MSCSA Platform Document

Article I: Mission Statement

Section A: Mission Statement

The Minnesota State College Student Association (herein referred to as the MSCSA) is an association of Minnesota's public two-year college students, which works to ensure accessible, quality, and affordable public higher education while providing students with representation, leadership development, and communication across the state.

Article II: Federal Legislative Issues

Section A: Financial Aid and Loan Programs:

MSCSA Supports:

1. Financial aid based entirely on income of the family, rather than the cost of the institution.

2. Full funding of the authorized Pell Grant award for all eligible students.

The Pell Grant is financial aid that does not need to be paid back. It provides need-based grants to low-income undergraduate and certain post baccalaureate students. The amount depends on financial need, the costs to attend school, and status as a full-time or part-time student.

3. Additional increases in the Income Protection Allowance to aid part-time students.

The Income Protection Allowance is an allowance for basic living expenses. It is used to help determine the amount of income available for educational purposes. It varies depending on family size and number of family members enrolled in college.

4. Entitlement status for the Pell Grant Program.

Entitlement status would make the Pell Grant program a mandatory cost in the federal budget rather than financing it through yearly appropriations. Essentially, it would provide funding stability for the program.

5. Increased funding and availability of the SEOG, and expanding award eligibility to non-Pell qualified students.

Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant helps students with high financial need that receive the Pell Grant.

6. Efforts to simplify the application process for all forms of financial aid.

7. Assistance in completing the application process for all forms of financial aid at no cost to students.

8. Timely disbursements of financial aid by the tenth day of classes.

9. Efforts to simplify the process to attain independent student status and grant independent student status at the age of 19, if the student so chooses.

Independent Student Status means that the student does not have to report their parent/guardian's information on the FAFSA. Currently granted at the age of 23. For more information visit this website: http://www.fafsa.ed.gov/help/fftoc02k.htm.

10. Providing campus financial aid directors greater flexibility under the "professional judgment" rule to grant a student "independent" status for the purposes of determining financial aid eligibility. The Department of Education should also establish uniform standards to guide campus financial aid directors using the rule.

The "professional judgment" rule refers to the authority of a school's financial aid administrator to make adjustments to the data elements on the FAFSA and to override a student's dependency status.

11. Legislation that would remove the drug and selective service line-items from the FAFSA application form.

The FAFSA is the Free Application for Federal Student Aid. Students can fill this out and send the results to any schools they are interested in attending to determine if they qualify for different kinds of financial aid, such as loans, grants or work-study jobs. Apply here: <u>www.fafsa.ed.gov</u>

The drug line-item is a section within the FAFSA. Students will not be eligible to apply for financial aid if they do not resolve any drug conviction issues, or if they were convicted while receiving financial aid.

The selective service line-item is a section with the FAFSA. If the student is male, it asks them if they have enlisted in the military. If the student hasn't, they may not be eligible for aid.

12. Lower, fixed interest rates on all federal student loans and retaining the "in-school" interest subsidy for undergraduate subsidized Stafford Loans.

Subsidized interest rates means the student does not have to start paying the loan back until after he or she has graduated.

13. A minimum 12-month repayment period, excluding the grace period, for all student loans.

The grace period is a set amount of time after a student graduates, leaves school, or drops below half-time enrollment during which the student is not required to make loan payments. Typically six months or more, but on some loans there is no grace period.

14. Continuation and increased funding and availability for the Carl D. Perkins Fund.

An act to provide federal funds to technical programs. For more information visit this website: http://www2.ed.gov/offices/OVAE/CTE/perkins.html.

15. Reforming the federal government's method of calculating student loan default rates in a way that more accurately reflects the actual rate of student loan defaults.

Student loan default is when students don't make payments on their loans. Read about it here: http://studentaid.ed.gov/repay-loans/default

- 16. Retaining the 6-month grace period for all federal loans.
- 17. Expanded loan forgiveness programs.

Loan forgiveness programs may cover a student's entire loan or parts of the loan.

MSCSA Opposes:

1. Reductions to aid programs.

2. Using students' social security numbers as identification numbers, unless such use is already required by federal or state law.

3. Limiting borrowers to a one-time consolidation.

Consolidation of loans is a process in which several loans are combined into one bigger loan from a single lender, which is then used to pay off the balances on the other loans. Interest rate is a weighted average of the interest rates on the loans being consolidated.

4. The Federal Satisfactory Academic Progress criteria preventing any student from receiving federal financial aid.

The Federal Satisfactory Academic Progress means that students must retain a certain GPA and show progress on completing their degree in a timely manner to retain financial aid.

5. Frontloading of the PELL Grant.

Frontloading means receiving a large amount at the beginning of degree seeking instead of more equal disbursements throughout all semesters of a student's academic career.

6. Filing fees for financial aid programs.

7. Limiting the semesters of eligibility for the Pell Grant.

Current number of semesters eligible is twelve.

Section B: Other Federal Issues: MSCSA Supports:

1. The continued re-authorization of the Higher Education Act of 1965

This bill, first passed in 1965, is the vehicle through which most federal higher education policy is established.

2. Increased accessibility and funding for all child care programs.

3. Increased funding and expanded eligibility for the Child Care Access Means Parents in School (CCAMPIS) program.

CCAMPIS supports low-income parents attending college through campus-based child care services. Must be eligible to receive the Pell grant.

4. Increased funding and expanded eligibility for the Federal Work Study program.

The Federal Work Study program provides funds for students to be employed part-time by their school, a public agency, a private nonprofit organization or a private for-profit organization. Hourly wages must not be less than the minimum wage. Students can apply for this through the FAFSA.

5. Expanded work study opportunities in the public, educational, community, health care, non-profit and for profit sectors.

6. Students receiving the full benefit of the work study grant entitlement.

7. Student organizations' right to organize at the federal level.

8. The continuation of the U.S. Department of Education as an individual cabinet level department.

Visit the U.S. Department of Ed here: http://www.ed.gov/

9. Tax deductions for interest assessed on all educational loans.

A tax deduction is a reduction of an individual's income that is subject to tax. Students may be able to deduct an amount of money on their federal individual income tax return. Students can only deduct interest on student loans that were actually used to pay for school-related expenses.

10. Tax credits for tuition paid, books, educational materials, computers and interest assessed on all educational loans.

A tax credit can reduce a student's tax bill on a dollar-for-dollar basis for their school-related expenses. One example is the American Opportunity credit. The American Opportunity credit covers the tuition payments a student makes plus the cost of purchasing books and supplies, as long as they maintain at least half-time status. Students that are eligible must be pursuing a degree, be in their first four years of school, or be paying for their education.

11. Refundable higher education tax credits.

12. Federal legislation that requires practices of publishers, bookstores, and institutions that lower textbook costs for students.

13. Making the U.S. Department of Education's Shopping Sheet mandatory for all colleges and universities across all sectors.

The Shopping Sheet tool is used to notify students of all of their financial aid award packages in a simplified way that is also intended to help compare aid packages between various schools. It is currently optional for institutions to use.

MSCSA Opposes:

1. Repeal of the "90/10" rule.

Legislation that requires colleges to get no more than 90% of their revenues from federal student aid. For more information about this rule, visit this website: http://www.finaid.org/loans/90-10-rule.phtml.

Article III: State Legislative Issues Section A: Tuition, Financial Aid, and Bonding: MSCSA Supports:

1. Making M.S. 135A.01 binding upon the Minnesota State Legislature, which would require the state pay at least 67% of instructional costs at all public colleges/universities, with students responsible for the remaining 33%.

Statute language available here: <u>https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/?id=135a.01</u>

2. Affordable, predictable tuition for all public higher education students through increased appropriations from the state legislature to the MnSCU base budget, tuition limits, and other affordability initiatives.

3. Legislation that would make the first two years of public college tuition-free.

4. In state tuition rates for current and former U.S. military members and their spouses and their dependent children.

5. Expanded loan forgiveness programs for individuals in public service.

6. Allowing any increases in the Pell Grant to "pass through" the state grant formula without penalizing the student's state grant award, or decoupling the Pell Grant from the state grant award calculation.

The term decoupling refers to changing the existing relationship with the federal Pell Grant and state aid. Currently, when the federal government seeks to provide more funding per student with the Pell Grant, a student's Minnesota State Grant will decrease. Similarly, Pell or Minnesota State Grant funding is decreased, students will see an increase in their aid from whichever source was not cut. This leaves the overall aid a student receives relatively static despite funding increases or decreases at the state or federal level.

7. Priority being given to public sector students over private sector students in the state grant formula.

8. Establishing an income cap for students receiving the Minnesota State Grant.

The Minnesota State Grant helps students from low-income and moderate-income families pay for educational expenses. There is no income cap currently. Students can apply for the grant through the FAFSA. Students must be graduates of a secondary school or at least 17 years of age and must be enrolled as undergraduates for at least three credits.

9. Basing Minnesota State Grant awards on the incomes of students with an accurate accounting of their family share.

10. Allowing students to retain Minnesota State Grant program eligibility up to the completion of a baccalaureate degree.

11. Increasing the Living and Miscellaneous Expense allowance (herein referred to as LME) with the cost of living.

The LME is intended to recognize a student's cost of attending college beyond charges for tuition and fees.

- 12. Directing state-generated gambling proceeds towards higher education.
- 13. Creating a campus or MnSCU system-based grant program.
- 14. All fees to be included in the calculations of the Minnesota State Grant formula.
- 15. Increased appropriations for the Minnesota State Grant.

The MN State Grant is funded by the State legislature. The legislature appropriates (gives) money from the general fund to the Office of Higher Education, based on the OHE's estimate of what is needed to fully fund the projected grant awards.

16. Equitable treatment of part-time students and full-time students in the state grant formula.

17. Exempting MnSCU from the one-third debt service requirement for capital bonds.

State Statute requires MnSCU to pay 1/3 of the cost of capital improvement projects, such as projects funded through the general obligation bonds. To read the statue, visit this URL: https://www.revisor.leg.state.mn.us/statutes/?id=16A.662&format=pdf)

18. The use of Higher Education Asset Preservation and Replacement (herein referred to as HEAPR) funds to allow campuses to engage in demolition and comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (Already in current law, MN Statutes 135A.046 Subdivision 2).

HEAPR means fixing our old buildings with repair and replacement. HEAPR differs from capital investment projects because students do not pay any of the debt, unlike in general obligation bonds.

19. A bonding bill in which MnSCU receives a significant investment in building construction/repair to ensure safe, quality, and sustainable facilities.

The bonding bill provides funding to state agencies for construction and repair – it must be publicly owned and be of state or regional significance

20. Legislative review of reciprocity agreements every five years.

Reciprocity agreements are made between Minnesota neighboring states to provide lower tuition for "out of state" students from states that are in reciprocity agreements with Minnesota such as Wisconsin, North Dakota, and Kansas.

21. Fair reciprocity agreements with neighboring states and provinces.

22. Requiring the Minnesota Office of Higher Education (herein referred to as OHE) to annually report to the legislature regarding Minnesota student's participation in tuition reciprocity and students from other states receiving reciprocity in Minnesota.

The OHE is a cabinet-level state agency providing students with financial programs and information to help them gain access to a college education.

23. The elimination of all non-resident tuition rates.

24. Efforts to make any student that completed three years of high school in Minnesota eligible for all forms of financial aid.

25. Tuition relief, affordable textbooks, and maintaining/enhancing student services shall be the budgetary priorities for MSCSA.

MSCSA Opposes:

1. The implementation of a voucher system in Minnesota.

Vouchers are provided by the state to give students a certain funding amount to use to reduce what they are paying in tuition at the institution they chose to attend.

Section B: Other State Issues: MSCSA Supports:

1. Student organizations in their continued efforts to organize at the state level. Moreover, local public twoyear college student governments support Minnesota State Statute 136F.22, which gives students a vehicle to advocate their concerns on higher education issues to various government entities.

2. Allowing students to retain eligibility for the Minnesota Post-Secondary Child Care Grant program up to the completion of a baccalaureate degree.

The MN Post-Secondary Child Care Grant Program provides financial assistance to students who have children age twelve and under. Students must not be receiving assistance under MFIP and must demonstrate financial need for grants.

3. A tuition-setting model that is tied to a national inflation index.

4. The creation and increase of childcare centers on campus, allowing students majoring in childcare or development priority in staffing.

5. Raising the award cap and expanding funding for the Minnesota Post-Secondary Child Care Grant program to reflect actual child care costs.

6. A reduction in the credits necessary to qualify for the maximum Post-Secondary Child Care Grant.

The current number of credits necessary is six credits per term.

7. Increased funding and expanded eligibility for the State Work Study program.

The MN State Work Study program is designed to assist students in meeting their financial need. Students must be paid minimum wage. Funds are allocated to the individual schools, and the schools award the funds based on financial need.

8. Allowing MnSCU to reallocate any unexpended work-study and Minnesota Post-Secondary Child Care Grant Program dollars amongst students at system schools before returning program funds to the OHE.

9. An annual refundable tax credit for higher education costs.

10. An annual tax credit for education-related computer and book expenses.

11. Academic licenses for full software and other technology that increases access for students.

These licenses would provide software that costs money, like Microsoft word or excel, to be provided to students.

12. Increased state appropriations to MnSCU to offset the cost of technology and equipment at public twoyear institutions.

13. Lowering the legal age for running for state and local elected office to 18.

Currently the age is 21.

14. Allowing MFIP participants to enroll in post-secondary education beyond 24 months while enrolled in MFIP.

The Minnesota Family Investment Program is the state's welfare reform program to assist lowincome families with children.

15. The substitution of a credit hour for a work hour to count towards the 20 hour minimum as required by the MFIP program.

16. Lowering the working hour requirements for MFIP program pertaining to full-time students to 10 hours per week.

17. The creation and implementation of a textbook rental program or other alternative programs designed to reduce the cost of all textbooks at each college.

18. The ongoing efforts and purpose of the Student Advisory Council (herein referred to as SAC).

SAC provides the OHE with student perspectives from all sectors on higher education issues and policies.

19. The consultation of SAC prior to any significant transfer of funds between the child care, work study and Minnesota State Grant programs by OHE.

20. Changes in the Minnesota State Grant formula to aid part-time students.

21. Legislation that recognizes the need of the family based on their income, rather than the cost of the institution the student attends.

22. Continued funding and facility space for campus veteran regional coordinators and resource centers through the Minnesota Department of Veteran Affairs.

Visit the MN Department of Veteran Affairs here: http://mn.gov/mdva/

23. Continuation of same-day voter registration in Minnesota for all elections.

Minnesota residents can register to vote all the way up until the day of the election, where they may register at their polling place.

24. Prioritizing the use of general obligation bonds over revenue fund bonds for the construction of new student and wellness centers at two-year colleges.

General obligation bonds are used to fund capital construction and remodeling projects. They must be paid back. MnSCU schools pay back 1/6 of the bond over the course of a certain amount of years. Revenue fund bonds are used for projects that the students want specifically, like a parking lot or a student center. These projects must produce their own revenue to survive. This is done by charging the students a certain fee over a 20 year bond.

25. Increased mental health and disability services in the two-year college system.

MSCSA Opposes:

1. Sale or provision of a student's personal information by college campuses to marketing companies or companies marketing products directly to students.

2. Making student life fees or student association fees optional.

Student life fees go towards all student clubs or activities, student association fees go to the Student Government on campus and the MSCSA.

3. All public bus service cuts to any educational institutions.

4. The bundling of textbooks with other media that is not required by the instructor of the class.

The practice of bundling refers to textbooks that may contain an online access code for additional required classroom activities. A student may already have the textbook but will be required to buy the bundled materials because the access code is not sold separately.

5. Instructors receiving any gifts from publishers for using that publisher's textbooks.

6. All efforts to impose a high tuition/high financial aid model on public higher education.

A model that determines financial aid need by the cost of the institution. A college that costs more to attend would receive more funds for financial aid.

Article IV: Local and Campus Issues

Section A: Local and Campus Student Issues: MSCSA Supports: 1. Credit-weighted campus registration policies that give priority to students with more accumulated credits.

2. A working relationship between CSG's and their campus administration.

3. Each student enrolled with at least one credit to have the right for representation and involvement in any and all campus-based decision-making.

4. The Minnesota Open Meeting law (M.S. 471.705).

Requires that meetings of governmental bodies must be made open to the public. For more information on this law, visit this website: http://www.house.leg.state.mn.us/hrd/pubs/openmtg.pdf.

5. Student governments conducting a yearly review of all fees.

Sometimes referred to as tuition consultation.

6. Requiring CSG approval of any campus technology and student fees increase.

7. Increased access to absentee balloting.

Absentee balloting is the opportunity for citizens to vote early if they are not able to make it to their polling place on Election Day. A person may cast an absentee ballot in person, through the mail or email. Absentee voting starts 46 days prior to Election Day.

8. The right of students to conduct voter registration campaigns on campus with support from the administration and without interference.

9. Locating polling stations on campuses with enrollments of 500 FYE or more.

10. Campus administrations' compliance with Minn. Stat. 201.1611 and the federal Higher Education Act, which require colleges to provide voter registration cards.

See statute language here: https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/?id=201.1611

11. Any legislation that makes it easier for a student to show proof of residence as it relates to voting.

12. The allocation of Student Life dollars solely for student approved activities.

13. Exclusive student control over all Student Life money.

14. Culturally diverse activities at its conferences and on CSG's campuses.

15. Disability sensitivity programming at its conferences and on its CSG's campuses.

16. Campus compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

The Americans with Disabilities Act prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities in employment, transportation, public accommodation, communications, and governmental activities. Click here to read more about the Americans with Disabilities Act: http://www.ada.gov/.

17. Requiring campus child care centers, with available openings, to give priority to those students with children that are enrolled at that campus.

18. Setting wages for on-campus and/or off-campus work study/student workers at a competitive rate above the minimum wage.

19. Increasing work study wages annually to compensate for inflation.

20. Students having easy access to affordable and quality health care at all public two-year colleges through the campus health service.

21. Improved technology training on the system's instructional management system for all faculty and on online learning for those who teach online/distance learning courses.

The instructional management system defines how learning materials will be exchanged over the internet and how these materials will be used. The system that MnSCU uses is Desire to Learn (D2L).

22. A yearly evaluation on campuses, with student input, of the quality of classes offered online.

23. Student involvement in all campus hiring processes.

24. MnSCU and campuses providing resources to aid all students, including international students, in understanding financial literacy and filing state and federal tax returns.

25. System-wide digital and financial literacy trainings that each campus would provide at no cost to students.

Financial literacy trainings would encompass anything the student might encounter in their financial journey. Taxes, credit cards, loans, etc.

MSCSA Opposes:

1. Any fee charged against cashing, accessing, or spending financial aid, state grant, student payroll, or stipend funds.

2. Any legislation that restricts a student's ability to vote at the precinct in which they currently reside.

3. Discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, gender, and sexual orientation, veteran's status, marital status, national origin, age, mental or physical disability status due to public assistance, or any other group or class against which discrimination could occur.

4. Using student technology fees to fund technology improvements purchases not directly beneficial or accessible to all students.

5. Mandating the off-campus purchase of laptops and equipment valued over \$200.00 before financial aid is disbursed.

6. Higher tuition costs and/or fees for taking online/distance classes.

Article V: International

Section A: International Student Issues: MSCSA Supports:

1. Legislation that clarifies the collection process of the SEVIS fee.

The SEVIS fee is a tool used by the federal government to track the arrival, enrollment and departures of international students and their dependents.

2. International students obtaining a temporary social security number, regardless of working or job status.

3. Campuses utilizing their existing discretionary authority (as described in MnSCU Board Policy 2.2, Part 2, Subpart C, #7) to grant "in-state" tuition rates to international students.

4. International students paying in-state tuition after obtaining residency in Minnesota for 12 consecutive months.

5. Improved campus-level advising services for international students.

6. International students and the integral diversity and global perspectives they bring to a campus community.

7. MnSCU and campuses providing resources to aid international students in understanding and filing state and federal tax returns.

MSCSA Opposes:

1. The collection of the SEVIS fee from international students.

Article VI: Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MnSCU)

Section A: MnSCU Student Issues: MSCSA Supports:

1. The continuation of three voting student members on the MnSCU Board of Trustees.

The Board has a student representative from a community college, a technical college, and a state university.

2. Allowing the statewide student associations to appoint their respective student trustees to the MnSCU Board of Trustees.

3. A fair allocation model that provides accessibility to affordable and quality educational programs for all students attending Minnesota's public two-year colleges.

An allocation model is a way for the State of Minnesota to determine where to use funds. The MnSCU Board of Trustees presents requests to the legislature.

4. MnSCU institutions utilizing their full allocation of student work study and child care dollars to avoid any return of unused funds to OHE.

5. The promotion of off-campus work study and internship opportunities with non-profit and for-profit groups.

6. The Board of Trustees' enforcement of MnSCU policies requiring student representation on all committees that affect students.

Policy 2.3, Procedure 2.3.1 defines this requirement. For the full procedure visit this website: http://www.mnscu.edu/board/procedure/203p1.html.

7. Appointing two students to presidential search committees.

8. A mandatory notification period of no less than two weeks for the appointment of student representatives to campus committees whose work directly affects students before committee work can begin.

9. Penalty-free deferments of tuition payments.

10. The appointment of at least one member of MSCSA to Vice Chancellor or Chancellor Search Committees.

11. That the MnSCU Board of Trustees consults with the statewide student associations on its evaluation of the Chancellor.

12. CSGs reporting to the Board of Trustees on the consultation process between the CSG and campus administration, particularly regarding CSG approval or non-approval of campus tuition proposals.

13. Increased accountability of chief campus administrators.

14. That campus reserves not exceed 5% of its yearly general operating revenue and any balance over 5% be used to reduce future tuition increases.

15. That student activity fees be spent exclusively on student approved activities.

16. That CSGs have exclusive authority over all student fee derived revenues.

17. The continuation of MnSCU Board Policy 2.3 and Procedure 2.3.1 as they relate to student involvement in decision-making.

Policy 2.3 can be found at: <u>http://www.mnscu.edu/board/policy/203.html</u>. Procedure 2.3.1 can be found at: http://www.mnscu.edu/board/procedure/203p1.html.

18. The right of students to be recognized and heard in all matters as they relate to decision-making with regard to the fulfillment of their higher education.

19. A system-wide application process with a one-time fee.

20. Allowing students to evaluate instructors no less than on a semester basis and for colleges to follow up with instructors who receive poor evaluations.

21. A uniform instructor evaluation process within all MnSCU institutions.

22. Universal transfer of all academic credits between MnSCU colleges, the University of Minnesota, and the private college system.

23. Seamless transfer of all academic credits between all MnSCU institutions, standardized equivalencies across all MnSCU schools, and policies aimed at simplifying the transfer process.

Standardized equivalencies would mean a uniform system based on course objectives.

24. Seamless registration and financial aid for MnSCU students that are transfer students within the MnSCU system or concurrently enrolled in more than one MnSCU institution.

25. Efforts aimed at limiting students' out-of-pocket costs for textbooks and other instructional materials.

26. Ensuring that textbooks and other instructional materials are easily accessible in a variety of formats to all students.

27. State-wide maximums for all student fees levied by campuses.

28. Development of system-wide criteria for setting differential tuition rates.

Tuition that is charged by course or program when there is a high cost for offering the course. An example is the need for specialized equipment. The Board of Trustees approves these rates.

29. Expanded availability of discounted and free software licenses and information technology support for MnSCU students.

30. Expanded healthcare coverage options for students and widespread marketing of available policy options.

31. Mandatory system-wide training or proficiency standards for all faculty regarding best practices for teaching online classes.

32. System-wide quality standards for online and hybrid classes.

Hybrid or "blended" classes are courses that are partly online and partly in the classroom.

33. Consultation with MSCSA leadership and local students on all revenue fund projects proposed for the next 5-10 years.

34. Access to low cost or free online and Adult Basic Education courses to meet development education requirements.

When students are considered to be "not college ready," they must pay for developmental courses that do not count for credit. This would allow for low cost or free developmental courses to get the student ready.

35. Appropriate classification within policy which recognizes and assists in the language learning needs of ESL students to ensure that students have adequate time for the translation of assignments, test, and quizzes.

ESL stands for English as a Second Language. This means English is not their native language.

36. Increased collaboration to facilitate successful transitions from all K-12 schools to colleges within MnSCU.

MSCSA Opposes:

1. Campuses mandating full payment of tuition prior to the first day of class.

2. Fees for dropping/adding classes prior to the first day of class.

3. Collecting fees and/or mandatory costs to support mandatory health insurance plans for students.

- 4. Construction of revenue fund projects without local student support.
- 5. Any third party product or service that would hinder a student's access to education.

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