

Colleagues:

I want to share a message I recently sent to our legislative team for NE Minnesota:

Dear Senators Rarick, McEwen, Farnsworth, Hauschild, and Representatives Lislegard, Dotseth, Olson, Nelson, Skraba, and Igo:

Thank you again for the work you do in service to the state of Minnesota. I am very aware of how challenging your work can be in **finding the balance** of voices, competing projects, different state-wide needs, and the ongoing planning for the future. Thank you for your strong voice in governing our state.

As an educator, College President, and Minnesota citizen; I am of course most closely focused on the needs of public higher education. Post-secondary education, from small stackable industry credentials to degrees, is the sure way to be **lifted up and out of poverty**. Our public higher education institutions provide that opportunity and yet have been increasingly underfunded over the years. A person can no longer “work their way through school” without holding several jobs. And even then, most students must go into debt to pay for their tuition and living needs.

The *assumption* is that higher education is simply charging too much. However, costs in terms of salaries and operating have not (relatively) really changed much over the years. What has changed is a decrease in state funding to help defray the cost of education. Costs for salaries are negotiated at the state level, tuition is set at the state level, and even our state allocation budget is set at the state level. **We have no real control over revenue**. Simply increasing enrollment does not solve the problem: at some point we must hire more faculty and staff as the student population increases. With a shrinking state allocation, this is a constant downward spiral for public higher education.

I applaud both the House and Senate higher education bills that help campuses like Lake Superior College prepare students to learn skills needed to **boost our economy**, replenish the workforce, and **improve the lives** of Minnesota’s citizens. And yet, there is more work to do to ensure that we can provide an education for all who seek to better themselves.

Spending taxpayer money on education has a true **multiplier effect**: investing in our citizens is a true investment in our workforce and our economic health. I believe we are **thrifty stewards** of these monies and hope you agree. Your support for fully funding Minnesota State’s request for higher education and capital investment is much appreciated. And please, we are always happy to host you on campus to see for yourselves what your support means to students (Thanks, Representative Dotseth, for your recent visit).

Again, thank you all for your **thoughtful representation** of student families, college employees, employers who hire our graduates, and especially the students themselves.

With gratitude,

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Pronouns: She, Her, Hers -- [More about pronouns](#)