

To the Minnesota Student Association,
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Thanks for reaching out and submitting this thought provoking list of questions to the Regent Candidates. After reading the questions, I've many thoughts, but one over-riding comment. As a Regent Candidate, I only have access to a portion of the information for each of these questions. I can read or have read the public information on each of these topics, but that is only a partial picture of the issue. Whether for my own businesses, or as a county commissioner, or for my personal life, before I make any decision, but especially ones with such far-reaching implications, I like to make sure I've gathered all of the facts, relevant information, and sought input from key stakeholders. I believe this process guide my opinions to wiser conclusions. Thus, I will try to comment on the topics below, but I will reserve my opinions on many of the issues until I've studied them more deeply. Thank you for respecting this process.

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 the University needs to invest its endowment carefully and with an eye toward the future. I am a strong believer in alternative fuel methods, and investing with Minnesota companies when possible.

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?

All three of my children, and my daughter-in-law and son-in-law attended the U of M in the last decade, and that has left me acutely aware of all the costs of their education. Options for affordable, safe student housing are a serious issue. The University of Minnesota Foundation's mission is to raise and manage private dollars for scholarships, world-class research and facilities.

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?

As a businessperson, I've learned not all jobs are equal, but I certainly believe in fair compensation for all. I hesitate to make a sweeping generalization without knowing all of the information.

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?

First I'd like to say that I'm a huge proponent of mass transit in the Twin Cities. I personally find it very convenient and helpful, and it reduces the need and cost for parking spaces, road rebuilds, etc. I'd be very interested in hearing the Metropolitan Council's thoughts on this matter, and studying the total costs.

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.

I always believe in learning how we can do better. Especially with COVID-19, the 'facts' as we've known them, have been continually evolving with our learning. Additionally, I've heard many use the analogy that we are all in this COVID storm together, but we are not all in the same boat. This is definitely true at our University as well. We need listening sessions with representatives from all sectors of our university (undergraduate, graduate, resident, non-resident, international, commuter, teaching staff, support staff, auxiliary staff, administration, etc) to better understand the virus' impact, so we can devise our best path forward. And, we need to be ready to adjust that path, as our learning and the virus continues to evolve.

Unfortunately, this will not be the last pandemic. How can our University staff and students learn, prepare, and be ready to give back to the people of Minnesota through the U's leadership on better handling the next pandemic? I am so very proud Dr. Michael Osterholm is a U of M grad. Now, how many more of our alumni- current and future – can we help prepare to lead our state and nation forward?

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

I've learned quite a bit this last year, and have a much greater understanding of the white privilege from which I benefit, and the blissful-unawareness in which I unknowingly wandered. I believe in thoroughly vetting all names, claims or accusations, and producing a plan we can all be proud of.

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?

Student safety, including feeling safe and being able to trust in the University and all its people, is paramount. Research and many conversations are needed before we can determine if an accountability council would help, or if there are other actions we need to take first.

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?

My business background includes agriculture, and healthy food sustainability for our planet is a key issue we need our University to keep researching and leading. Who can best, most cost-effectively, with the most healthy and sustainable menu, provide our foodservice is an issue we need to study carefully. Sometimes change is perfect. Sometimes it does not bring us the solution we seek.

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 need more information on all of the factors regarding this situation, and all of the potential solutions, including but not limited to switching ownership of the land. There may be some sort of hybrid collaboration that would be fair and beneficial to all concerned.

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?

Basic student needs will always be prioritized, but defining all of those needs can get tricky. The University will have to get creative with its budget, post-Covid. Whenever possible, I seek novel ways to grow revenue. Can we find more grant dollars to underwrite our research expenses? Can we find new or maximize current sources of revenue outside of tuition and tax dollars? We need to re-emerge stronger not weaker and acknowledge the world is a different place. We need to become more resilient for the next major challenge we face.

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 is an extremely important, and complicated issue. Finding truth is hard, but essential. I would need to confer with more individuals before I'd be comfortable stating an opinion.

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?

First, we need to make sure all of Minnesota's indigenous students understand that they are eligible for free tuition at our Morris campus. Furthermore, we need to research whether we could extend that same free tuition offer to our Crookston campus. It's simple geographic proximity might make it more appealing to many students. As for Black or Hispanic/Latino students, we first need to understand why they are not enrolling in our University. Are we attracting them with the fields of study we offer? Is their academic preparation part of the problem? Is cost the issue? Are we promoting our out-state campuses enough for the students who wish not to be in the Twin Cities? What can we as a University do to remove these barriers? Then, once here, we need to determine the root cause of why diverse students face inequities. I believe knowledge is power. So helping diverse students excel at the University of Minnesota is a huge goal of mine. But we won't accomplish that goal unless we also find the real answers to our earlier questions.

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?

As a rural Minnesotan, farmer and former county commissioner, I'm deeply concerned about our food deserts throughout the state. For the Twin Cities campus, part of the solutions will relate to transportation access, recruiting affordable grocery stores, and working with area corporations like Target to ensure the pricing levels for groceries in their stores near campus are the lowest possible.

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?

While I believe our society has not paid enough attention to mental health, this last year has exacerbated an already sad situation. Programs like OutForUndergrad help one portion of this group feel welcome. My son-in-law was an MBA student from India when he met my daughter. I'm grateful for the welcoming, mentoring family he was matched with that helped him buy winter gear, find housing, and basically adjust to life in Minnesota. These key support groups and programs, as well as other student mentoring programs I've participated in as an alum are one portion of the answer. However, we only have to watch the nightly news to be reminded that mental health issues are pervasive, and when left untreated, lead to greater problems. We cannot neglect the mental health needs of our students or staff.

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 believe Regents need to take a macro-approach to our University, and focus on the bigger picture and direction of the U of M. I'll trust our academic experts to make grading system decisions.

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?

If selected, I'd hope to be an accessible Regent, and I'd encourage our administration and staff to be as accessible as possible through attending campus events, keeping open office hours at accommodating times, and interacting with students as much as possible. I believe we all share the same goal: to give our students the best possible education, at the lowest cost, and in the most reasonable timeframe. As for the pace of change, I'm an impatient man. However, I've experienced the waste that comes from forging forward without a clear plan, without the needed buy-in, in place. Good change takes planning.

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

I'll repeat the closing phrase from my previous answer, 'good change takes planning.' I believe in renewable energy.

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 deeply love the U—and that love includes the pride I get from its students, the thrill I get from its achievements in research, and even the heartache I can get occasionally from its athletics. I believe the U is critical to Minnesota. All across the state the U helps Minnesotans everyday through extension, through its research on better varieties to grow in our Minnesota fields, to discoveries in health care, and innovation in our businesses. I want to help tell the tale throughout our state, on why we need the U, and why it improves the quality of our lives and safeguards our future.