

# Pandemic Platform

## Short-Term System

1. A strong condemnation of, and accountability for, xenophobia and bigotry in response to this pandemic.
2. An honor system for class absences should be employed that ensures no student is required to provide a doctor's note or other documentation if they need to miss class to care for their health or the health of others.
3. On-campus housing should remain open throughout the duration of the pandemic and the CDC guidelines should be employed to ensure sanitation and safety.
4. If on-campus housing has extra space available, students experiencing homelessness should be allowed to apply to live there at no extra charge.
5. On-campus basic needs services such as food pantries, dining centers, free transportation services, etc., should be rearranged to ensure at-risk students still receive necessary goods and services, regardless of previous enrollment in these plans, while preserving the health and wellbeing of all.
6. If work-study jobs cannot be moved to tele-work, remaining work-study funds should be distributed to students' accounts.
7. If on-campus jobs cannot be moved to tele-work, all employees (including student employees) should receive paid leave for the remainder of their employment terms.
8. Students on institution-sponsored health insurance should continue to receive regular coverage throughout the duration of the pandemic.
9. Students should receive leniency, including a pause on academic probation and no restrictions on enrollment throughout the duration of the pandemic, in relation to tuition and fee payments.
10. Students should be allowed to drop a class without receiving a W on their transcript.
11. Students should not be charged for housing that has been closed or for meals that they have not been able to access during the Covid-19 campus closures.
12. Support alternatives/reschedules to commencements/graduations to ensure students and their loved ones have an opportunity to celebrate their hard work.

## State

1. A strong condemnation of, and accountability for, xenophobia and bigotry in response to this pandemic.
2. Ensure all state financial aid disbursements for Spring 2020 and Summer 2020 are final and do not require payback, regardless of enrollment or credit status.
3. Employ a moratorium on all utility shut offs and evictions.

4. Provide emergency funding to the public colleges and universities to meet the enormous health and economic needs, including the funds necessary to meet our system agenda.
5. Grants should be made available for all students who have lost work due to pandemic related causes in order to allow them to continue their education.
6. Have a special enrollment period for MNSure to ensure anyone who lost health coverage, or does not have coverage, can get it.

## **Federal**

1. A strong condemnation of, and accountability for, xenophobia and bigotry in response to this pandemic.
2. Provide emergency funding to the public colleges and universities to meet the enormous health and economic needs, including the funds necessary to meet our system agenda.
3. Allow for direct emergency funds to cover students' basic needs.
4. Expand Pell Grant eligibility for all students in order ensure that they do not reach their lifetime limit before completing their program as a result of Covid-19. Pell Grant eligibility should be extended by one semester for all students due to the disruptive nature that COVID-19 has had on all university students.
5. Ensure no penalty to student's Satisfactory Academic Progress status. Covid-19 will undoubtedly create disruption to instruction time and quality over the next few months. Congress should allow for flexibility in student's ability to access Title IV if they are below the satisfactory academic progress requirements.
6. Allow for the continuation of the student loan interest rate reduction to 0% until a full economic recovery has occurred.
7. Ensure immigrants can use public benefits and bail outs without being deemed a "public charge" or otherwise impact their immigration status.
8. Allow all student loan borrowers to go into automatic deferment if they miss a payment during the Covid-19 outbreak without a financial penalty regardless of whether the loan is subsidized or unsubsidized.
9. Ensure all federal financial aid disbursements for Spring 2020 and Summer 2020 are final and do not require payback, regardless of enrollment or credit status.

## **Long-Term**

### **System**

1. Ensure mental healthcare access for students whose homes are outside of Minnesota.
2. Provide faculty and staff with a list of authorized digital platforms that have been vetted for security and data privacy.
3. Waive online course differential fees for classes moved to digital learning and provide online course differential fee refunds for classes moved online.

4. Ensure international and domestic students are treated as equally as legally possible in all COVID-19 response measures.
5. Encourage COVID-19 testing on and near campus.
6. All students should be able to request virtual instruction and services no questions asked.
7. All institutions should fully and adequately consult with student leaders to have a predetermined emergency shutdown plan should the Fall or Spring semester require an emergency shutdown. All campus community members should be aware of this plan as early into the academic year as possible.
8. If a student wishes to attend an in-person class, priority will be kept on student and faculty well-being. Students, staff, and faculty should freely (without fear of reprisal and no questions asked) be able to request extra equipment such as face shields, masks, gloves, etc.
9. A system-wide procedure should be developed to allow faculty to request approval to switch to virtual instruction if appropriate and necessary for public health.
10. Universities hold the responsibility of ensuring safety requirements are enforced upon their campuses and need to be proactive in establishing an aggressive response to students that are violating safety protocols. Universities should develop a tiered system, specific to their university, of reprimand for the campus' code of conduct offices to follow for repeat non-compliance.
11. A vaccine-or-attestation process should be required for students (who are medically able) and there should be fair and equitable access to vaccines.
12. Ensure international and domestic students are treated as equally as legally possible in all COVID-19 response measures.
13. Maintain system and campus mask usages for in-person classes and large gatherings sanctioned by the institution.
14. Minnesota State should help make the vaccine accessible and encouraged prior to, and at the commencement of, the 2021-2022 academic year, including providing vaccine opportunities during orientation, throughout the semester during events/activities, and more.

## *State*

1. Additional emergency grants should be extended, or new grants should be created for college and university students.
2. Provide long term funding for public college and university students' basic needs.
3. Institute a freeze on rent, mortgage, and utilities collections.
4. Provide long-term funding for public college and university students' basic needs.

## *Federal*

1. Allow for the continuation of the student loan interest rate reduction from 0%-1% on all current and future student loans.

2. Allow all student loan borrowers to go into automatic deferment if they miss a payment without a financial penalty.
3. End the public charge rule.
4. Institute a freeze on rent, mortgage, and utilities collections.
5. Provide “nonresident alien” students with temporary work authorization.

## Previous Stances

*These stances were either moved to the Students United Platform, successfully advocated for and no longer relevant, or the board changed their stance.*

### Short-Term: System

- International students with on-campus jobs should receive the same treatment as other on-campus student employees, barring any federal restrictions or risks to the student.
- International student services on-campus should remain available virtually to ensure F-1 and J-1 students receive the guidance they need in these complicated times.
- Emergency grants and aid should be made available indefinitely.
- Students in need of equipment, technology, and/or internet/broadband access in order to complete their instruction should have that cost subsidized or those items provided.
- Students should have access to free COVID-19 vaccinations and both doses (if applicable) should be offered in the same semester. Vaccines should not be required for students but there should be fair and equitable access to them should they want one. Safety should be prioritized over returning to in-person learning. Efforts should be made to offer vaccinations to high risk, nontraditional, and essential worker students first. All other students should be prioritized based on state guidance.

### Short-Term: Federal

- Expanding eligibility to public benefits, including unemployment, SNAP, housing, etc., to all.

### Long-Term: System

- An honor system for class absences should be employed that ensures no student is required to provide a doctor’s note or other documentation if they need to miss class to care for their health or the health of others.
- A system that does not penalize students for dropping classes should be enacted.
- Fully fund basic needs programs—including food pantries —across institutions to serve students.
- Ensure institution-sponsored health insurance provides coverage out-of-state, tele-health coverage, emergency response hotlines, and a guarantee of coverage in emergency situations, including if the institution shuts down or a student must drop out.
- Students who drop a class during the pandemic should be able to retake it later for free.
- Maintain system and campus mask mandates for in-person classes and large gatherings sanctioned by the institution.

- Ensure international and domestic students are treated as equally as legally possible in all COVID-19 response measures.

### *Long-Term: Federal*

- Allow for the continuation of the extension of Pell Grant eligibility by one semester for all students.
- Provide long term funding for public college and university students' basic needs.
- Provide financial aid to states that are providing health insurance to unemployed individuals and families.
- Ensure xenophobia does not inform COVID-19 safety measures, including travel restrictions.