



Members of the Higher Education Finance and Policy Conference Committee,

The Minnesota TRIO Association would like to thank you for your dedication to education issues. Given the unprecedented opportunity this session to invest in the future of Minnesota, **the Minnesota TRIO Association is in strong support of increased investment into the Minnesota State Grant program**, a program that is critical for making higher education accessible to low-income students.

TRIO programs are a series of federally funded college-access initiatives. They were created to remove education barriers for low-income and first-generation college students, as well as students who have a documented disability. Since 1966, TRIO programs have worked to reduce education disparities in Minnesota and have since grown to serve over 16,000 students at 32 post-secondary institutions across our state. Because of TRIO's federally defined eligibility criteria, the vast majority of TRIO students in Minnesota either are or will be State Grant recipients.

Working every day with low-income and first-generation college students, TRIO professionals can attest that the Minnesota State Grant is essential for making higher education accessible in our state. Whether students are pursuing a bachelor's degree in nursing or an associate's degree in automotive services, career and education pathways would be unattainable for thousands of Minnesotans without the support of the Minnesota State Grant program. However, because of the current parameters of the State Grant program, many of the lowest income Minnesotans reach the Grant maximum long before their financial need is met. The current formula requires that all students be responsible for a minimum of 50% of their total college costs, regardless of their income. This Assigned Student Responsibility means that combined State and Federal aid can cover no more than 50% of a student's recognized college cost. This creates an unrealistic cost burden for many of the TRIO students that we serve. As a result, TRIO-eligible students have been forced to take on unsustainable amounts of student debt or, in some cases, drop out of higher education entirely. In the 2020-2021 school year, enrollment of Pell Grant eligible students decreased by 12%, vs. a 2% decrease in non-Pell eligible students. The current crisis of college enrollment and retention is not experienced equally across all income levels: our students need more financial support.

The State Grant is critical for higher education access. However, under the current formula, the lowest income students bear a disproportionate burden of the cost. In order to make college more attainable for low and moderate-income students, **Minnesota TRIO asks that the state invest into the State Grant program and reduce the current Assigned Student Responsibility from 50% to 48%**. For the lowest-income students, this change would amount to an annual financial aid increase of \$358-\$534.

Thank you for your shared commitment to our students,

Minnesota TRIO Association
Legislation and Education Committee
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A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kevin Lattu".

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Krystle Igbo-Ogbonna".

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael Bro".

Institutions in Minnesota that hold federal TRIO grants:

Anoka Ramsey Community College - Cambridge & Coon Rapids
Augsburg University - Minneapolis
Bemidji State University - Bemidji
Carleton College - Northfield
Central Lakes College - Brainerd & Staples
Century College - White Bear Lake
College of Saint Benedict/Saint John's University - St. Joseph & Collegeville
The College of St. Scholastica - Duluth
Dakota County Technical College - Rosemount
Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College - Cloquet
Hennepin Technical College - Brooklyn Park & Eden Prairie
Hibbing Community College - Hibbing
Inver Hills Community College - Inver Grove Heights
Itasca Community College - Grand Rapids
Lake Superior College - Duluth
M State Community and Technical College - Moorhead
Mesabi Range College - Virginia
Metropolitan State University - St. Paul
Minneapolis Community and Technical College - Minneapolis
Minnesota State University Mankato - Mankato
Normandale Community College - Bloomington
North Hennepin Community College - Brooklyn Park
Rainy River Community College - International Falls
Riverland Community College - Albert Lea, Austin, & Owatonna
Ridgewater College TRIO - Willmar
Rochester Community and Technical College - Rochester
South Central College - North Mankato
Southwest Minnesota State University - Marshall
St Cloud State University - St. Cloud
St. Cloud Technical College - St. Cloud
St. Paul College - St. Paul
University of Minnesota Duluth - Duluth & Minneapolis
University of Minnesota Morris - Morris
University of Minnesota Twin Cities - Minneapolis
Vermilion Community College - Ely
Winona State University - Winona

*Programs that are operated by each of these institutions serve over 16,000 students in Minnesota annually.