



Chair Moe, Board of Trustees

Students United is thankful to be invited once again to the Board of Trustees Retreat!

Before we start, I would love to reintroduce myself to you, from the last time we met. My name is Marwah Asif, I am a student at St. Cloud State University, and serve as the Chair of Students United. I would also like to introduce our Vice Chair, Emma Gabbert. We also wanted to highlight our treasurer Kendra Draeger who could not join us today. She is a graduate student at Minnesota State Mankato and received her bachelor's degree from Bemidji State University.

We are excited to be joining you during an exciting week for Students United. Yesterday we kicked off our fall campus visit tours at Metro State University and tomorrow we will be at MSU Moorhead. At Metro State we had the opportunity to meet with administrators, students, faculty and staff to discuss student life and our goals for the year. The visit served as a reminder of the opportunity and importance our universities have in offering students resources for basic needs and the importance of how we implement policies after we have victories at the legislature. Last session, we reached a milestone in our Equity 2030 goal by securing menstrual equity, and now we need to ensure that campuses implement this policy equitably, we need make sure this it is done with sustainability in mind.

During our visit yesterday, we were also able to visit the Food for Thought Pantry, a place for students to pick up shelf-stable groceries and other critical products such as hygiene and menstrual products. They have also partnered with the Kitchen Coalition Program to offer free refrigerated meals that are made by local restaurants in the St. Paul Community. The Food Pantry is the perfect example of how our advocacy makes a difference. Making sure that students never again have to fear where they'll get their next meal. Services and programs like these are critical in helping us implement and reach the Minnesota State Systems goals of Equity 2030.



I consider the mission set forth in Equity 2030 to be not only a goal, but a promise, of our dedication to close the educational equity gaps that have persisted for far too long at our colleges and universities. These gaps, born of race and ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and geographic location, have cast shadows over the futures of countless individuals. But with Equity 2030, we dare to imagine a different future, one where every student in Minnesota has an equal chance to succeed. To reach Equity 2030, we will need to pave the way with innovative and creative solutions, that build capacity at our institutions and fosters environments where all students can thrive.

Our students face challenges that extend far beyond the classroom walls. The disparities we aim to rectify are not isolated; they are interconnected threads in the fabric of society. Jobs, housing, healthcare, mental health services, childcare and food security are interwoven aspects of the same tapestry. We know that when a student's needs are being met, they gain the space to further dedicate themselves to their education and their likelihood of graduation skyrockets. At Metro State, in addition to the importance of their food pantry, we also heard about the importance of childcare access for student parents, the need for virtual and in-person mental health and counseling services, and expanded support for our international students. To truly succeed in our mission, we must break down silos, recognizing that equity extends beyond education.

Again, I want to thank Chair Moe and the Board for extending the invitation to this retreat and continuing our strong relationship. In that spirit, I hope we can be partners together as the board and system sets its budget requests to the legislature, so we can show a strong united front in securing those investments. I also look forward to updating you after the Students United board sets our priorities and outcomes for the year. Through our collaboration and partnership, we can meet students where they are, strive for their success and then and only then will Minnesota become what it is destined to be. The higher education capitol of the United States.