



# **MSUSA Student Platform 2013-2014**

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## **Student Consultation and Representation**

MSUSA urges and supports student involvement in decision making through consultation and representation in all aspects at the campus, system, state and federal levels regarding issues that impact students.

## **Academic Affairs**

The mission of the Minnesota State University Student Association (MSUSA), Inc. regarding academic affairs is to enhance the academic quality provided by the Minnesota State Universities and to increase scholastic opportunities for the students attending these institutions. To ensure academic programs are the focus at these institutions, MSUSA supports:

- A. Increasing scholarship, internship, assistantship and fellowship opportunities
- B. Providing quality advising by faculty and professional advisors to ensure students are given the tools to graduate in an efficient time period
- C. Enhancing academic integrity at each respective institution
- D. Developing and maintaining innovative and efficient learning technologies
- E. Improving recruitment and retention of students, faculty, staff, and administrators of underserved and underrepresented populations
- F. Supporting admission policies and programs which offer access to the greatest possible student profile while striving to maintain a system wide commitment to high academic standards
- G. Encouraging a uniform credit transfer policy to be used by all colleges and universities within the MnSCU System that would maintain individual institutional integrity
- H. Promoting student representation in faculty hiring, evaluation and promotion processes
- I. Encouraging, promoting and enhancing diverse programs and curriculum at Minnesota state universities
- J. Supporting fair policies in regards to drop/withdrawal of courses as well as the charging of class/consumable fees
- K. Supporting campus level decision making without unnecessary interference from state or federal government
- L. Encouraging student consultation on faculty curriculum committees
- M. Encouraging student representation on university committees and task forces
- N. Ensuring that textbooks and academic course resources are affordable and accessible for students and encouraging alternative means of providing course materials
- O. Advocating for policies that ensure the protections of students' academic rights, including but not limited to intellectual property, appeals, academic standing and grading
- P. Support a forum for students that provides access to information of internship opportunities

## Diversity

MSUSA defines “diversity” as the respect and recognition of all underrepresented groups and issues including, but not limited to, cultural groups, ethnic groups, members of the L (lesbian) G (gay) B (bisexual) T (transgender) Q (queer) community s, gender issues, international students, veterans, religious preference, age issues, creed, income and people with disabilities. MSUSA’s primary mission in relation to diversity is to promote issues of diversity in higher education and empower all students within our association and communities to ensure diversity is a focus on each campus MSUSA supports:

- A. Non-discriminatory and equal opportunity policies in all aspects of collegiate life
- B. Encouraging ongoing diversity education and training for all members of the university’s community
- C. Encouraging the creation and sustainability of student services for members of all underrepresented populations
- D. Creating a safe learning environment on each campus and in the community for students of all backgrounds
- E. Annual assessment surveys of cultural climates on each campus, within MSUSA and MnSCU, with full student consultation
- F. Encouraging international experiences for all students through student recruitment and retention, study abroad experiences as well as cultural opportunities
- G. Working with the system office to continually pursue the enhancement of diversity at the state universities
- H. Increasing its visibility by encouraging, promoting, and enhancing diverse programs and curriculum in all Minnesota state universities
- I. Striving to ensure that all campus facilities meet or exceed the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) standards
- J. Advocating for the creation and sustainable funding for diversity related centers at each Minnesota state university adapting to each campus’ need
- K. Proactive and preventative approach to the new norm and how it directly affects diversity, compiling data from demographics, financial needs of the diverse groups, and the non-traditional student influx so as to meet those changes today and be better prepared as an organization for tomorrow
- L. Advocating as a governing body to hold MSUSA campuses accountable for developing and implementing an inclusive diversity plan which follows the MNSCU diversity plan guidelines and to hold the universities accountable to the plans which currently exist on campus
- M. Developing metrics to set standards for accountability
- N. Fair access for international students attending MSUSA affiliated campuses to in-state tuition waivers

With each of these goals and objectives, MSUSA supports an expansion of diversity beyond the MnSCU definitions. Rather than limiting to certain groups of people, MSUSA supports a definition of diversity, which recognizes that every person is both a distinct individual and identifies with various groups’ cultures.

# Federal Legislation

The mission of MSUSA regarding Federal Legislation is to assist policy makers at the university, MnSCU and federal government by providing information on legislation and rulemaking affecting state universities and to disseminate all pertinent information regarding issues concerning higher education to students and all other interested parties. It is an objective of MSUSA to set legislative priorities on all levels of decision making, to make strides to influence the areas outlined and to support and represent all students of the MnSCU system, regardless of nationality, citizenship status, age, race, creed, sexual orientation, disability and/or religious beliefs on the campus and at the federal government level.

MSUSA has selected the following federal legislative priorities to support:

## Section A: Financial Aid

1. Expanding beneficial need-based federal grant programs (Pell Grant, TRIO, etc.)
2. Low interest financial aid to all students
3. Simplifying the FAFSA
4. Evaluating financial need recognizing that many students pay for higher education without financial assistance from family by changing the EFC to more accurately represent the funds a student has available for college
5. Inclusion of all student fees, including mandatory academic program fees in the calculation of the financial aid formula
6. Federal student aid programs giving preference to students at public institutions.
7. Increasing funding and eligibility for the Federal Work Study program
8. Providing an opportunity for all United States high school graduates to attend a higher education institution at in-state costs regardless of citizenship status
9. The expansion of a student loan income-based repayment program
10. Allow financial aid advisors to give preference to the SELF loan program
11. The availability of subsidized loans for all eligible graduate students

## Section B: International Students

1. Legislation that would make it easier for international students to gain employment off-campus
2. Encouraging the federal government to assign Social Security Numbers to international students as soon as they become enrolled within the university
3. Allow international students to be eligible for work-study positions

## Section C: Veterans

1. Increased financial aid for service men and women, which includes promoting a practical and easily accessible system of applying for and receiving benefits
2. Providing veteran benefits to higher education based on cumulative service rather than consecutive service

## Section D: Taxes

1. Any measures taken to reduce the tax burden on students
2. Tax credits or savings based on educational expenses such as tuition, computers, textbooks, etc and student loan payments

## Section E: Textbooks

1. Fair publishing practices and pricing regarding the textbook industry
2. Legislation that would prevent instructors from receiving any gifts from publishers

## Section F: Other

1. Efforts in encouraging students to work for public service and non-profit organizations resulting in credit towards repayment of student loans or educational expenses
2. Working in cooperation with all other state and national student, faculty and administrative associations, by proposing positive changes in federal higher education, with student involvement at every level of decision-making
3. Fair and flexible implementation and enforcement for students affected by Title IX

# State Legislation

The mission of MSUSA regarding State Legislation is to assist policy makers at the university, MnSCU, OHE and state legislature by providing information in regards to legislation and rulemaking affecting state universities and to disseminate all pertinent information regarding issues concerning higher education to students and all other interested parties. It is an objective of MSUSA to set legislative priorities on all levels of decision making, to make strides to influence the areas outlined and to support and represent all students of the MnSCU system, regardless of nationality, citizenship status, age, race, creed, sexual orientation, disability and/or religious beliefs on the campus and at the state government level.

MSUSA has selected the following state legislative priorities to support:

## Section A: Tuition

- a. Recognition of lower tuition as the best source of financial aid to all students at public higher education institutions
- b. Advocating that the Minnesota State Legislature honor their appropriation commitments made in chapter 135A.01 of the Minnesota State Code to fund 67% of the cost of public postsecondary education instruction

## Section B: Financial Aid

1. SELF loans and other state financial aid programs
2. The reduction of student dependence on loan programs by increasing grant and other aid
3. A financial aid system that is based on the student's financial need, not the cost of the institution
4. The opposition of any proposal which includes university revenues or tuition being used to fund the State Grant Program
5. The PELL Pass Through, which would allow any further increases in the PELL grant to "pass through" the state grant formula without penalizing the students grant award
6. Increased funding for the Living and Miscellaneous Expense (LME) allowance
7. Priority given to public institution students over private institution students in the State Grant formula
8. All fees to be included in the calculations of the Minnesota State Grant formula

## Section C: Bonding

1. Bonding for academic buildings, prioritizing significant health and safety risks
2. Full funding for state university academic programs, university libraries, and academic buildings
3. The elimination of university responsibility for debt service on all bonding projects

## Section D: Taxes and Fees

1. Tax credits and/or deductions benefiting students
2. Approval from the respective student association regarding a change in any student fees
3. The limitation of all cities and municipalities from assessing fees targeted to students or any institution of higher education

## Section E: Civic Engagement

1. Encouragement of access to and participation in all aspects of the political process through educational campaigns and voter registration
2. Advocating for student-friendly voting laws, rules and practices, including maintaining current voter registration laws pertaining to residence hall students and Election Day registration
3. Encouraging the placement of polling locations at on-campus sites or sites convenient and accessible to student populations
4. The Student Advisory Council (SAC) as a permanent advisory group to the Governor, the legislature, and Office of Higher Education

## Section F: Information privacy

- a. The opposition of any legislation that infringes on the privacy of students including parental notification (with the exception of medical emergencies)
- b. The opposition of the sale or distribution of a student's personal information by MnSCU or university campuses to any party not specifically approved by the student

#### Section G: Textbooks

1. Fair publishing practices regarding the textbook industry
2. Legislation that would prevent instructors from receiving any gifts from publishers
3. Promote legislation that provides low-cost textbook alternatives to students

#### Section H: Veterans

1. Increased financial aid for returning service men and women
2. Legislation that would simplify the application and advising process providing higher education benefits to veterans
3. Legislation that provides veteran benefits to higher education based on cumulative service rather than consecutive service
4. Educational credit awarded for relevant military training and service
5. Expand state GI benefits to pre-9/11/01 veterans

#### Section I: Student Employment/Work Study

1. Competitive wages for all students working on state university campuses
2. Increased funding and eligibility for the State Work Study program
3. Legislation that would make it easier for international students to gain employment off campus
4. The advancement of internship opportunities

#### Section J: Childcare

1. Existing and the formation of, low-cost child care programs that are accessible to students on all campuses
2. Raising the award cap on the Minnesota Post-Secondary Child Care Grant to reflect actual childcare costs
3. Priority consideration for students seeking on-campus child care

## Student Services Objectives

The mission of MSUSA in regards to Student Services is to ensure students always play an integral role in the higher education community. In addition, MSUSA strives to promote the highest quality of life that will enhance the college experience of all students outside the classroom. In an effort to achieve this goal, MSUSA supports:

- A. Affordable and accessible childcare provided by certified facilities on-campus
- B. Ensuring that all students have access to affordable healthcare and healthcare facilities as well as fair and reasonable healthcare options for international students
- C. Safe campus community for all students
- D. Continual efforts to maintain the most environmentally sustainable campus practices possible
- E. Recognition of the role universities play in the surrounding community
- F. Free legal consultation.
- G. Competitive bid for all student service contracts
- H. Ensuring student knowledge of rights and responsibilities through student representation on relevant committees
- I. University policies and city ordinances that promote fair prices and renting practices for on and off campus student housing and opposes those practices not congruent with this point
- J. Opposing all forms of hazing and encourage civility
- K. Ensuring access to affordable emergency contraceptives
- L. Mental health services and support systems in the campus community
- M. The protection of first amendment rights for all students and student organizations on campus
- N. University support for sexual violence victims including but not limited to, health care, legal consultation, and counseling
- O. Advocating for policies and funding that would assist single parents while attending a Minnesota state university
- P. The dissemination of university rules and regulations, while maintaining a fair and legal judicial due process
- Q. The opposition of any efforts to restrict access to public institutions to any group of students (i.e. moratoriums and extra fees)
- R. Student understanding and utilization of available state, federal and private financial aid programs
- S. Working to ensure that campuses and MnSCU provide efficient, effective and student friendly technology services
- T. Existence of long-term plans and planning processes for revenue fund buildings and structures
- U. Consideration of the needs of veterans on campuses when instituting new policies, procedures or practice
- V. Promotion of financial literacy and education, including student loan repayment options
- W. Providing these services should be provided in a fiscally responsible manner while ensuring student needs are met
- X. To ensure campus and system consultation when considering outside vendors or service providers in regards to financial disbursement and student services



## **PLATFORM GUIDELINES (for Delegate**

## **Assembly)**

1. All issues should be addressed in a general fashion.
2. Each issue should be identified, briefly described, its effect should be addressed and then the MSUSA position should be made clear.
3. Each issue should be addressed in a single paragraph except for issues that are complex, such as the (entire) Minnesota State Colleges and Universities Budget.
4. Each platform section should keep within the bounds of the overall issues in its area. For example, Academic Affairs should not address a Student Services issue.
5. No specific direction should be made to spend money, direct an officer or staff member to carry out a duty, or any other action. Platforms are general statements of philosophy and provide general positions.
6. Each issue should be identified before the plank is stated. For example, the issue of Student Debt should be underlined and identified before any text is written.
7. It should be realized that since we do not know what issues are very important to the Legislature for the next session, we should not put the planks in priority order. We can stress what we think should be a high priority or an ongoing priority, but we must avoid being too specific.
8. The overall platform will be one document. It should flow well and be consistent.
9. It should avoid naming persons by name and only use titles such as the Governor, the Chancellor, the Director of the Office of Higher Education, etc.
10. If necessary, it is acceptable to mention MSUSA past actions or past positions on an issue.
11. Issues mentioned in the platform should be consistent with MSUSA's by-laws and policies.
12. All platform sections must be completed by the end of the committee meetings on Friday, and handed in (on Friday) to be typed for consideration on Saturday.
13. The platform will be published as the position of MSUSA, and will only be adjusted if it becomes outdated or inaccurate.
14. MSUSA will review the platform every year at the sixth regularly scheduled Delegate Assembly.
15. Any changes to the platform during the year shall be done by the Board of Directors after careful consideration.