "Best Colleges in the Midwest" by the Princeton Review. He has also been a leader in major strategic initiatives of the Minnesota State system including development of the Centers of Excellence, transfer pathways,

NextGen, and Equity 2030. He is an advocate for both system-level solutions and the need for campus autonomy to meet local needs. Dr. Olson is also known as a strong advocate for advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion. Under his leadership, WSU increased enrollment of students of color by 95% and achieved the highest success rates of students of color among the colleges and universities of Minnesota State. Outcome gaps have been cut almost in half. Other highlights of his tenure at Winona State include the completion of several strategic initiatives including Education Village, a multi-year capital project to provide integrated, flexible, state-of-the-art learning and teaching spaces for student teachers and school professionals; co-hosting the Winona Mini-Session of the Minnesota House of Representatives, and the Leading Energy Savings & Sustainability (LESS) initiative, a \$12 million campus-wide energy savings and sustainability project.

Prior to his appointment to Winona State University, Dr. Olson served as provost and vice president for academic and student affairs at Minnesota State University, Mankato from 2003 to 2012 as well as interim vice chancellor for academic and student affairs for a little over a year at the Minnesota State system office. For close to three decades, he taught in the classroom, ultimately becoming a professor of communications studies at Minnesota State University, Mankato, Ball State University, and Central Connecticut State University. He earned his Ph.D. in Media Studies from Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois. A close inspection of his CV reveals Dr. Olson also has been a student at Hennepin Technical College, and held jobs as a dishwasher, busboy, front desk clerk, and oil rig driller, among other things.

Testimonials from formal references describe a leader whose experiences have prepared him exceedingly well to serve as our next chancellor. They call him strategic, student-centric; committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion, focused on shared governance, empathetic, emotionally intelligent, optimistic, and a great fundraiser. Feedback from our public forums was very positive. Staff said he is experienced, intelligent, charismatic, and has a vision of what needs to be done. Staff's comments included: "Scott is familiar with Minnesota State, is dedicated to student success and meeting them where they are." and "his personable and passionate leadership will allow him to work effectively with legislators, campus leaders and students to lead Minnesota State long into the future."

Faculty weighed in and called him established, experienced and well-liked. Comments from faculty included: "Scott has deep experience in Minnesota State and in Minnesota. He understands the system – technical programs, community colleges, and four-year universities." and "Dr. Olson is a motivator, and a builder of community." The presidents weighed in and called Dr. Olson inspirational, student-centered, and a great advocate with legislators. Direct quotes from the presidents include: "Scott has years of commitment and passion for our state and for our system, proven success as the top executive, and proven successes in projects that span 2 and 4-year institutions." and "He is a gifted relationship builder and has strong legislative ties. He will use his

experience as a university president to make changes that will benefit students and the system as a whole.”

Finally, students noted Dr. Olson is engaging, dynamic, and an educator at heart. Colleagues, Scott Olson is a leader whose career has uniquely prepared him to serve as chancellor of our large and critically important system of colleges and universities. He is a tested leader who has accomplished much in the face of the economic challenges facing higher education today. He has the support from presidents, students, faculty, and staff. Therefore, I am delighted to recommend the appointment of Dr. Scott Olson as the next chancellor of the colleges and universities of Minnesota State.

Therefore, I move that we appoint Dr. Scott Olson as chancellor of Minnesota State Universities and Colleges with the effective date of August 1, 2023. The board authorizes the completion of an employment agreement in accordance with the terms and conditions of the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities Personnel Plan for Administrators.

Chair Moe then called on members of the Board to comment on the proposed appointment. Several trustees expressed thanks to the hiring committee for their hard work and persistence and shared comments regarding the Chancellor Designate.

Appointment of Chancellor

Chair Moe recommended the following motion and Vice Chair Soule seconded.

The Board of Trustees, upon the recommendation of Chair Roger Moe, appoints Dr. Scott Olson as chancellor of Minnesota State Universities and Colleges. The board authorizes the completion of an employment agreement in accordance with the terms and conditions of the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities Personnel Plan for Administrators with the effective date of August 1, 2023.

A roll call vote was conducted. The vote was as follows:

Trustee Ajogun	Absent
Trustee Ayemobuwa	Yes
Trustee Cirillo	Yes
Trustee Cowles	Yes
Trustee Erlandson	Yes
Trustee Grabowska	Yes
Trustee Huebsch	Yes
Trustee Janezich	Yes
Trustee Moe	Yes
Trustee Morillo	Yes
Trustee Nishimura	Yes
Trustee Oballa	Absent

Trustee Sheran	Yes
Trustee Soule	Yes
Trustee Tefer	Yes

The board voted unanimously to approve the recommended motion. Scott Olson was introduced to make remarks.

Chair Moe again expressed his gratitude to EVERYONE for their participation in this search. He further stated that the care and dedication that so many have to this system was very evident.

He then stated that the next meetings of the Board of Trustees are scheduled for May 16-17.

Adjournment

Chair Moe adjourned the meeting at 10:58 a.m.