

Testimony offered on Chairs Agreement on SF 975 – Higher Education Finance and Policy Committee

Dr. Bruce P. Corrie, June 15, 2021

ALANA Brain Trust

Chairs Bernardy and Tomassoni - thank you for this opportunity to testify and for your work in getting an agreement on funding and policy for higher education in Minnesota. Though much has been accomplished there are certain areas that could still be incorporated in the current bill.

In earlier testimony I offered, The Minnesota Solution for Higher Education - four areas to ensure that higher education investments effectively reach ALANA/BIPOC (African Latino Asian and Native American) students and offer some analysis for your consideration.

ALANA/BIPOC students invest over a billion dollars, annually, in tuition to get a quality education in Minnesota and so they deserve adequate investments in these four areas:

Affordability - an important mechanism to keep education affordable statewide has been the state grant program. The bill has very modest investments in this program and fails to acknowledge the devastating impact of the Pandemic and civil unrest on the ability of students to learn, work and pay their bills. Please explore adding to the state grant program as it has been very effective in reaching diverse students in rural and urban areas, especially low-income students.

Support Services – Some ALANA/BIPOC students need wrap around services to help them be successful. The bill does not have direct investments, such as in the form of competitive grants, to help provide these important services. Could you include a statewide “X” million competitive matching grant program to help grow support services across public and private institutions? This will remarkably improve graduation and retention rates.

Culturally Intelligent Learning Environments – The bill needs language for recipients of public funds, that they will invest in culturally intelligent learning environments so that students can be successful. A matching grant program of “x” million can help leverage resources to build culturally intelligent learning environments, such as improvements in syllabi and course materials, across public and private institutions. The funding for “teachers of color” in the existing bill will not make a significant change in the number of teachers of color in Minnesota in the next 5 years, especially in rural Minnesota. More investments are needed.

Metrics and Outcomes – Institutions receiving public funds should report disaggregated data by race and ethnicity on graduation outcomes and by discipline/academic major and by ACT/High School GPA. Institutions receiving public funds should also report on ALANA/BIPOC representation in staff, faculty, and administration. This will allow taxpayers a tool to assess the effectiveness of their investments in higher education.

We in Minnesota have a unique opportunity to make significant progress in eliminating racial educational disparities, given the inflow of federal resources, surplus in our tax revenues and a history of disinvestment in our ALANA/BIPOC student success. I implore you to not lose this important window of opportunity. Thank you.