



ALUMNI
ASSOCIATION

A photograph of the Minnesota State Capitol building, a grand neoclassical structure with a large dome, set against a clear blue sky. The building is surrounded by green lawns and trees with autumn foliage.

2025 Regent Candidate Guide

Learn about the candidates recommended by the Regent Candidate Advisory Council for the University of Minnesota Board of Regents. The University of Minnesota Alumni Association does not endorse or lobby for or against candidates for Regent.

Regent Candidate Forum
February 4, 2025

6 - 7:30 p.m.

Minnesota State Capitol, Room G-15

UMNalumni.org/RegentForum



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ASSOCIATION

Greetings from the University of Minnesota Alumni Association (UMAA)!

The UMAA is proud to continue its tradition of informing alumni, Minnesotans, and elected officials about the University of Minnesota Regent Election. Outstanding Regent leadership ensures a strong future for the University, and your support is necessary.

This guide provides information about the Regent Candidate Advisory Council (RCAC)-recommended candidates, supplied by the candidates themselves. The Alumni Association thanks each of the candidates for stepping forward to serve. If elected, they will be responsible for ensuring the University remains a world-class educational institution.

The Alumni Association would also like to thank the RCAC members and staff for their important work. RCAC is the citizen advisory body created by the Minnesota Legislature. It assists in recruiting, interviewing, and recommending Regent candidates to the Legislature.

It's important to note that the UMAA does not endorse Regent candidates. There are more than 633,000 U of M systemwide alumni globally, with alumni living in every Minnesota county. They have a vested interest in ensuring that the Board of Regents is composed of highly qualified, mission-driven leaders. Leaders who are committed to the long-term success of the University. **Therefore, the UMAA only endorses an open, fair, and transparent Regent Election process, where candidates are among a strong and diverse pool.**

The University of Minnesota is a statewide economic engine. It produces a highly skilled workforce, serves the public in various ways, and conducts world-class, life-changing research. The Alumni Association thanks you for your support of this Minnesota treasure.

Warm regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tony Wagner'.

Tony Wagner (B.S. '96)
Alumni Association Board Chair
Life Member

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lisa R. Lewis'.

Lisa R. Lewis
Alumni Association CEO and President
Life Member

TABLE OF CONTENTS

At-Large Candidates (2 Seats)

Jamal Adam 4
Jeffrey Ettinger. 6
John Gibbs 8
Josh Lease. 10
Scott Nagel 12
Ann Sheldon. 14
Dan Wolter 16

Fifth Congressional District Candidates

Robert Albright 18
Benjamin Kaplan 20
Ellen Luger 22

Student At-Large Candidates

Kowsar Mohamed 24
Madeline Rowe. 26
Flora Yang 28
Dylan Young 29



AT-LARGE CANDIDATE

JAMAL ADAM

MAPLE GROVE, MN

Dr. Jamal Adam’s career in educational leadership is marked by his commitment to addressing barriers faced by underserved college students. Starting his academic journey as a nontraditional refugee student, he quickly identified institutional challenges faced by college students. His strategic vision and innovative solutions have significantly advanced educational accessibility and success for diverse student populations.

As the Executive Director of 826 MSP, Dr. Adam has led initiatives to bolster creative and academic opportunities for K-12 students, enhancing their ability to think creatively, write effectively, and succeed academically. His leadership extended to academic roles, including academic dean, instructor, and counselor across various colleges and universities in Greater Minnesota and the Metro Area, where he developed innovative educational programs and support systems for first-generation students. Dr. Adam’s comprehensive understanding of student needs across the state is further enriched by his past roles at the University of Minnesota campuses in both the Twin Cities and Duluth. His experiences in these diverse educational settings have equipped him with a nuanced perspective on the challenges and opportunities in both urban and rural educational landscapes, allowing him to effectively address the varied needs of Minnesota’s student populations.

Dr. Adam’s commitment is recognized by a Bush Fellowship, acknowledging his impactful contributions to educational policy and practice. His candidacy for the University of Minnesota Board of Regents is driven by a vision to integrate comprehensive support systems that address critical issues like student finances, mental health, and public trust – fostering an inclusive and innovative educational environment.

RCAC Application Essay #3: How would you address the topics of student finances; campus safety; diversity, equity, and inclusion; and up to three additional important topics currently confronting the University of Minnesota?

Student Finances: The University must advocate for greater legislative support and align investments with initiatives that reduce costs for students. Proactively offering tailored financial aid through predictive analytics—analyzing spending patterns, academic performance, and employment status—can prevent financial hardships. Coupled with financial literacy programs on budgeting, loan management, and scholarships, these measures empower students to manage their finances effectively and enhance their chances of academic and career success.

Campus Safety: Campus safety is inherently connected to broader community safety and requires collaborative efforts between campus safety teams and public safety institutions. The University must adopt a data-driven approach

JAMAL ADAM (CONTINUED)

to analyze crime trends, identify high-risk areas, and allocate resources effectively. Empowering students to report concerns and fostering open communication builds trust among students and their families, reinforcing a safe and conducive learning environment. That said, campus safety cannot be addressed in isolation from the concerns of the communities surrounding the University. The University must also embrace its role as a public safety leader by actively partnering with local communities to develop initiatives that address the root causes of rising crime and promote a safer environment for all.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion: These efforts should focus on creating initiatives that foster a sense of belonging for all students, including first-generation, transfer, rural, and disabled students, as well as historically underserved students of color. This begins with bridging the gap between academic and student affairs to provide integrated, holistic support systems that anticipate and address student needs in a timely manner. Such systems promote educational equity and success by meeting students where they are and tailoring programs to their unique circumstances.

Mental Health Challenges: This topic requires a proactive, multifaceted approach that reduces stigma, promotes holistic wellness, and intervenes before issues reach crisis levels. As a former college counselor, I understand the complexities of student mental health and advocate for integrating physical wellness initiatives, awareness campaigns, and collaboration between academic, student services, administration, and other stakeholders. While increasing counseling services is vital, these efforts must be part of a broader strategy that includes outreach and wellness programming to foster resilience and ensure easy access to mental health counseling.

Declining Public Trust in Higher Education: This topic poses an existential challenge to higher education institutions. The University must better engage the public to highlight its contributions as a driver of economic innovation and civic progress. For example, serving as a judge for the U of M 3-Minute Thesis competition recently, I witnessed the inspiring research undertaken by brilliant students addressing complex and seemingly intractable issues such as climate change, cancer cures, and preventative medicine—work that deserves greater visibility. The event deserved coverage by both traditional and digital media platforms. By expanding public engagement through diverse media channels, compelling storytelling, and targeted outreach, the University can inspire Minnesotans to take pride in their institution. This approach would also demonstrate to taxpayers that their investment in the University is not only well-utilized but yields significant returns that benefit the entire state and humanity at large.

Reach All Minnesotans: Restoring public trust also means extending the University's reach to all Minnesotans. This includes supporting first-generation and nontraditional students through robust transfer pathways and career development programs while enhancing extension services. By embracing its role as a public service leader without compromising its focus on teaching and research, the University can demonstrate its value and strengthen its connection to the people it serves. Communicating this vision through modern and accessible platforms will solidify the University's standing as a cornerstone of innovation, education, and public trust.



AT-LARGE CANDIDATE

JEFFREY ETTINGER

AUSTIN, MN

Jeff Ettinger is a 35-year resident of greater Minnesota. His wife, all four kids, and both sons-in-law are graduates of the University of Minnesota. He served as the CEO of Hormel Foods from 2005 to 2016, where he managed a \$9 billion annual budget and over 20,000 team members. Following his retirement from the company, he served on multiple boards, including as chair of the Hormel Foundation and as lead director for Ecolab.

Ettinger has also been an executive fellow with the Carlson School since 2017, helping to create and co-teach an Agribusiness course, being a regular guest lecturer in Professor Mark Bergen's Marketing and Pricing course, and co-teaching a course this spring on "Engaging with Boards" with former Carlson Dean Sri Zaheer.

Ettinger served as Interim President of the University of Minnesota from June 2023 to July 1, 2024, where he had the privilege of working with hundreds of dedicated University faculty, students, administrators, alumni, and donors. He particularly enjoyed his experience leading the full U of M system, including specific visits and projects with the Crookston, Duluth, Morris, and Rochester campuses. He believes his "crash course" about the breadth and depth of the University of Minnesota world, coupled with his extensive previous experience in strategic leadership, financial management of large and complex budgets, and service on public, private, and nonprofit boards, makes him a compelling candidate to serve as an at-large member of the Board of Regents.

RCAC Application Essay #3: How would you address the topics of student finances; campus safety; diversity, equity, and inclusion; and up to three additional important topics currently confronting the University of Minnesota?

Student Finance: The University should continue to support programs that provide opportunities for students from all income brackets to benefit from its top-notch education. Cost should not be a barrier to attendance. Some students and families have expressed concerns about the current cost of attendance, and these concerns warrant further attention. It is useful to analyze the pricing of each University of Minnesota system campus in relation to its relevant competitive set. The University should also remain vigilant to ensure that the amount of student loans needed to graduate is not unduly burdensome given a student's future income prospects.

JEFFREY ETTINGER (CONTINUED)

Campus Safety: While serving as Interim President, I worked closely with the University law enforcement team and interested community members to augment the University's presence in important areas near the Minneapolis campus, such as Dinkytown and Stadium Village. We also improved on-campus security technology across all five campuses. This was one of my four priority areas from the Board of Regents and would continue to be a priority as a member of the Board of Regents.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion: I have been a lifelong proponent of diversity and inclusion. I believe companies, communities, and educational institutions such as the University of Minnesota benefit from the inclusion of people from all backgrounds and the varied perspectives they bring. It is particularly important at this time in our state's history that the University plays a major role in preparing our future workforce, which will be diverse given demographic trends. The University should also be at the forefront of supporting diversity of thought and ideas, and I was able to support this philosophy on multiple occasions during my time as Interim President.

Financial Sustainability: The world of higher education is confronting difficult times in finding the right balance between costs and funding while remaining affordable for students. The University is no stranger to this challenge. I have 25 years of experience working with multi-billion dollar budgets and balance sheets in the corporate world, the nonprofit sector, and at the University last year. I believe this background could be helpful to the University as a member of the Board of Regents.

The Five-Campus U of M System: I have lived in Greater Minnesota (primarily in Austin, though also in the Willmar area) for 35 years, and I believe strongly that the U of M needs to be more than the flagship Twin Cities campus. The University of Minnesota's unique offerings and approaches in Crookston, Duluth, Morris, and Rochester provide important alternatives to students and faculty. I believe the Board of Regents should continue to support the administration's efforts to run the total system efficiently while bolstering the unique nature of each campus.



AT-LARGE CANDIDATE

JOHN GIBBS

BLOOMINGTON, MN

Business and Law: John recently retired as Senior Vice President of Comcast NBCUniversal, where he ran a large, external-facing department and architect of the company's 50-state government affairs effort. He is a recipient of the industry's signature Cable Pioneer Award for his leadership in communications law and policy, as well as the development of affordable broadband and digital literacy programs for traditionally underserved communities. Prior, John spent a decade as

partner at the Robins, Kaplan, Miller & Ciresi law firm in Minneapolis and was Vice President and in-house counsel at Continental Cablevision in Los Angeles.

Government: Gibbs has been an elected member of the Three Rivers Park District Board of Commissioners since 2011 and currently serves as Chair. Before this role, he served as President of the Hennepin County Library Board, where he was instrumental in the successful merger of the Minneapolis Public and Hennepin County library systems, creating one of the nation's premier public library systems.

Nonprofit Organizations: John has served on several Minnesota nonprofits, including leadership roles at the Ordway Center for the Performing Arts and Artistry MN. An active bagpiper and musician, he has also served on the boards of various performing ensembles.

University of Minnesota: A graduate of the University of Minnesota, John met his wife in the Marching Band and is part of a five-generation Gopher family. His great-grandmother operated student housing, his grandfather was on the music faculty, his uncle chaired the Psychology Department and served as Dean of Students, and both of his parents are University graduates. One of his sons is also a U graduate, and another son is a current student.

RCAC Application Essay #3: How would you address the topics of student finances; campus safety; diversity, equity, and inclusion; and up to three additional important topics currently confronting the University of Minnesota?

Magical Community: The minute I stepped onto campus as a freshman, I joined a community – but not just a community, I joined the world. I became part of something big. Nothing had prepared me for the magic of being one young soul among many, surrounded by an abundance of ideas, activities, and opportunities. There should be no barriers to accessing that magic.

Student Finances: World-class higher education is expensive—very expensive. Yet it must be affordable for students. The days of \$333-per-quarter tuition from my freshman year are gone. But the goal that a qualified student can work, borrow only modest sums and still afford the University of Minnesota is absolutely attainable. Through partnerships with

JOHN GIBBS (CONTINUED)

Minnesota companies, national employers, NGO's, foundations and alumni we can mitigate the student tuition impact so that the magic is never denied due to money.

Campus Safety: Partnerships, technology, education, law enforcement, mental health resources all play a role. Each is a large topic, and will take resources. Those resources must come from both the University and beyond – public and private. Beyond that, each one of us can lead by example to foster respect.

Diversity: Without diversity, there is no magic. When I stepped on campus in 1975 a door was opened that allowed me to meet the Dalai Lama, hear Jerry Brown, experience the Socialist Workers pamphleteers, Gus Hall, Libertarians and so many more. I had things to consider that made my head spin! When I met fellow students from the Middle East, Asia and Africa it was truly exhilarating. When fellow marching band members told of their home life on the farm in Wheaton, in the mines near Eveleth, the small towns like New Richmond I was mesmerized. Without diversity there is no magic.

Equity: We must live it, not just talk it, as an institution. A governing board must set the tone and be ever vigilant.

Inclusion: These are table stakes for our governance. All must be welcome here, and not just as a trite expression or out of politeness. Welcomed in order to thrive.

Academic Health and Partnerships: As a significant portion of the budget and a high-profile program, academic health serves as the foundation for the physical, mental, and economic well-being of our population and region. This must be a top priority for the University. Recent appointments to the Board of Regents, along with the University's leadership team, position us well to address these challenges. I aim to bring my experience as a lawyer, negotiator, and businessperson to the table to help galvanize, leverage, and execute on their guidance.

Cornerstone of Regional Competitiveness: We are in competition with fast, strong, creative, and motivated regions and universities. Our geographic location, natural resources, built environment and cultural diversity are real time advantages. This region wins the competition if the University of Minnesota is the Northern Star that it can be – building on our land-grant foundations and traditions with renewed energy and focus, inspiring young minds, incubating young inventors and companies, discovering new theories, deploying solutions, partnering with employers. The University will only be that Northern Star if – in turn – the Twin Cities, the state, and business community champion the University. My years in business, legislative and policy advocacy, public service, and the nonprofit community position me to help bring those together.

Reputation and Recognition: The University's quality, tradition, and potential are unmatched. It is fair to ask whether it is adequately recognized. In this fast evolving influencer-driven world there is great opportunity if we "Proclaim It Near and Far." Let's do it.



AT-LARGE CANDIDATE

JOSH LEASE

MONTICELLO, MN

Joshua Lease is a native of Duluth, MN, and grew up on the University of Minnesota-Duluth campus as the son of Professor M. Harry Lease, Jr., who served as a faculty member, dean, and interim provost at UMD. Josh went on to earn his bachelor's in history and political science at St. Cloud State before spending two years in graduate school at the Humphrey Institute.

Mr. Lease then moved to Washington, D.C., where he spent six years working as a budget analyst and legislative liaison for the Pentagon, serving in several roles, primarily within the Army Budget Office, including a fellowship with the Senate Budget Committee. In 2004, he returned to Minnesota as a student at the University of Minnesota Law School, passing the bar in 2007 before going on to work as a political consultant and fundraiser for multiple campaigns in Minnesota and Wisconsin. In 2015, he returned to St. Cloud State, where he works today as Director of Development - Annual Giving. He also played a key role in the successful \$39.5M comprehensive campaign completed in 2022, St. Cloud State's first comprehensive campaign in nearly 20 years.

Representing the Administrative and Service Faculty in Minnesota State, Mr. Lease worked with system leaders, legislators, and retirement specialists to resolve an ongoing conflict regarding retirement plans. He has also worked to promote public higher education across Minnesota. He believes strongly in the importance of accessible and strong public higher education institutions throughout the state and the returns on investment they bring intellectually, culturally, and financially to the state, with the University of Minnesota being a critical component in that success.

RCAC Application Essay #3: How would you address the topics of student finances; campus safety; diversity, equity, and inclusion; and up to three additional important topics currently confronting the University of Minnesota?

Student Finances: Part of what needs to happen regarding student finances is ensuring that the U of M is adequately funded by the state. Too often, we have sat back and presume that the legislature and/or the governor will fund public higher education as it should be, and we need to be aggressive advocates for the outstanding value the University provides to students and the state. That makes it much easier to hold the line on rising costs and tuition, while still ensuring that we have the staff and facilities to provide the education we're known for. The University also needs to be serious about looking at the total cost of attendance as the most important metric to ensure that students are able to stay in school, not just sticker prices for tuition. Ensuring that philanthropic dollars raised also go towards keeping costs down for students needs to be a priority.

JOSH LEASE (CONTINUED)

Campus Safety: Campus safety will always be an issue, especially for an urban campus like the Twin Cities. Students need to have safety education be part of their orientation process and it needs to be reviewed and updated consistently. Encouraging students to live on campus helps as well, concentrating a community that can help look out for each other. Investments in technology (improved safety apps) and investing in lighting, safe walk programs, and paying attention to the parking environments help ensure our campuses stay safe.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion: Diversity, equity, and inclusion make our campuses stronger. Programs to support DEI create opportunities for those who have been excluded or disadvantaged and develop understanding between people. Part of what we need to keep doing with DEI is reminding people that it's not a zero-sum game. Supporting diversity, equity, and inclusion doesn't mean taking anything away from one to support another, and that the rising tide will lift all boats. A fairer, more equitable, more inclusive university is a more successful one for all students, creating environments with less fear and more opportunities to learn and grow. Leadership at the University needs to be clear and direct about their support for DEI within the system and why it matters for the best interests of the entire University, including recruitment and retention at all campuses in the state. An equitable and inclusive campus is one that can be successful at closing achievement gaps without ever lowering standards.

Reputation and Value in a College Degree: The University of Minnesota is a strong institution with a great history and reputation. It is also a system, and has to consider all of its campuses going forward. The Twin Cities campus may be the heart of the University, but Crookston, Duluth, Morris, and Rochester are schools that matter greatly to the state as well and need to be supported. The University faces the same challenge that is rampant throughout higher education – where too many people no longer see the value in a college degree or the impact public higher education has on a community. As an institution with high standing in Minnesota, it has a duty to take up that banner and show everyone how much a college degree still matters and how transformative college educations are. My father taught for 37 years at the University of Minnesota Duluth. I'm a proud alum as well, so I know as well as anyone how important the University is. But an increasing number of people in the public don't have that background and information, and we can't sit back and believe that good work is enough. We need to do more to tell our story to all parts of the state, the region, and even the world. The Regents should be deployed to help do so.



AT-LARGE CANDIDATE

SCOTT NAGEL

MAPLE GROVE, MN

Scott earned a Bachelor of Science in Agricultural and Applied Economics from the University of Minnesota in 1988. His time at the University provided a strong foundation for his career, and he has remained deeply connected to its mission. In addition, Scott enhanced his leadership capabilities through the CEO-Led Executive Development Program at Harvard Business School.

Rural Connection and Advocacy: Growing up on a farm in southern Minnesota, Scott cultivated a lifelong bond with rural communities and their unique challenges and opportunities. He has maintained personal and professional ties to rural Minnesota, primarily through his work with Archer Daniels Midland (ADM). As a Regent, Scott would serve as a vital advocate for the University's Greater Minnesota campuses, ensuring that rural community needs are prioritized.

Professional Experience: Scott's 35-year career at ADM equipped him with extensive expertise in risk management, trading, logistics, and financing. His responsibilities included managing significant grain and fertilizer elevator assets, requiring strategic vision and operational excellence. This experience positions him to contribute meaningfully to the University's governance, particularly in areas like financial oversight, operational efficiency, and resource management.

Board and Governance Experience: Scott has served on numerous for-profit and nonprofit boards throughout his career, giving him a comprehensive understanding of governance principles. He brings a nuanced approach to balancing strategic oversight with respect for operational boundaries, enabling effective collaboration with University leadership.

RCAC Application Essay #3: How would you address the topics of student finances; campus safety; diversity, equity, and inclusion; and up to three additional important topics currently confronting the University of Minnesota?

Student Finances: College affordability is a major issue for students and families. The cost of higher education has risen significantly over the past few decades. The University is often seen as a more expensive option for students as they look to neighboring states to continue their post-secondary education. As we look at making college more affordable for students at the U of M, one needs to address both the revenue and expense sides.

The Minnesota Legislature plays a key role in the funding of the University. Over the past 30 years, funding has decreased significantly. As Minnesota's only Land Grant and prestigious research institution, more funding is needed to help offset the cost of education.

SCOTT NAGEL (CONTINUED)

It is also the University's responsibility to ensure that the money received from the Minnesota Legislature and student tuition is directed towards educational opportunities and experiences for all students. Oftentimes, overhead or administrative costs can become a burden that requires annual review. My skill set prepares me to review, analyze, and make recommendations on how funds are most economically utilized.

I value fiscal responsibility. There is a need to scrutinize expenses and ensure that every dollar is going to a cause that is necessary. When making budget decisions, I use both practical common sense and look to the numbers to factually drive decisions. I've made careful, thoughtful decisions in both the for-profit and nonprofit sectors that have benefited the organization's mission. At the University, I believe every dollar should go towards enhancing the educational experience for the students.

Campus Safety: Campus safety is a critical aspect of the student experience at the University and a serious consideration when making the decision to enroll. We need to ensure that students, faculty, and staff can study, work, and interact in an environment where they feel secure and protected. I support the current system of uniformed officers on campus and the support of escort services when requested. With a campus in a downtown metro area, there will always be concerns about safety, and it is the responsibility of the University and Board of Regents to provide all possible measures to ensure a safe environment for our students.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion: The demographics of the state of Minnesota are changing, and we as the University need to change along with our population. Today's workplace also values and supports diversity in ways it didn't in the past. We need to provide our diverse student body with opportunities to explore and learn about fields where they are underserved. Mentorship programs and freshman orientation outreach are key strategies to attract diverse candidates where they are underrepresented. In addition, hiring professors and teaching assistants with diverse backgrounds will become role models for students and bring new perspectives and ideas that will enhance the educational experience for all students. Providing scholarships is another way to encourage diverse students into fields that are underrepresented.

Land Grant University: While the role of agriculture has changed over time, the legacy of the Land Grant institution continues through sustainable agriculture and food security. The University has a mission to connect the research and educational expertise of land-grant universities with local communities. The University's research has resulted in many advancements that have benefited all aspects of society, the state of Minnesota, and the economy in general. I would be a strong advocate as a Regent in this mission of the University.

College Athletics: My concern is that, under this current system, the University of Minnesota will struggle to remain competitive. I would be an advocate nationally for some form of reform or compensation cap on NIL funding to student-athletes that equalizes all universities. College education is the most important function of the University; however, its athletic program will have an impact on student enrollment and the overall student experience.



AT-LARGE CANDIDATE

ANN SHELDON

LINO LAKES, MN

Ann Sheldon is a first-generation college graduate with a Bachelor of Mechanical Engineering from the University of Minnesota. As one of the few women in engineering during her time, she experienced the transformative power of a strong support system, shaping her into a lifelong advocate for students. While at the University, she built lasting relationships, including meeting her husband, and formed a network of friends that continues to sustain her.

With over 35 years of professional experience, Ann spent 28 years at Medtronic, where she progressed from engineer to executive. Her career focused on continuous learning, developing talent, driving innovation, and navigating complex challenges—all while leading high-performing teams and fostering collaboration.

Ann's board service includes roles with Achieve Services, Emma Norton Services, and her church council. She dedicated eight years to the University of Minnesota Alumni Association (UMAA) Board of Directors, serving as Board Chair and leading key committees such as the nominating, executive, and finance committees. Most recently, Ann contributed to the University's 18th Presidential Search Advisory Committee. Listening to students, faculty, and staff across campuses inspired her to pursue a role as Regent.

Ann is passionate about the University's far-reaching impact across Minnesota as a land-grant institution and is committed to advancing student success, academic excellence, and outstanding research capabilities.

She and her husband have lived in Lino Lakes for 27 years and are proud parents of two adult children: Emma, a doctor of pharmacy graduate, and Michael, a University of Minnesota alumnus with a degree in graphic design.

RCAC Application Essay #3: How would you address the topics of student finances; campus safety; diversity, equity, and inclusion; and up to three additional important topics currently confronting the University of Minnesota?

The success of the University of Minnesota is built upon three pillars: student success, academic excellence, and outstanding research capabilities. Interwoven within these are complex and evolving topics, such as partnerships with M Health Fairview and the Medical School, managing the land-grant mission, securing sustainable funding, navigating the influence of Name, Image, and Likeness (NIL) policies, and upholding academic freedom. While these challenges are multifaceted, they are manageable through a strategic and collaborative approach. The best way to address such complexity is by clearly defining each issue, articulating a vision of success, and establishing measurable goals to track progress.

ANN SHELDON (CONTINUED)

Student Finances: Our students deserve an affordable, high-quality education that prepares them for the future. The cost of education encompasses tuition, housing, food, financial aid access, and employment opportunities. Benchmarking these factors against high-performing institutions will help determine what “good” looks like and identify areas for improvement. While the President has noted that the University is one of the most affordable institutions in the Midwest, investment must continue so the University remains competitive and students feel they are receiving value for their investment.

Campus Safety: Campus safety must remain a top priority. The University has already implemented programs and partnerships, such as those with the City of Minneapolis Police Department, but these efforts must evolve in response to changes in the campus landscape, student demographics, and broader societal issues. Ongoing investment in physical security, community engagement, and emergency preparedness will ensure a safe environment that allows students to thrive.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion: The University must foster an environment where students, faculty, and staff can succeed, while also preparing students to succeed in the diverse and global workforce they will enter. This requires creating opportunities for open dialogue and appreciating varied backgrounds and opinions. Beyond traditional classroom experiences, the University can provide spaces for students, faculty, and staff to engage meaningfully across disciplines and perspectives. Such efforts promote a truly inclusive environment where everyone feels valued and empowered.

Addressing Complex and Competing Demands: Among the many critical issues facing the University, the M Health Fairview and Medical School partnership stands out as particularly urgent. I would prioritize gaining a deep understanding of the current status, including relevant data, to identify opportunities for facilitating a mutually beneficial solution. For broader challenges, such as sustainable funding, I believe in approaching the issue holistically while breaking it down into its various sources and potential impacts. By evaluating these elements against anticipated headwinds, we can create a clearer path forward. Setting measurable goals and tracking progress will be essential to achieving meaningful results.

When all stakeholders are moving in the same direction with a clear understanding of the objectives, we can “move the needle” and achieve meaningful outcomes. As a Regent, I want to ensure that the University’s strategies reflect this unified approach, positioning the institution to thrive in an increasingly complex and competitive world.



AT-LARGE CANDIDATE

DAN WOLTER

LAKEVILLE, MN

A resident of Dakota County for nearly 25 years, Dan Wolter is no stranger to public service, having served as a top advisor to three governors in two states, represented northern Dakota County on the Metropolitan Council, chaired the Burnsville Planning Commission, led the State Legislature’s efforts to recruit Regents for the University of Minnesota, and now serving as Lakeville’s newest city councilmember. He was elected to a four-year term in the 2024 election with the highest vote total for city council in city history.

Dan is currently employed by Iowa-based retailer, Hy-Vee, Inc., managing the grocer’s government and community relations in Minnesota, South Dakota, and Wisconsin.

After leaving the Minnesota Governor’s Office in 2005, Dan was hired as director of the University of Minnesota News Service, where he managed all media and public relations for President Robert Bruininks, the U of M administration and Board of Regents. After leaving the U, he was appointed by the Speaker of the House twice to the Regent Candidate Advisory Council (RCAC), where he served as chair for two Regent selection cycles and vice chair for one. During his two terms as chair, the RCAC recommended the two most diverse slates of candidates to the Legislature in its history.

Dan is a native of Waverly, IA, with a bachelor’s degree cum laude from Drake University in Des Moines, Iowa, and a master’s degree from George Washington University in Washington, D.C. He lives in northern Lakeville with his two English Bulldogs, Lizzo and Drake.

RCAC Application Essay #3: How would you address the topics of student finances; campus safety; diversity, equity, and inclusion; and up to three additional important topics currently confronting the University of Minnesota?

Student Finances: The Board of Regents needs to place a higher priority on controlling the costs of tuition and fees for students. The idea that college students graduate with years of debt on their backs is a new concept. The University has done a wonderful job over the past several decades in boosting scholarship support, but it hits nearly as a drop in the bucket in a world where quarter million-dollar mid-level administrators are the norm. The biggest thing the Board of Regents can do is to more aggressively use their governance role to question administrative spending to put students back at the top of the priority list.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion: The strength of higher education lies in being an incubator for different ideas, backgrounds, perspectives, life circumstances, and experiences. Exposing students and faculty to diverse worldviews and enabling them to frame their own views is a critical part of education. The genius of modern universities has been their ability to turn differences into human progress. Additionally, access to higher education for historically marginalized communities aligns with the Land Grant mission of the University.

DAN WOLTER (CONTINUED)

However, like many, I have been concerned that there is less of an interest in generating speech and debate around the diversity of ideas and more of a focus on ideological conformity, which I see as the exact opposite of the purpose of higher education. This last year, it was concerning to see the rising levels of flagrant antisemitism, masked in the form of political protest, on the U of M campus. Administrators have a difficult job in ensuring safe and free speech on campus, but the Board of Regents needs to hold them accountable.

Healthcare and University of Minnesota Medical Center (UMMC): One of the biggest immediate issues facing the University is the future of the U of M a Medical Center. Current discussions to buy back UMMC in a manner that will enhance the U's critical role in preparing the physician and healthcare workforce of the future are appropriate and I applaud President Cunningham for hitting the ground running. Maintaining a world class teaching hospital is vital to the state and it will be important for the Board of Regents to be engaged, supportive, and mindful of the financial pitfalls that led to UMMC being sold to Fairview in the late 1990s.

Value of a College Degree: There is an alarming trend in the value people associate with a four-year college degree that is leading many to other kinds of degrees or experiential learning. The factors pushing that trend include the exorbitant increase in the cost, and a disconnect between basic skills employers are seeking in workers coming out of four-year colleges. I would support a strategy that re-establishes the value of a college degree, that includes looking at administrative bloat and the costs driving the University budget, and market research to determine what graduates and hiring employers ultimately need and want from graduates. This strategy would ultimately need to be connected to curriculum and academic programming.

Campus Safety: One of the biggest concerns from students, parents, and members of the University community continues to be public safety on the Twin Cities campus. After a number of missteps under the previous president, the U of M is now taking the issue of crime more seriously. The Board of Regents bears some responsibility for not insisting the administration more aggressively address threats to campus safety, even after concerns were raised by the Regents, as well as the primary constituency group for the U – students and parents. If there is one important area in which state support for the U can be an asset, it is public safety. As a Regent, I would listen to student and parent concerns and be a voice on the security and safety needs of all U of M campuses.

Intercollegiate Athletics: Having been involved in Regent selection processes for more than a decade, I was hesitant to raise athletics, as my experience has been that it takes up too much public discourse. But the NCAA's Name, Image, Likeness (NIL) rule necessitates a Board of Regents that is well-informed and engaged in these issues as the decisions made in the next few years will determine the future of sport at the U. I have been critical of canceling specific athletic programs, believe unfettered salary increases for athletics administrators need to be more heavily scrutinized, and am concerned at Gopher Sports' directional change away from amateur athletics. However, I am a firm believer that athletics needs to be prominent at the U of M and support efforts to ensure thriving programs in the NIL area, including for the coordinate campuses.



FIFTH CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

ROBERT ALBRIGHT

EDINA, MN

Mr. Albright is the Managing Member and a Founding Principal of Alternative Strategy Advisers (ASA), a \$2 billion boutique fixed-income manager based in Minneapolis. From 1989 to 1990, he was an associate in the Boston office of the L.E.K. Partnership, a strategy consulting firm. In 1991, Mr. Albright joined Cargill Financial Services Corporation (Cargill), where he held a variety of management positions in the U.S. and Europe. From 1999 to 2000, he served as the Chief Investment Officer of E.W.

Blanch Asset Management before co-founding ASA in 2001.

Mr. Albright received a bachelor's in Engineering Sciences from Dartmouth College in 1989 and master's degrees in both Computer Science (2001) and Applied Mathematics (2020) from the University of Minnesota, where he helped establish the Masters of Financial Mathematics (MFM) Program and served as a Board Member from 2007 to 2012. He is also a Chartered Financial Analyst (CFA).

Outside of work, Mr. Albright is married with two children (18 - a freshman at UW Madison, and 13 - a 7th grader at Valley View Middle School). He has held numerous leadership positions in his church and is a member of the Luther Seminary Investment Committee. He is a past President of the Dartmouth Club of the Midwest and a member of the Dartmouth Alumni Council.

Through the Albright Family Foundation, which was founded in 2006, Mr. Albright has funded and advanced philanthropic efforts addressing educational opportunity and quality from pre-K through post-secondary education, persistence through graduation, technical training and skills development, veterans' affairs, and health and human services in Minnesota and nationally.

RCAC Application Essay #3: How would you address the topics of student finances; campus safety; diversity, equity, and inclusion; and up to three additional important topics currently confronting the University of Minnesota?

Student Finances: This warrants a broader discussion of higher education finance, but it is indisputable that the cost structure of higher education is a growing problem, especially in the face of a declining college-aged population. Administrative overhead and regulatory compliance at universities are excessively expensive, and resulting student debt makes post-secondary education problematic for many. It is not possible to manage student finances or maintain affordability without a serious review of the cost structure, delivery mechanisms, and academic/career outcomes produced by higher education institutions. Nowhere is this rigor more essential than at the State's foundational institution of higher learning, the U of M system.

ROBERT ALBRIGHT (CONTINUED)

Campus Safety: Safety is indispensable and must be addressed with the full force and resources of not only the University but also the Cities and State. Every student should feel safe while on campus. This is a fundamental condition necessary for a world-class institution. Increased security presence on walkways and at campus perimeters, increased dialogue and trust-building between students and campus security, broader use of security camera technology, better lighting, and clear guidelines for recognizing what constitutes (sexual) assault are all potential solutions.

Healthcare: This is partly a campus safety issue as well. Providing students with clear, accessible resources that support mental health, as well as training faculty and staff to address students at risk of harming themselves or others, should be priority budget items. More broadly, providing all students access to comprehensive health insurance through BCBS and possibly premium support for low-income students is a worthy goal. Finally, maintaining a vibrant and effective Boynton Health and equivalents on other U of M campuses is vital.

DEI and Academic Freedom/Free Speech: My mantra in all my pre-K-12 education work is that delivering an excellent education is the most equitable thing we can do for any young person. My focus in post-secondary education would be no different. That said, there is no question that fostering and encouraging a wide range of campus opportunities – athletics, community groups, affinity groups, social organizations, pre-professional groups, and even political and faith-based organizations – are essential for students to find their niche on campus and feel accepted as part of the community. Vibrancy outside the classroom is completely complementary to vibrancy and excellence in the classroom. I emphasize that ‘inclusion’ must also apply to unpopular ideas. Consequently, the Regents should seek to foster ‘brave spaces’ on campus to fully secure the University’s place as a marketplace of ideas.

Physical Plant and Sustainability: The Campus Plan should be reviewed to assess performance and address unfinished work. Obviously, sustainable facilities are a subset of the Systemwide Strategic Plan. However, maintaining sufficient housing stock and effective, efficient academic, athletic, and other facilities to meet projected campus demand are core responsibilities of the Board of Regents and require continuous commitment.



FIFTH CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

BENJAMIN KAPLAN

ST. LOUIS PARK, MN

Benjie is a seasoned non-profit leader with more than 20 years of experience in communal service dedicated to fostering meaningful engagement and transformative leadership. He holds a master's in Professional Leadership from Brandeis University and a bachelor's in Journalism from the University of Kansas.

As a Campus Support Director at Hillel International, Benjie collaborates with local campus Hillels across North America to advance strategic planning, development, programming, and staff growth. Previously, as Executive Director of the University of Minnesota Hillel, he led a professional team, strengthened community relationships, and spearheaded innovative student initiatives, impactful educational trips, and successful fundraising efforts – including the new Johnson Family Center for Jewish Student Life on University Ave.

Benjie's commitment to excellence has earned him prestigious accolades, including the Minneapolis Jewish Federation's Educational Excellence Award and Professional Achievement Award, and Hillel International's Exemplar of Excellence Award. Under his leadership, Minnesota Hillel received the University of Minnesota's Tony Diggs Award for Innovative Student Programming.

With a University of Minnesota legacy tied to four generations, Benjie remains committed to advancing the institution and enriching Minnesota's community and educational landscape.

RCAC Application Essay #3: How would you address the topics of student finances; campus safety; diversity, equity, and inclusion; and up to three additional important topics currently confronting the University of Minnesota?

As the previous Executive Director of Minnesota Hillel – the state's oldest Jewish collegiate organization – and now an international consultant for Hillel, I am deeply committed to supporting the University of Minnesota addressing these critical issues.

Campus Safety: Campus safety is a paramount concern for institutions nationwide, including the University of Minnesota. National statistics indicate that 4 in 10 college students feel unsafe on campus, and approximately 30% report being concerned about campus safety affecting their ability to concentrate on their studies (American College Health Association, 2022). At Minnesota Hillel, I recently completed a \$130,000 Federal Security Grant project to assess and implement safety upgrades, which gave me critical insights into how modern technology can support security in educational environments. The University of Minnesota has made strides in addressing campus safety, yet continuous advancement in security technology is essential. In the words of a 2023 National Center for Education Statistics report, "modern campus security measures significantly increase students' sense of safety," which in turn positively impacts academic success and mental well-being.

BENJAMIN KAPLAN (CONTINUED)

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion: At the University of Minnesota, DEI is more than a set of policies. It is central to the University's mission to foster a community that values "respect, integrity, and diversity." Through my work with Hillel, I have seen firsthand how meaningful DEI initiatives can bridge divides and fosters understanding. I believe the University has a vital role to play in preparing students to navigate an increasingly interconnected world with empathy and respect. However, to be effective, DEI initiatives must focus on fostering nuanced, respectful dialogue across differences. Unfortunately, divisive tactics and rhetoric on some campuses – including ours – can undermine these efforts. DEI professionals at the U of M need ample resources to promote inclusivity, while discouraging divisive practices.

Student Finances: Rising tuition and student debt continue to challenge access to higher education. Affordability is critical, not only to recruit students, but to retain them. In fact, a 2023 study by the University of Minnesota's Office of Undergraduate Education found that 30% of students cite financial stress as the primary barrier to academic success. As Regent, I would prioritize monitoring national and state-level financial trends in higher education. Our goal must be to make the University affordable for students across the socioeconomic spectrum. Responsible budgeting that balances taxpayer resources and scholarships is essential. Research consistently shows that financial accessibility promotes a more diverse student body, leading to "more innovative and inclusive learning environments" (AAC&U, 2022).

Mental Health and Wellness: According to the American College Health Association, nearly 60% of college students report experiencing overwhelming anxiety, and 40% report symptoms of depression. Financial pressures, safety concerns, and social tensions significantly contribute to this crisis. The University has made progress in addressing mental health, yet we need a more comprehensive approach. As Regent, I would advocate for placing student wellness at the center of our policies, ensuring students have access to resources that support their physical and mental health. Integrating mental health resources within campus safety, DEI initiatives, and financial aid efforts can promote a more holistic approach to student well-being.

Addressing Campus Climate Around Israel/Palestine: The current campus climate around Israel and Palestine is concerning, especially for Jewish students and others who feel unsafe or marginalized. As someone who has worked in Jewish community spaces for more than 20 years, I have seen the impact of this issue on campus life. The role of the Regents is crucial in ensuring the University remains a place of learning and dialogue, not a platform for divisive political agendas. Research underscores that campuses maintaining an atmosphere of respect and open dialogue experience fewer incidents of intolerance and higher student satisfaction overall (Pew Research Center, 2023). My commitment would be to uphold the university's values of inclusivity and academic freedom, while ensuring student safety remains a highest priority.



FIFTH CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

ELLEN LUGER

MINNEAPOLIS, MN

Ellen Goldberg Luger brings decades of experience as a board member, diplomat, attorney, and philanthropic leader to her candidacy. Ellen most recently served as the Minister Counselor for Agriculture at the U.S. Mission to the U.N. Agencies in Rome. In this role, she negotiated international agricultural policy with over 190 countries and developed and implemented strategic plans. Her work in Rome focused on addressing food insecurity and world hunger issues. Her deep

knowledge of agriculture will greatly benefit her service.

Ellen served for 15 years as a Trustee at Wellesley College, where she chaired the Board's Governance Committee and a Special Committee on Gender. She is regarded as an excellent listener, a consensus builder, and a leader who brings great integrity and transparency to reaching the best outcomes for an organization while involving all stakeholders in the process.

Ellen also served as the Vice President of Global Philanthropy and Volunteerism for the General Mills Foundation, which contributed \$150 million annually in philanthropy and coordinated public-private partnerships addressing hunger, agriculture, safety, and underserved communities.

Ellen's family has deep ties to the University. All four of her grandparents graduated from the University. Her maternal grandfather played in the first football game at Memorial Stadium, famously stopping Illinois running back Red Grange. Her father is a distinguished graduate of the Medical School who led the Division of Colon and Rectal Surgery, while her mother was the first woman to serve as Chair of the University Foundation. Additionally, her aunt served as Chair of the Board of Regents.

RCAC Application Essay #3: How would you address the topics of student finances; campus safety; diversity, equity, and inclusion; and up to three additional important topics currently confronting the University of Minnesota?

The lens I bring to complex issues is one of mission, curiosity, learning, listening, and understanding what has been done to date on the issue. I also bring critical thinking skills, a desire to find a way forward that improves University outcomes as well as a collaborative approach with other members of the Board. Given this approach and my experience, I will be interested in learning where and how the University administration and key stakeholders prioritize and recommend action on these topics.

I have addressed several of these issues previously in my role as a college and independent school trustee. In finding ways forward, I look to data and to models that have worked at other institutions and partnerships. As each of these issues requires deliberate analysis and discussion, I will highlight a few of the considerations that I bring to each topic.

ELLEN LUGER (CONTINUED)

Student Finances: I believe that the amount of debt our students carry at graduation is highly relevant. I will look at data to evaluate where the University compares to others, and I value targeting aid to those most in need relying on a financial aid office that works with families.

Campus Safety: This is a high priority for me. Students must “come to campus” with the ability to move safely to and from classes and activities. A way forward on this issue are partnerships with campus based and off-campus groups to ensure student safety.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion: My priority for diversity, equity and inclusion is that the University be a place where a diverse group of students, faculty, staff and administrators come together, feel connected to the mission of the institution and move forward with our educational goals. The University should focus on recruiting a diverse community of learners and educators that help increase the ability of all on campus to discuss differences civilly and “agree to disagree” when necessary. Another focus should be on reducing the disparities in learning outcomes among underrepresented groups and improving the climate on campus for all.

Enrollment: Enrollment will present a challenge moving forward. Given the changing landscape, the University should set goals for enrollment and look at graduation rate disparities to find ways to decrease these differences. The Administration and Regents will need to review budget implications and discuss the tradeoffs that may be required in the new environment.

Research: Research and teaching are a hallmark of the U of M. Moving forward, the University will need to explore how to bring additional research dollars to Minnesota. The administration should review existing research relationships for expansion opportunities as well as relationships that need to be built. Exploring increased undergraduate research opportunities may be a path forward. Similarly, innovation in teaching should be prioritized. Within this innovation review, attracting and retaining the best professors must be included. Innovative teaching with professors skilled to implement these teaching methods is critical.

Sustainability: Finally, service to our state, region, and the world. As a land grant university, we should have goals and a concrete plan for sustainability leadership. As a way to serve our state, we should regularly measure ourselves against our plan. If we are able to demonstrate concrete results of our work, we should share that information to have an impact more broadly. While these issues are complex, I bring critical thinking skills to ask the questions that will advance the ability to work collaboratively toward goals that align with the mission of the University.



STUDENT AT-LARGE

KOWSAR MOHAMED

MINNEAPOLIS, MN

Kowsar D. Mohamed is a social scientist, educator, and economic development practitioner based in South Minneapolis. She holds undergraduate degrees in Environmental Sciences, Policy and Management as well as Global Studies from the University of Minnesota and a master's in Urban and Regional Planning from the Humphrey School of Public Affairs.

Kowsar's leadership – deeply rooted in fostering social cohesion, environmental stewardship, and inclusive growth – has been a driving force throughout her career. In 2007, she co-founded Cedar Riverside's first neighborhood youth council

and launched Triple C Café, a youth-led social enterprise addressing workforce incongruencies. Her efforts worked to preserve Cedar Riverside's largest green space and led to a new bike/ped path called Samatar Crossing in honor of a community trailblazer, Hussein Samatar (AUN).

After working extensively on community-first response efforts during the COVID-19 pandemic and the civil unrest in Minneapolis, Kowsar grappled with questions about the fragmentation in society and our built and natural environments. These challenges inspired her return to the University of Minnesota to pursue a doctorate in Natural Resources Science Management, where she focuses on Afro-Indigenous ecological knowledge and community-led solutions.

Kowsar's work has spanned geographies, from Minnesota to Morocco, emphasizing public-private partnerships and transformative solutions. She co-designed the City of St. Paul's MSP TechHire UX Academy during the pandemic, equipping workers with tools for sustainable employment. Committed to inclusive, data-informed solutions, Kowsar envisions positioning the University of Minnesota as a global leader in innovation and sustainability while fostering resilience and inclusive growth across Minnesota communities.

RCAC Application Essay #3: How would you address the topics of student finances; campus safety; diversity, equity, and inclusion; and up to three additional important topics currently confronting the University of Minnesota?

I believe the University of Minnesota is at a critical juncture, requiring pragmatic, innovative leadership to sustain its legacy. We must address today's challenges with bold, transformative actions rooted in reciprocal, human-centered care and a future-forward vision. Supporting students means addressing not only academic needs but also the ecosystems that nurture them.

As a land-grant institution, the University must model resilience and serve as a resource hub for Minnesota and beyond. From advancing climate resiliency to modernizing infrastructure and expanding research capacities, we must lead in addressing global challenges. Moving from financial dependence to abundance requires innovative revenue strategies, including public-private partnerships and research and technology commercialization, while positioning the University as a global leader in medical research, agriculture, and sustainability.

Student Finances: We know that ensuring affordability and access for all students, whether first-generation, low income, or coming from a rural community is essential. I would advocate for strengthening programs like the Promise Plus Free Tuition initiative through public-private partnerships to maintain financial accessibility. I'd also be interested in automating and creating greater transparency when conducting efficiency reviews of existing resources, programs, and facilities to help optimize their impact while addressing funding shortfalls. Additionally, I would prioritize collaboration with state and federal partners to align investments with the University's goals, ensuring sustainable support for students across Minnesota and beyond.

Campus Safety: Campus and surrounding communities safety should be holistic, integrating community-centered practices and leveraging innovative technologies like Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED). Institutionalizing the embedment of mental health professionals in campus safety programs, increasing infrastructure safety investments, and creating community spaces that promote cohesion and reduce risks are critical. These measures, combined with regular safety audits that are shared with campus and surrounding communities, I believe will foster a secure environment for all students, faculty, staff and surrounding community members and businesses across all University campuses.

KOWSAR MOHAMED (CONTINUED)

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion: Fostering an inclusive culture requires intentional recruitment and retention of underrepresented groups, expansion of culturally responsive curriculum, and increased engagement in underrepresented regions – particularly in areas of concentrated poverty, rural and tribal communities. These efforts ensure equitable access and representation across all geographies, making the University a more inclusive and dynamic institution that reflects the diversity of our great state.

A critical opportunity to advance diversity, equity, and inclusion lies in greater investment in programs like the University of Minnesota Extension. Extension serves as a trusted interface between the University and communities, offering practical education, resources, and research-based solutions. By strengthening investments in Extension's initiatives, the University can deepen its engagement with underrepresented populations and foster a greater sense of trust and connection.

Extension provides a unique avenue for community members to envision a future with the University. Whether as a prospective student pursuing a degree, a lifelong learner participating in skills-building programs, a partner collaborating on impactful initiatives, or someone exploring the University as an employer of choice, Extension creates pathways that make the University more accessible and approachable. Expanding culturally responsive programming, training educators in inclusive practices, and embedding inclusive frameworks into Extension's outreach efforts can amplify its impact, fostering equitable engagement across Minnesota.

Through strategic investment in Extension, the University can continue to build trust, strengthen relationships, and empower communities, ensuring its inclusion efforts resonate statewide, nationally, and globally creating lasting opportunities for collaboration.

Climate Resiliency: The University must continue to move from reactive to proactive strategies in addressing climate resiliency. This includes embedding sustainability and diverse forms of ecological knowledge into University operations and modernizing infrastructure to ensure long-term functionality. Creating a climate resiliency dashboard with real-time metrics on energy use, emissions reduction, and sustainability initiatives will enhance accountability and transparency while positioning the University as a resource hub for Minnesota and beyond, serving urban and rural communities alike.

Research and Technology Commercialization: I believe expanding the University's research and technology commercialization capacity is crucial to solving global challenges and gaining national and global market traction. This involves diversifying research funding sources, increasing public-private partnerships, and pursuing federal designations that solidify the University's leadership in innovation. By fostering connections with the business community, entrepreneurs, and agricultural innovators, the University can expand its reach and create statewide economic and knowledge growth.

Strengthening and Elevating the University of Minnesota M Health System: The University's M Health system is a cornerstone of excellence in healthcare for Minnesota. I would prioritize its growth and preservation by exploring the diversification of existing funding streams, fostering public-private collaborations, and recruiting future-forward visionaries to ensure its continued world-class delivery of care. Additionally, I would advocate for expanded access to healthcare services, particularly in rural and underserved areas, ensuring the system meets the evolving needs of all Minnesotans.

Improving Government and Community Relations: Strengthening the University's relationships with government and community partners is essential to advancing its mission in ways that are reciprocal and transformative. I would prioritize cultivating trust-based partnerships with state, tribal, and local governments as well as community organizations to identify shared priorities and opportunities for collaboration. This includes amplifying the University's role as a bridge between urban and rural communities, ensuring equitable investment in both regions and aligning initiatives to address shared and emerging challenges.

Modernizing Infrastructure and Campus Utilization: The University has a great opportunity to rethink its approach to infrastructure and campus spaces, addressing underutilized and aging buildings. Consolidating programs, modernizing office spaces, and repurposing dormant facilities to provide affordable housing or co-working hubs for startups and community organizations can create new revenue streams while strengthening the University's role as a center for innovation and collaboration. I believe this approach could ensure our campuses remain dynamic, sustainable, and responsive to community and student needs.



STUDENT AT-LARGE

MADELINE ROWE

MINNEAPOLIS, MN

Madeline Rowe is a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Minnesota Twin Cities. She is studying Organizational Leadership and Policy Development, focusing specifically on higher education. Her research is focused on higher education policy, academic freedom and free speech on college campuses, and college student-athletes. She earned her Master's degree in Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis from University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Madeline works on campus as a graduate instructor and teaching assistant, teaching undergraduate and graduate students in her department of

Organizational Leadership and Policy Development in the College of Education and Human Development, and in the Humphrey School for Public Affairs. She is also involved in University Senate Governance on campus, and has been a member of senate governance committees, including the All-University Honors Committee and the Academic Freedom and Tenure Committee, among other senate committee working groups.

RCAC Application Essay #3: How would you address the topics of student finances; campus safety; diversity, equity, and inclusion; and up to three additional important topics currently confronting the University of Minnesota?

Student Finances: The University of Minnesota's three promise programs (U Promise, Promise Plus, and Native American Promise) and the State of Minnesota's two promise programs (North Star Promise and American Indian Scholars Program) offer grants to cover tuition, but not the full cost of attendance. The University of Minnesota also has two unique opportunities to set an example for other state system promise programs to follow. First, the University of Minnesota could increase its promise programs to cover up to the full cost of attendance, relieving eligible students of the financial burden that seeking a high-quality college education may create. Or the University of Minnesota could convert its promise program from a last-dollar program (a program that covers remaining balance after all other financial aid has been applied) to a first-dollar program, allowing students to use other financial aid (like federal student loans or Pell grants) to cover other non-tuition or cost of living expenses associated with college.

Campus Safety: Campus safety looks different at different institutions as police force sizes range and communities have different safety risks and needs. At the Twin Cities campus, safety has been a challenge over the last few years, especially with a much smaller police force and lower officer-to-student ratio than other Big Ten campuses. The University should increase the number of law enforcement/community safety officers and make them more accessible through regular foot and bicycle patrols on campus. This visibility will help to foster community, and encourage relationships between students, faculty, staff, and their community safety officers. In addition, student safety resources – such as crisis counseling and health services – should continue to be financially supported and made known to students. In my experience, most students do not know how many physical and mental health resources are available to them on campus, which tells me that there is still work to be done here in getting the word out about resources.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion: Research shows that DEI initiatives help promote student sense of belonging for all students, not just historically underrepresented students. To continue to cultivate this sense of belonging on campuses, the University of Minnesota must continuously promote and invest in the programs that are already working to cultivate this inclusive environment – including student groups for all students, fair access and opportunities for campus resources, and feeling represented throughout the University by others who share their same identity (racial/ethnic, political, gender, social, family status, etc.). By using campus climate survey results, employee wellbeing surveys, or other surveys like the SERU, the University has opportunities to actively seek feedback on what resources are most helpful to students, and what could still be improved for a greater impact.

MADLINE ROWE (CONTINUED)

Increase Direct Admissions and “Share My App” Admissions: The University of Minnesota is currently in its first year of direct admissions at its Morris, Crookston, Duluth, and Rochester campuses. While the success of this program is yet to be known, it is clear that this type of direct outreach to students creates access and pathways to higher education for students who may not see themselves as “college ready,” oftentimes first-generation students or students from other historically marginalized backgrounds. Direct admissions should also be targeted at students who have successfully participated in dual enrollment programs with the University of Minnesota, again, to continue to foster the student’s sense of belonging with the institutions and show that they have and will continue to be successful at the University of Minnesota. Finally, the University should continue to utilize “share my app” admissions, so that students who apply to one University of Minnesota institution can be accepted into another University of Minnesota institution. This creates a sense of belonging as a University of Minnesota student and promotes student persistence and achievement for the long term.

Continue to Maintain High Persistence and Graduation Rates: The University of Minnesota reports high college persistence and graduation rates, both above the national averages. By maintaining these high rates for persistence and graduation, the University of Minnesota continues to demonstrate its value in educating Minnesota students and providing well-rounded citizens and individuals for the state’s workforce.



STUDENT AT-LARGE

FLORA YANG

MINNEAPOLIS, MN

Flora Yang is 10-year Gopher who is now a second year B.A./M.D. medical school student at the University of Minnesota and the Vice President of the Professional Student Government. She lived in Eden Prairie with her family from 2011 until moving to Minneapolis as a full-time student.

For the past five years, Yang has worked at the governance level to empower student voices from all system campuses, most notably as the 2022-23 Twin Cities Undergraduate Student Body President and 2023-24 Chair of the Student Representatives to the Board of Regents. She has been a passionate advocate for student success, especially around college affordability, basic needs, mental health, and campus safety. Yang led efforts to increase the student minimum wage by ~30%, developed the Basic Needs Strategic Plan – a report to the Board of Regents highlighting areas of student need – and engaged in proactive stakeholder consultations in the development of the new strategic plan with legislators and students from each system campus. She served on the Strategic Safety Advisory Council, Alumni Association’s Board of Directors, and the President’s Initiative for Student Mental Health.

Yang is deeply committed to the continued success of the University and seeks to use her institutional knowledge, commitment to transparency and accountability, medical background, and previous experience with the Board to give back to the institution that has provided so much for her.

RCAC Application Essay #3: How would you address the topics of student finances; campus safety; diversity, equity, and inclusion; and up to three additional important topics currently confronting the University of Minnesota?

Student Finances: The University of Minnesota faces critical challenges that require thoughtful, transparent, and inclusive leadership. Addressing student finances is paramount, as rising tuition costs and stagnant wages have left many students burdened by debt. Programs like the North Star Promise and increased state funding have helped, but tuition continues to climb by 1.5–3.5% annually, and wages fail to keep pace with inflation. To combat this, the University must partner with state legislators to freeze tuition through sustainable financial practices, explore cost-reduction measures, and enhance employment opportunities that align with living costs.

Campus Safety: Campus safety also demands urgent attention. Reports of assault have doubled from 2023 to 2024, and incidents such as the recent campus shooter threat, multiple car break-ins, students being filmed while showering at the REC, among many other incidents, have left students feeling vulnerable. While initiatives like the Dinkytown Safe Streets program, the Strategic Safety Advisory Council (SSAC), and the new Dinkytown Resource Center are promising, formalizing a charter for the Strategic Safety Advisory Council (SSAC) to set strategic direction in improving campus safety is a critical next step.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion: In our increasingly diverse community, the University of Minnesota faces the challenge of fostering an environment where all individuals, regardless of political affiliation or ideology, feel respected and heard. We can improve this by streamlining avenues for feedback on Board-relevant topics, where individuals can engage with each other’s perspectives, even – and especially – when they disagree.

Mental Health and Basic Needs: Mental health and basic needs must also remain some of my top priorities. The 2024 College Student Health Survey found that 57.2% of Twin Cities students report having a mental health condition, with 26.1% diagnosed within the past year, and 45.9% unable to manage their stress. Additionally, more than one in five Twin Cities students worry about running out of food, and housing insecurity affects 43.6% of undergraduates. Our system campuses also disproportionately face basic needs insecurity. To address these disparities, the University should expand upon PRISMH efforts to increase telehealth services, sustain grant-subsidized basic needs programs, and ensure every campus has a strategic plan to tackle food deserts and housing affordability.



STUDENT AT-LARGE

DYLAN YOUNG

SAINT PAUL, MN

Dylan Young is a Master of Public Policy student at the Humphrey School of Public Affairs, specializing in higher education policy. In 2023, he graduated from the University of Minnesota Morris. As the first in his family to graduate college, Young intimately understands the transformative power of a college education. He is dedicating his career to making college equitable, accessible, and affordable to all students, regardless of their background.

When Young arrived on the Morris campus, he was uncertain if he belonged in higher education. He was eight hours away from home on the Rosebud Reservation and knew nothing about how to succeed in college. Through help from supportive mentors, a close-knit community, and a world-class education, Young found his voice and became a leader. Even better, he had the opportunity to help other students thrive as well.

Dylan served as President of the Morris Campus Student Association, leading projects that addressed issues facing students, including food insecurity, disability access, and mental health. He also worked as a peer mentor for the TRIO-SSS program, helping first-years navigate their college experience. Young has also served in several academic and non-profit boards, including the Rosebud Fund, which provides financial support and mentorship to Indigenous students.

If elected, Dylan will work hard to ensure the University of Minnesota is an institution where everyone, regardless of background, belongs, and can access a transformative college experience like his.

RCAC Application Essay #3: How would you address the topics of student finances; campus safety; diversity, equity, and inclusion; and up to three additional important topics currently confronting the University of Minnesota?

An enrollment cliff is projected to strain our national higher education infrastructure over the next decade due to decreasing population growth and more individuals choosing to not invest in a college degree. By 2030, Minnesota will begin facing this problem. This trend threatens to undermine our institutional sustainability and exacerbate financial pressures currently challenging the University, especially our Greater Minnesota campuses. To overcome these challenges, the University of Minnesota must prepare to recruit and retain student populations who have been underserved by higher education, as well as populations who have grown disillusioned by it. Accomplishing this will require us to evolve as well as build on our foundational strengths as a land-grant institution. As a first-generation Cougar/Gopher, a student leader with systemwide institutional knowledge, and a community organizer, I'm ready to take on those challenges.

Student Finances: I would not have been able to attend college without support from UMN Morris' Native American tuition waiver and the merit-based institutional scholarships I have received at the Humphrey School. These experiences allowed me the rare privilege of pursuing a college education with limited financial stress – a privilege that I believe every student should be afforded. At the same time, there were moments where I still faced hardship, despite my financial aid. I have come to be intimately familiar with the wave of anxiety triggered by falling short of covering monthly rent or weekly groceries. I share these personal experiences to underscore the burden that even the luckiest students face in their everyday lives.

There is no silver-bullet-solution, but one measure could be setting affordability as an explicit strategic priority. The University's current strategic plan, MPACT25, does not identify affordability as a core institutional commitment. As President Cunningham begins the early stages of articulating a new strategic vision, I would encourage including metrics that hold us accountable to reducing total cost of attendance, graduating students debt-free, and tracking the average financial aid package compared to peer institutions. It would also send a strong message to prospective students and their families, the legislature, and other key stakeholders that we're an institution that seriously invests in students.

DYLAN YOUNG (CONTINUED)

Campus Safety: As a product of the rural Midwest, it was a culture shock moving to the Twin Cities and experiencing the crime within our urban environment, and I am certain that others feel the same way. At Morris, students know our public safety officers by name. Even students who are skeptical of police recognize them as integral members of the community who prioritize students well-being. While the campus safety ecosystem at Morris is vastly different from the Twin Cities, I believe there are many lessons to be learned about the importance of fostering trust between students and officers. As a Regent, I would promote programs that emphasize community-oriented safety practices, encourage open dialogue between students and UMPD, and prioritize building trust and community.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion: When a former Regent asked whether it was possible that Morris had become too diverse, I responded with an open letter that read: “As we look towards overcoming enrollment struggles, this institution cannot turn its back on the values of equity, diversity, and inclusion out of fear and discomfort. We need to embrace them.” I invited the Regent to dinner on the Morris campus so he can witness the diversity himself. What he saw was an environment that made me better by all measures. An environment where students from different backgrounds and perspectives came together, learned from each other, and thrived. DEI not only opens doors to opportunity, it enriches the whole community, fostering collaboration, innovation, and empathy. These are all skills that are essential to all scholars.

Public Engagement and Transparency: I want to provide a friendly challenge to the Board of Regents’ current approach to public engagement. I believe that responsible stewardship of state appropriations and tuition dollars means operating transparently and ensuring that the communities we serve have meaningful input into our decisions. As a Regent, I would work to incorporate values of inclusive governance into the Board’s work, fostering greater trust between the University and its constituents. This is especially important given the growing skepticism from students and lawmakers about transparency and accountability at the University of Minnesota (and higher education at-large).

Throughout my campaign, I’ve made it a priority to visit each University of Minnesota campus and meet with as many members of the University community as possible. This hands-on approach is about building lasting relationships and ensuring that I am hearing from everyone across the state, not just those who are easiest to reach. I think this type of engagement is essential for any Regent, and I encourage others to take similar steps to connect with the people they aim to serve. As a Regent, I would propose the Board implement a public comment period at our regular meetings and host frequent town halls to make us more accessible and responsive to the needs of our stakeholders. If elected, I will continue to put transparency and accountability first, and I am committed to earning the trust and support of the entire University community through direct and honest engagement.

Student Basic Needs: As a former peer mentor for first-generation freshmen, and President of the Morris Campus Student Association, I saw firsthand the challenges students face in meeting their basic needs. Academic success requires time, energy, and mental focus – yet many students struggle with food insecurity, housing instability, and inadequate mental health support. Those closest to dropping out were often balancing multiple jobs just to pay rent, leaving little time to study, attend class, or even sleep. A 2023 Hope Center study found that nearly 60% of college students report burnout, often linked to mental health struggles that undermine academic performance. Similarly, a 2021 survey revealed that 58% of students faced food or housing insecurity. These realities highlight the urgent need for comprehensive institutional strategies to address students’ holistic wellness.

Supporting students’ basic needs isn’t just about equity; it’s about fulfilling a university’s fundamental responsibility. Institutions cannot claim to be accessible or inclusive when students are forced to choose between feeding themselves and achieving their potential. As a Regent, I would advocate for programs that prioritize student wellness, recognizing that ensuring basic needs is a prerequisite for academic success and a more equitable, inclusive campus.

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