

Minnesota State Students Take on the State Capitol

Students from across the state organized in St. Paul to lobby on important issues that include tuition relief, student voter registration, food & housing insecurity and more

February 26, 2020 – On Monday, February 24, students from all seven Minnesota State universities joined Students United in St. Paul to meet with state legislators on key issues.

Students from each university met with every Minnesota Senate and House representative from their respective districts. Additionally, the Students United Board (made up of all seven state university student body presidents) met with the Senate and House Higher Education Finance and Policy chairs, Sen. Paul Anderson (44, R) and Rep. Connie Bernardy (41A, D) and ranking members, Sen. Greg Clausen (57, D) and Rep. Bud Nornes (8A, R).

“It is important for students to meet with legislators because they need to hear the different stories that students face every day,” said Vice Chair and SMSU student, Sandra Shimba. “There is power in numbers and I believe there was power at the state Capitol on Monday.”

Students discussed the following priorities:

1. **2020 Capital Request**

Students United supports Minnesota State’s request for \$271.2 million in funding for capital improvement projects through state bonding. The \$230.8 million would be paid by the state of Minnesota. The remaining \$40.4 million would come from the colleges and universities within the MinnState system. The funds will be used to repair and renovate existing facilities across the 37 MinnState colleges and universities.

2. **Textbook Affordability**

Students United requests that the legislature build upon the textbook affordability legislation that was passed at the state capitol last session by appropriating additional funds for the development of OER programs.

3. **Technology Modernization**

Students United requests that the state legislature invest additional funds into the NextGen technology modernization program for all MinnState campuses. This upgrade will improve the experiences of faculty and students across the MinnState system.

4. **Food and Housing Insecurity**

Students United is requesting that the state legislature invest in programs that help to assure all students have access to food and housing.

5. **Student Voter Registration**

Students United believes that the state legislature should invest in programs that help register university students. The organization asks that the legislature support the ongoing work of the students, faculty, and administrators.

Prior to meeting with their representatives, students participated in a two-day Advocacy Conference at St. Paul College – a training for students who are interested in organizing, civic engagement, and/or advocacy of any kind. Students were provided with tangible tools and practical tips on how to leverage their power and resources as students and also as active members of society after college. The event included over a dozen different speakers ranging from experts in federal higher education based out of Washington D.C., to individuals who have years of expertise working for and advocating within our own Minnesota State system.

Next, the Students United Board of Directors will head to Washington, D.C. March 8-12 to lobby to the federal legislature. Details on the organizations federal legislative agenda can be found [here](#).

Our mission: Led by Minnesota State University Students, we are the inclusive voice for all future, current, and former students. We actively work to represent and support Minnesota State university students and advocate at a campus, state, and federal level for higher education policies that make a positive impact for our students and communities.