Regent Candidate Dave Hoang’s Responses to the 2021 Minnesota Student Association Issues Questionnaire

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?

I believe that any organization, public or private, should be able to make investment or procurement decisions that reflect its values. I also believe that public organizations should make these decisions in a deliberate, thorough, inclusive, transparent and responsible manner.

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?

I support all reasonable means to achieve affordable housing for students.

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?

I support paying students a minimum wage that is established by federal, state, or local government so that students, regardless of whether they work on- or off-campus, are compensated similarly for similar work.

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 support affordable public transit options for students using public transportation including options for a flat fee or sliding-scale fee.

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.

The fundamental gap that exists in the University’s current COVID-19 plan is a financial one and it manifests in many areas including the ones listed here. COVID-19 pandemic occurs in an unprecedented manner and I appreciate the University’s best efforts to address all the issues that are coming before it. However, this fundamental financial gap cannot be addressed by the University alone and will require the assistance of legislators at both state and federal level.

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 believe this issue was reviewed and voted by the Board of Regents in 2019. However, if the student body, staff, faculty and the administration believe that the issue warrants another review and I am chosen to serve, I will pledge to carefully review any and all materials and to listen to all points of view with empathy, compassion and understanding.

*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?*

I support all reasonable means to hold the University of Minnesota Police Department accountable for the actions of its officers and staff. I also support all reasonable means that the Police Department needs to deploy to keep students, staff and visitors safe at all times.

*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 the University’s efforts to explore all available options to bring the University community dining options that bring the best value keeping in mind that a contracted vendor may be able to hold down cost more efficiently due to its economy of scale and a self-operated dining system may be able to bring maximum flexibility in addressing issues that a contracted vendor may not be able to address.

*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 support an honest and thorough examination and discussions of this matter. The decision on this serious matter of this magnitude should not be made in haste because it has many implications for our society and its citizenry. And the conversations that we need to have require the participation of all stakeholders including experts in treaties.

*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?*

The first step in the prioritization process will need to be a thoughtful and transparent stakeholder engagement to process to have frank and open discussions in order to arrive at a consensus of what the basic needs are. The prioritization process will require the understanding and the sacrifice of all stakeholders to achieve the common good.

*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?*
Changes to Title IX by the Department of Education are being challenged in courts and the unknowns regarding the new administration’s action on Title IX make it difficult or even premature to comment on this issue. In principle, as a person with no legal expertise, I have a great deal of empathy for victims of sexual misconduct and victims of baseless allegations.

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 appreciate the University’s proposal to offer tuition for students from very low-income Minnesota families. I wish the University much success in gathering public support for this proposal. In addition, for the longer-term, I would also support the University’s efforts in recruiting and retaining professors of color and most importantly senior leaders of color.

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?

I believe the University should play an active role in ensuring healthy and affordable food options are available to students. There are a variety of options that the University can consider ranging from affordable and accessible public transportation, mixed-use public building where a grocery store can be housed, enhancing value in University’s dining contract or a self-supported dining operation, public/private partnerships with grocers to bring grocery delivery to students at lower costs, etc.

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?

As a healthcare provider, I notice an encouraging trend occurring in health care professional organizations when they offer many low-cost or no-cost continuing educational opportunities to help their members gain cultural competency. As a matter of policy, the University can require professional staff at our student centers to obtain knowledge and competency in this area. Furthermore, as an expert in the procurement of healthcare services and products I can say that the University can also ensure that its contracted vendors who provide healthcare products and services to our University community are competent in these areas via our contract requirements; and we can achieve this with minimal budget impact.

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 support any grading option that best prepare students for the future upon graduation whether it be for a job, a career or a pursuit of graduate degree or academic research.
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?

Throughout the history of our country, university students play an important role in bringing about social changes that move our country towards a more perfect union. This observation leads me to the belief that the students’ collective right to self-determination of their future ought to be celebrated and respected. University administration has the responsibility to listen to the concerns of students and to provide the students the rationale of their decisions and their actions and the students have the corresponding responsibility to respect the decision made by their University administrators. This continuous process of bringing together ideas, aspirations, knowledge, expertise and lived experiences must always applied to advance the University’s progress towards a better future that is sometimes beyond the student’s time on campus.

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

In principle, I support the transition to source the University’s energy from 100% renewable energy. I would also support the University administration to be in charge of establishing the process for this effort because the University will need maximum flexibility in its achievement timeline so that it can seek out synergistic partnership opportunities in both the private and public sectors including federal, state, and local government initiatives in order to minimize budget impact for such a major undertaking.

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 mentor College of Pharmacy students on elective rotations and their number one concern that they share with me is the job market and their ability to obtain employment within a 6-month period after graduation. I would like the University to have more discussion on how it can assist students to obtain employment after graduation.