



# Represent. Inform. Organize.



2011 Annual Report

## Dear Friends,

The Minnesota State University Student Association (MSUSA) is an independent, nonprofit organization funded and operated by students that has been a strong voice for state university students on the campus, state, and federal levels for over 40 years. Over the past year MSUSA has been dedicated to educating and informing students about higher education issues that affect their lives as students, while providing opportunities to use this knowledge to advocate on behalf of all Minnesota state university students.

In 2011, MSUSA reached out to students and engaged in advocacy for increased funding to the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities System in order to ensure tuition increases remained minimal. By dedicating resources to expanding communications with students we were better able to carry out our mission.

After two years of hard work the contact management system has been fully implemented, allowing us to contact our entire student population for the first time in our organization's history. This, coupled with our improved campus committee structure has enabled us to organize our students to participate in grassroots organizing more effectively than ever.

In addition, our affiliate programs continued to serve as an important asset for the organization. The Jared P. Scholarship program reached its \$20,000 fundraising goal. Meanwhile, the Penny Scholarship Program gave out over \$18,000 in awards making it possible for students to actively pursue public internships and engage in community service. Finally, the MSUSA Alumni Association had one of its best years to date managing to implement both a successful mentorship program and a "Living with Student Debt" campaign that assisted greatly in our efforts to engage students in our work.

While 2011 was not without its share of challenges, thanks to the dedication of our student committees, board members, and professional staff we were able to overcome the difficulties of the current economic climate and continue to ensure public higher education in Minnesota remains affordable and accessible to all.



Amanda Bardonner  
State Chair



## 2011-2012 Board of Directors

Charlie Woodson, Bemidji State University

Matthew Lexcen, Minnesota State University Mankato

Diane Poss, Metropolitan State University

Kim Ehrlich, Minnesota State University Moorhead

Samantha Ivey, Saint Cloud State University

Kyle Berndt, Southwest Minnesota State University

Jack Linehan, Winona State University

# Increasing Communication with Students

## *Implementation of the Contact Management System and Social Media Expansion*

In this time of improved communications, it is more important than ever MSUSA utilize all the tools at its disposal to engage with students. It was with this thought in mind the MSUSA leadership worked to increase its presence on the web through a refocused emphasis on the MSUSA website, social media pages, blog, and a newly implemented contact management system

### Contact Management System

After two years of negotiation and planning, the contact management system (CMS) was fully implemented during the spring of 2011. Through a collaborative process involving the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MnSCU) and the CMS vendor E-tapestry (a subsidiary of Blackbaud Inc.) a database was created and maintained that includes nearly 75,000 of the Minnesota State University Student Association fee-paying members, alumni, and scholarship donors.

During the Spring of 2011 the database was used to e-mail over 45,000 students to introduce the Minnesota State University Student Association and offer them the opportunity to become more involved with the association's work. This was the first time in MSUSA's history as an organization the association has been able to contact this many students.



### Increased Web Based Communications

Complementing the increased ability to contact students via e-mail, MSUSA has also expanded its ability to stay in touch with students using a variety of online resources, including social networking sites like Facebook and Twitter, the MSUSA blog and website. By integrating the blog, website and social media pages a concentrated message can be sent to a growing number of students no matter how they choose to receive information.



### Increased Donor and Alumni Communication

In addition to increasing communication with student members, these tools have enabled MSUSA to reach out to alumni and scholarship program donors in a way never before possible. This increased contact will lead to more involvement in the Alumni Association. In addition, with more ways to reach out to returning and potential donors the association scholarships will likely see an increase in revenue.

# Student Grassroots Advocacy

## Optimizing Campus Organizing

### Campus Committee Expectations

For the first time since their inception, the campus committees were provided a clear expectation for the time they were to spend working on MSUSA related activities. Campus committees were expected to complete 14-week periods of work each semester.

Each campus committee was given a comprehensive list of assignments and project due dates at the beginning of the academic year enabling increases in their efficacy and efficiency. In addition, a new accountability system was implemented that required written reports for each campus committee, ensuring the organizing work was accomplished.

### Improved Recruitment

A strong emphasis was placed on the early formation of campus committees. Campus coordinators were appointed by early summer, while the rest of the campus committee were hired by the first few weeks of the fall semester. This was a notable improvement from years past. In addition, an application process was initiated for the Lobby Corps on each campus. This enabled MSUSA to attract a more capable, engaged group of students to assist in grassroots advocacy efforts.



### Committee Resources

Annual fall campus visits from staff and officers were focused almost entirely on campus committee trainings. This focus on engaging students and completing training exercises while on campus gave the campus committees the tools needed to get a head start on the much needed organizing and advocacy work. In addition, a system was implemented that allowed students to easily access needed funds while maintaining a proper amount of oversight, which in turn creates more efficiency and flexibility while carrying out their work assignments.

## 2011-2012 Leadership Team



**Amanda Bardonner**  
State Chair  
SCSU Student



**Nikki Sabby**  
Vice Chair  
MNSU Student



**Tyler Ulferts**  
Treasurer  
MNSU Student

# Student Lead Advocacy

## *Engaging Students to Ensure Accessibility and Affordability*

### Student Lead Advocacy

MSUSA is dedicated to providing opportunities for students to advocate for the issues affecting them every day.

The Minnesota State University Student Association partnered with the two-year student association, the Minnesota State College Student Association (MSCSA), to bring over 400 students to the capitol to rally for higher education funding.

More than 30 students from all over the state travelled to the state capitol six times to meet with more than 30 legislators during the session. Students from Saint Cloud State University were even able to have lunch with the House and Senate Chairs of the Higher Education Committee to discuss the importance of keeping higher education affordable. In addition, State Chair Andrew Spaeth was able to participate in a higher education roundtable with Governor Mark Dayton and Sheila Wright, the Director of the Office of Higher Education.



### Ensuring Accessibility and Affordability



MSUSA was busy at work this past legislative session advocating for a variety of issues vital to the continued accessibility and affordability of higher education at Minnesota's state universities.

MSUSA fought record cuts to Higher Education in Minnesota. The final budget agreement included an additional \$10 million for the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MnSCU) system. In addition, the State Grant Program received an additional \$10 million a year over the next biennium, thus boosting a program that benefits the most vulnerable students.

Thanks in part to these efforts; the state legislature passed \$131 million in bonding projects for MnSCU. \$30 million of that money went to HEAPR with approximately another \$100 million of that going to the renovation and construction of new buildings at our universities, thus ensuring a quality educational experience for the students served by MSUSA.

MSUSA helped to secure \$945,000 in funding for the Higher Education Veterans Program and repealed the program's sunset date. Repealing the sunset date ensured the money would be added to the base budget.

MSUSA worked tirelessly this past session in opposition to a proposed requirement to show a picture ID to vote. Efforts included testifying in front of legislative committees numerous times as well as submitting a letter to the Governor outlining concerns with the proposal. This requirement would limit students' ability to vote by requiring they show a government issued identification with a current address—something many college students lack.

## Improved Alumni Outreach

### *Engaging Our Students Beyond Graduation*

#### **Mentorship Program**

The MSUSA Alumni Association implemented a mentorship program matching up former MSUSA students with current ones. This provided an alternative avenue for students to connect with the student association, while giving them a chance to learn from alumni who were once in their shoes. Besides participating in one-on-one mentorships, alumni lead conference trainings and shared their current work to encourage the students to get further involved with the important issues MSUSA works on.

By offering networking and job opportunities for students, the alumni who participate in the mentorship program help to ensure MSUSA's future success by assisting in students' post-graduate success. Furthermore, this interaction with alumni emphasizes why the work students are currently doing is so important.



#### **Living with Student Debt Campaign**



The MSUSA Alumni Association conducted a survey of state university alumni regarding how the debt they incurred while attending school was affecting them. The results were alarming. Those that responded reported an average of \$32,510 in debt upon graduation, with monthly payments averaging around \$293 a month. While only 47 alumni responded to the survey, their stories were on par with similarly disturbing national trends.

This program enabled alumni to take a more active role in MSUSA's advocacy work by giving public and elected officials a different perspective on public higher education and why it is important to fund. In addition, it illustrated the importance of student work at the capitol by showing the ramifications student debt has on their future lives and the economy while encouraging them to be more cognizant of the consequences student loans have on their financial futures. The results of this alumni-led survey ultimately reinforce the need for a lifetime commitment to higher education advocacy.

## 2011-2012 Staff

### **Kasey Gerkovich**

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### **Matt Smriga**

Director of Campus Organizing  
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## Financial Statement

	Unrestricted	Temporarily Restricted	Permanently Restricted	2011 Totals	2012 Totals
<b>Revenues:</b>					
Association Fees	\$ 740,013	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 740,013	\$783,938
Special Events	0	27,632	0	27,632	32,002
Contributions	0	5,646	0	5,646	16,521
Grants	0	3,539	0	3,539	3,715
Interest and Dividend Income	9,335	8,774	0	18,109	45,437
Reimbursements	920	0	0	920	2,283
Gain (Loss) on Investments	49,784	101,651	0	151,435	(26,421)
Gain (Loss) on Disposal of Assets	(1,110)	0	0	1,110	0
Net Assets Released from Restriction	126,334	(126,334)	0	0	0
<b>Total Revenues</b>	<b>925,276</b>	<b>20,908</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>946,184</b>	<b>857,475</b>
<b>Expenses:</b>					
Management and General	207,676	0	0	207,676	402,285
Program Services	449,909	0	0	449,909	277,170
Fund Raising	62,192	0	0	62,192	51,738
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>719,777</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>719,777</b>	<b>731,193</b>
<b>Changes in Net Assets</b>	<b>205,499</b>	<b>20,908</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>226,407</b>	<b>126,282</b>
<b>Net Assets at Beginning of the Year</b>	<b>1,157,158</b>	<b>51,797</b>	<b>67,000</b>	<b>1,275,955</b>	<b>1,149,673</b>
<b>Net Assets at the End of the Year</b>	<b>1,362,657</b>	<b>72,705</b>	<b>67,000</b>	<b>1,502,362</b>	<b>1,275,955</b>

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[www.msusa.org](http://www.msusa.org)



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