

Michael Hsu MSA Question Responses 1-29-2021

Do you believe that the University of Minnesota should follow the lead of the University of Michigan and completely divest its endowment from fossil companies?

Yes. What we have been told in the past is that would be difficult because we do not hold individual stocks in our University portfolio. This means we cannot invest in certain funds if they have holdings from fossil companies and this could affect our returns. Additional funds are held in the University of Minnesota Foundation, which is a separate entity that has its own trustees. I believe there are far better investments in other industry sectors that could even improve our returns if this policy were implemented. The main objective is to invest in assets that bring in the highest returns with the least amount of risk. I think it is possible to do and that this problem will take care of itself, as fossil companies become less attractive investments relatively speaking.

The University of Minnesota Foundation East Gateway Project, overseen jointly by the Foundation and the Board of Regents, calls for the demolition of Argyle House and Dinnaken House. These two properties account for 900 beds of relatively affordable student housing. Do you support additional requirements to require the East Gateway Plan to construct an equal number of new units at a similarly affordable rate?

Yes. I have spoken about this in past meetings. Student housing is important. Student housing has been excluded in East Gateway planning and will displace students forcing them to live further away from their classes, labs, etc. I was told that demolition would be 10-20 years in the future and not to be concerned about student housing. The impact to students who will be forced to live farther away could be devastating to their college experience, not to mention their levels of student debt. It is a significant issue and should not be forgotten.

Do you support paying all student workers a \$15/hr minimum wage? Why or why not? If not, what alternative would you support to ensure students are fairly compensated for their work?

Sure, I have supported it in the past. Support for a \$15/Hour minimum wage may mean fewer jobs in the future. Being fairly compensated is a totally different question. The market will determine whether a person is adequately compensated for a particular job. If Minneapolis has a \$20/Hour minimum wage, for example, then students will likely take those jobs instead of University jobs. This will cause University employers to increase their wages to around the same amounts if they want to fill their jobs. Obviously, the cost and time to commute, as well as, the type of work are important considerations. Additionally, \$15/Hour should not be the goal, as \$15/Hour will need to be increased over time.

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Do you believe that the University should work with the Metropolitan Council to provide all Twin Cities students with a universal transit pass, funded by student service fees? If not, what alternative transit proposals would you support?

I have no problem with the University and the Metropolitan Council working together to provide all TC students with a universal transit pass funded by student fees. It's up to the students to request this type of expenditure from their student fees. It is my understanding that not all students are interested in a universal transit pass.

What gaps do you believe exist in the University's current COVID-19 plan? Please consider areas such as public health, academic programs, student financial wellbeing, and disparities for different groups of students.

My main concern is that we are not doing enough testing. Many schools are doing mandatory testing, especially for students living on campus. With the cost of testing going down to \$5 or less per test, I think we should be doing more testing. I pushed for a COVID Dashboard and a weekly Dashboard was eventually provided for on campus tests. I still believe a Daily Dashboard should be provided, but we have been lucky so far as it relates to positive COVID tests.

This is a broad subject and has impacted the University in many ways. The University has also provided significant resources to the State and Nation's pandemic response. Much will need to be done in the recovery process as we move forward. I believe that financial assistance for groups of students with greater needs has been addressed. If not, it should be. Fortunately, several good vaccines are on the way. More information will be available as we continue to recover. Hopefully next fall will be closer to normal.

Would you support a proposal to rename Coffman Memorial Union, Middlebrook Hall, Nicholson Hall, and Coffey Hall given the racist and antisemitic legacies of the individuals for whom these buildings are named?

I did not support this proposal when it was addressed by the Board in 2019. I did support the effort to examine the institutional history and spent over 100 hours personally examining thousands of documents in the files of former Regent Fred Snyder (1912-1951) in the University archives. Regent Snyder spend nearly all of his 39 years of service as the chair of the Board. He was the chair though WWI, the pandemic of 1918, the depression and WWII. It was a fascinating journey for me to see all the decisions that were made to make our University what it is today. Chair Snyder was the son-in-law of Gov. and Regent John Pillsbury. He was an attorney, a former Minneapolis City Council Member, and former State legislator. I have been fortunate to be able to read through his daily correspondence for over 30 years. I have much respect for how he and former regents were able to overcome challenges and create the great University that we as Minnesotans enjoy today.

From this exercise, I learned that the regents decided to let this issue go unresolved for over a decade. The regents followed chair Snyder's lead in wanting the courts to decide

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the issues around segregation and housing. This issue at the University came about under Plessy v. Ferguson (1896), separate but equal, and 20 years before Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, which was not decided by SCOTUS until 1954. As an attorney, it is understandable that Snyder wanted the courts to decide these issues.

Nothing takes 10 years for the board of regents to resolve unless they don't want to resolve it. It is quite obviously the case that they were waiting for a higher authority to make the decision. Having not been in their shoes, it is impossible to know what they knew and how they were thinking. I would like to think that I would have sought a resolution to this issue were I a regent then.

Lastly, I was the first regent to suggest that we research and understand what transpired nearly 100 years ago and, if necessary, fix it. Before voting against the resolution, I asked my colleagues to delay the vote until more information could be gathered and analyzed. There was no appetite for a delay. The vote was 10-1 against the resolution. Since then, there has been little or no effort made to further this research except for my own efforts. The pandemic forced me to pause my own research. The Board has discussed naming and renaming, but has not decided on what approach to take. It remains a work in progress and like many issues, has been on the back burner since the pandemic. I support a renaming policy that will overtime allow the renaming of certain buildings.

Do you support the establishment of a Civilian Police Accountability Council, composed of students, workers, and community members, to provide oversight on the University of Minnesota Police Department? What other measures do you believe should be taken to ensure that all students feel safe on campus?

Yes, some sort of civilian police accountability council could add value to the process. Accountability and transparency are important. At the December BOR meeting, I suggested providing body cameras to the entire force. The cost, I believe is minimal. Currently, UMPD spends a lot of time and energy responding to calls and incidents off campus. We need to better understand the workload and adjust accordingly. This week, Dr. Alexander and the University released a copy of his recommendations. I'm happy to see some of my thoughts reflected in the report.

Do you support ending the dining contract with Aramark Corporation and shifting to a self-operated dining system? Why or why not? What is your vision for student dining, student health, and the future of food sustainability on campus and in our community?

I support providing better quality food at a lower cost. If this can be done in a self-operated dining system, then we should do it. I attended the University at a time when dining was self-operated and I think it can be done again. In the future, we should find a way to provide better nutrition to students in a sustainable way. There are many food companies in the Twin Cities who can help with this effort. We should be able to solve any food insecurity problem on campus and in the greater community.

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Do you support returning ownership of the Cloquet Forestry Center to the Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians? Why or why not?

I do not know about this issue and administration has not provided any information regarding this question. All I can say is that regents should be provided with the facts and history prior to any discussion on the subject. There is probably a way to find a solution if we try.

The COVID-19 pandemic has underscored shortfalls in the University's yearly budget. As the Board considers how to be good fiscal stewards of University dollars, how will you ensure that programs designed to meet the basic needs of students are prioritized?

This will be done in the budget process. I am against putting the cost on the backs of current and future students. We have been told that the University will need to borrow over \$80M sometime this spring or summer. There have not been any details regarding where the money will come from to repay this loan or even what the terms will be. I will be looking to make sure the needs of students are prioritized in this process. I will be working with students regarding their concerns as we move forward. This includes tuition, which I believe should be frozen or reduced.

Recent changes to Title IX by the Department of Education have allowed universities to raise the standard of evidence in sexual misconduct disciplinary hearings from a "preponderance of the evidence" to a higher "clear and convincing" standard. Which standard do you believe the University should use in adjudicating sexual misconduct claims against students and faculty? Additionally, do you think students reporting sexual misconduct should be subject to live cross-examination, as provided for in the same Title IX changes?

This past summer we were asked to approve changing our policies involving students and faculty to the preponderance standard due to Title IX requirements. The faculty supported the change and so did I. We should always be in compliance with Title IX and any other local, State and Federal laws.

Our student body does not represent the diversity of our state, with Black students accounting for 4.04% of enrollment, Hispanic/Latino students representing just 3.82% and Indigenous students making up just 0.08%. Additionally, students of color and Indigenous students face stark inequities in terms of academic support and access to basic needs once they are on campus. What can the University do, both in the long-term and the short-term, to eliminate these disparities and ensure higher education is accessible to students of color and Indigenous students?

I believe in a fair admissions process that follows all laws. I further believe that we should have a Test Optional policy for admissions, where students can apply with no test

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scores. It only took a pandemic for this to happen, although this is not a permanent change to the policy. I think the Test Optional policy should be permanent. Any disparities should be addressed and eliminated over time and accessibility to all students of color and Indigenous students should be improved. At our Morris campus, where tuition is free for Indigenous students, over 25% of the student body is now composed of Indigenous students.

The University of Minnesota - Twin Cities campus is classified by the USDA as a food desert. Do you believe the University should play an active role in ensuring healthy and affordable food options are available to students? Beyond the existing Nutritious U Food Pantry, what could the University do to prevent food insecurity?

Yes, I believe the University should be active in making sure healthy and affordable food options are available to students living on or near campus. Nutritious U Food Pantry is filling a need, but more needs to be done. The high cost of tuition and room and board along with high rent costs off campus are significant problems that contribute to food insecurity. There are places such as the East Gateway area where a large grocery store could be located in the future. Also there are new developments planned for Dinkytown that could include larger grocery stores. The Target Express store in Dinkytown is nice, but simply not enough. Target, SuperValu and many food companies in Minnesota can help with this issue.

How do you plan to take a holistic approach to supporting both student and faculty mental health, considering the unique mental health needs of multicultural, LGBTQ+, and students with disabilities?

Mental health is a big problem for all students and should be a major priority moving forward. I have been an advocate in the past for more funding for student mental health initiatives and to reduce wait times for appointments. There is also a problem with having enough services near campus. Transportation is potentially a problem as well. In the post pandemic world, we'll have to see how best to offer a holistic approach to support the needs of students and faculty in this area. I am not aware of the specifics with regard to multicultural, LGBTQ+, and students with disabilities, but I'm eager to learn about it.

Do you feel that the current undergraduate grading system is successful in providing the best possible academic experience for our students? Do you support the expansion of S/N grading options beyond the COVID-19 pandemic? What other long-term changes to university grading policies would you like to see implemented?

I would need to hear more about the issues. I supported the change during the pandemic, but I have not heard much about a long-term change. Other schools have experimented with grading, but this involves a lot of research, study and consultation with faculty before any long-term changes are discussed.

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How will you address the perception held by some members of the student body that the relationship between students and administrators is adversarial in nature? How will you navigate the differing timelines for change often held by students and other stakeholders in the University community?

I would have to know more about this question. I am always open for discussion. With regard to timing, some things can be changed quickly and some things take a long time. I was the first advocate for mandatory sexual assault and harassment training for all students, faculty and staff at the University. This took years to accomplish. I was originally told it could never happen. So the fact that it only took years taught me that anything is possible. The same was true about online learning. I was told it was too expensive and that faculty didn't want to do it. I was told that we are a "place based educational institution". Well, it only took a pandemic and most classes were delivered online. Maybe not all were good, but the point is, anything is possible. It only took a pandemic. Change in higher education is just beginning.

Do you support the transition to source the University's energy from 100% renewable energy? If so, what should that process look like?

Yes, over time this will happen. It's all about cost and who will pay for it. My father was a wind energy researcher in the 1970s when there was a real "energy crisis". Gas lines were miles long. When it ended, the research dollars for renewable energy went away. I think we are closer than ever now, and costs will continue to go down. Electric cars are the future and wind and solar, etc. are the future. You have seen many solar panels being constructed across our campuses and wind turbines too. This is happening.

Beyond what has been mentioned in this questionnaire, what other policies or issues would you hope to prioritize if selected for a position on the Board of Regents?

I will continue to advocate for the following additional issues:

- Lower Tuition and Total Cost of Attendance
- A Test Optional Admissions Policy
- Access and Diversity
- Increased Graduation Rates
- Reduced Student Debt
- Improved Student Experience, including Housing, Health & Safety
- Improved Career Placement
- Increased Research
- Improved Rankings
- Coherent Athletics Strategy
- Transparency and Accountability...