



students  
united™

# IMPACT REPORT 2022-2023

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# A NOTE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

In 1967, a group of students gathered to create a coalition that united student voices and empowered students to advocate for the issues surrounding higher education. As we embarked on our 55th year as an organization, we did so with purpose, determination, and belief.

We set our purpose for the year through our strategic plan, going “Back to our Roots” and “Growing our Branches.” Staying true to who we have always been while finding new growth opportunities. We started the year determined to make higher education more affordable, to make campuses more equitable, and to elevate student voice in the decision-making process. We reaffirmed our belief in the power of collective action and the power of our students.

At our roots, we are an advocacy organization, and our collective advocacy efforts throughout this last year have led to significant and impactful policy changes such as the North Star Promise, the MinnState tuition freeze, free menstrual products on campuses, and more.

While we created impactful policy change, we also looked to the organization’s future. Student leadership has always been a part of who we are, but our goal looking forward is to be intentional about student growth, data, and program development. As such, we launched our first full year of our Community Leader Fellowship, which invests in student growth and provides students with direct experience in non-profit leadership, financial literacy, personal growth and development, and opportunities to work directly on student-led advocacy initiatives and projects that impact the students we serve.

In our first full year of this program, students increased their understanding of self-advocacy. We saw an increase in students’ knowledge of non-profit leadership. We saw gains in how students think about participating in systems that are rooted in racism and oppression, and an increase in their awareness of changing inequitable systems not built for all students to succeed.

None of this progress would have been possible without our exceptional student leaders, our staff, and the support of our partners. Our collective work has helped thousands of students, but our work is not done yet. We are excited to see how we can build upon this year’s success to ensure future, current, and former students are at the forefront of higher education advocacy.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Thomas Anderson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line above the first few letters.

Thomas Anderson  
Executive Director

# OUR STORY SO FAR

## OUR HISTORY

Established in 1967, Students United is an independent, non-profit organization funded and operated by students. Students United serves over 65,000 students attending Minnesota's seven state universities: Bemidji, Mankato, Metropolitan (St. Paul/Minneapolis), Moorhead, St. Cloud, Southwest (Marshall), and Winona. Students United has been a strong voice for state university students on the campus, system, state and federal levels for over 50 years. The organization is recognized by the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities Board of Trustees as the sole representative of state university students in Minnesota, and work on a variety of issues at several levels.

## OUR MISSION

Led by Minnesota State University students, we are the inclusive voice for all future, current, and former students. We actively work to represent and support Minnesota State University students and advocate at a local, system, state, and federal level for higher education policies that make a positive impact for our students and communities.

## OUR VISION

Our vision is to create the model of inclusive higher education policies and leadership. Our goal is to ensure higher education is rooted in student voices and student needs. Student leaders at all decision-making tables strengthen student advocacy, which creates a more robust higher education system and community.

## OUR VALUES

- Student voice
- Thought leaders
- United leadership
- Diversity
- Equity and inclusion
- Next level thinking
- Tangible advocacy
- Student leadership

EST.

1967

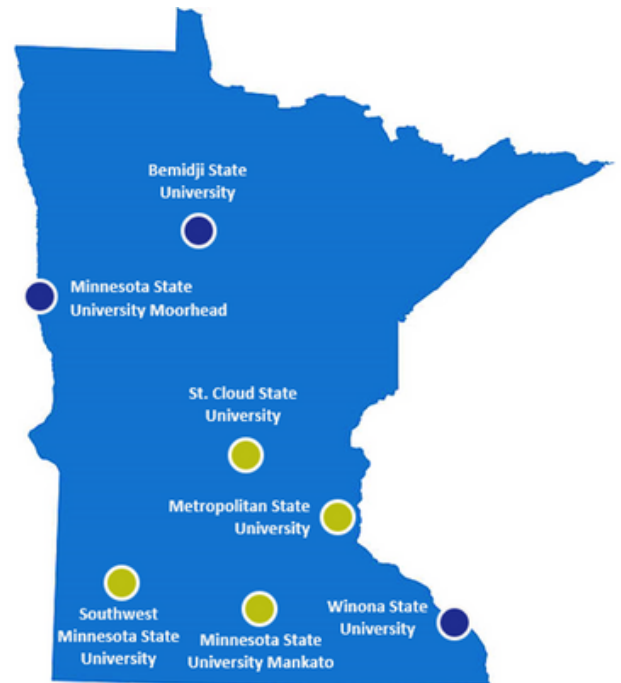
students  united.

# Community Leader Fellowship

## 2022-2023 COHORT REPORT

### The year at a glance:

- **A cohort of 6 Minnesota State University students successfully completed the Community Leader Fellowship (CLF) – Students United’s first academic-year long fellowship program.**
  - The students represented 4 of the 7 Minnesota State Universities (shown in green on the map).
- **The Community Leader Fellowship consisted of two strands:** a development portion focused on group learning and skill growth and an internship placement with a Students United staff member.
- **All of the fellows’ entry, midyear, and exit surveys indicated growth in all measured skill and knowledge areas including JEDI (Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion) topics, antiracism, advocacy principles, nonprofit leadership, and financial literacy.**



100%

Of fellows felt “mostly confident” or “completely confident” in their ability to advocate for a cause they care about

100%

Of fellows reported feeling that their personal and professional networks have expanded meaningfully through the CLF program

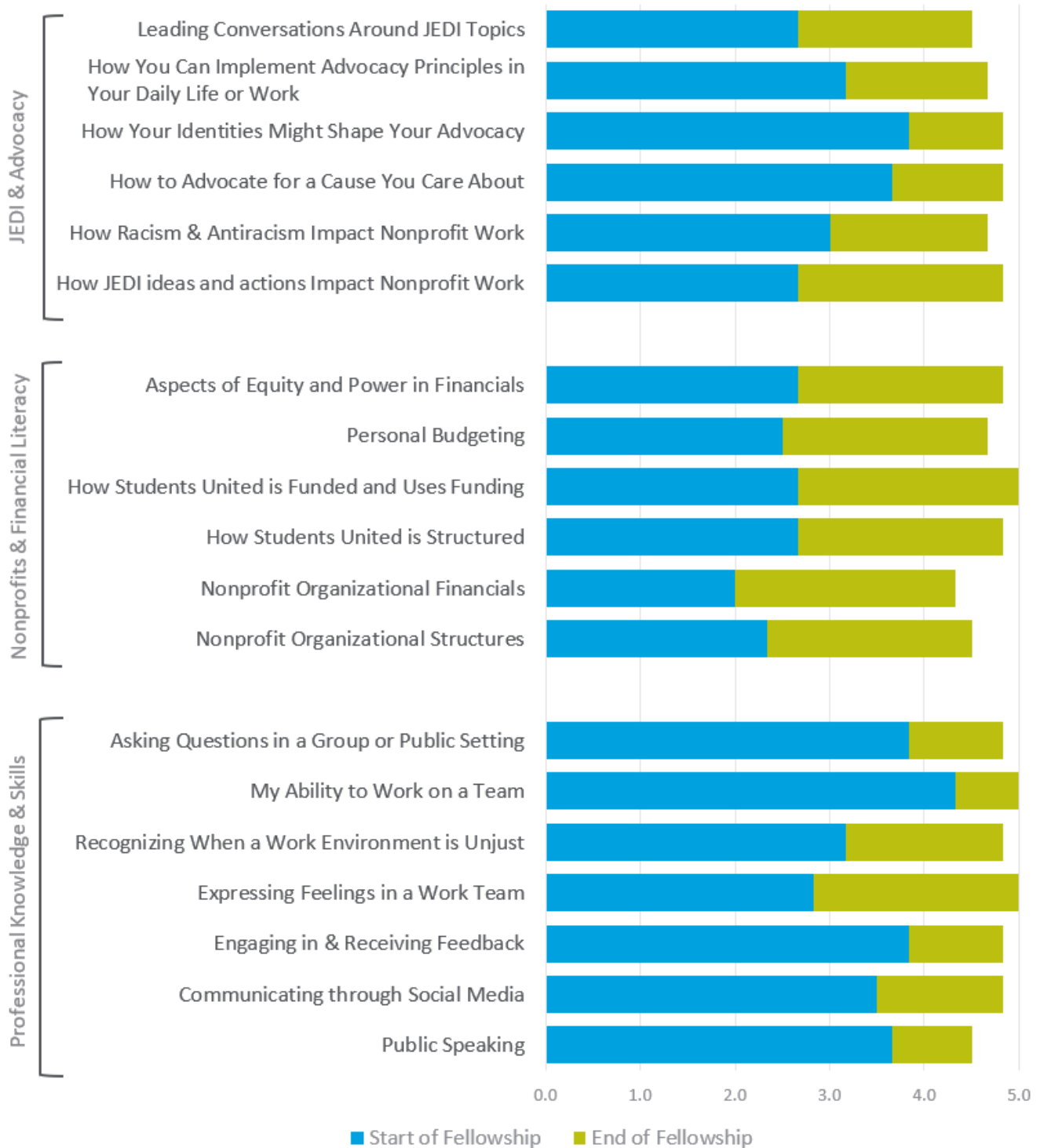
100%

Of fellows “strongly agreed” that they would recommend the Community Leader Fellowship to a friend or peer

# The Fellows considered their confidence in the several knowledge and skill areas throughout the year.

They ranked each statement from 1 – “Not Confident at All” to 5 – “Completely Confident”

## Cohort Average Confidence in Measured Knowledge and Skill Areas



## The Community Leader Fellowship in the Fellows' Own Words:

"I am much more confident after my experience in the Community Leader Fellowship in being a leader in changemaking spaces. This was a space where we could easily speak our minds and collaborate safely and confidently."

TJ Tjeerdsma, SMSU



"In the fellowship, I built power for myself and others, built skills and knowledge around nonprofits, shared knowledge, and my confidence has risen so much."

Gabriel Spinks, Metro



"The fellowship taught me to be the best I could be for me and for the people I represent. Teaching advocacy and sharing inspirations became important to me."

Marwah Asif, SCSU



"This fellowship has helped me to make connections that I can take with me in my future, it has helped me with how to engage with a community that has different views than mine, and how to prepare in public speaking."

Idman Ibrahim, MSUM



"My confidence growing with the organization had me put on big boy shoes to gain the knowledge of the staff on how to run a non-profit."

Pierre Young, Metro



"I found the fellowship's development sessions on Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion beneficial as I never knew that much about topics like that. It was all new to me which I appreciated."

Hap Krosschell, SMSU



**Thank you to our Community Leader Fellowship sponsors:  
The Graves Foundation and The ECMC Foundation**

# Scholarships

22

Scholarship  
Recipients

\$48,500

Total Amount Awarded

## The year at a glance:

- **Available Scholarships**

- Timothy J. Penny State & Federal Public Service Fellowship
- Barbara J. Penny Community Service Scholarship
- Nellie Stone Johnson Scholarship Program
- Jared P. Stene Student Leadership Scholarship
- Friends Scholarship
- Elizabeth Pegues Scholarship Matching Program For Students Of Color
- Hull Educational Foundation Scholarship
- Robert L. Carothers Distinguished Student Writers Award

- **42 Applicants in Total**

- Friends – 9 applicants: 2 recipients
- Hull – 3 applicants: 3 recipients
- Barbara Penny – 13 applicants: 12 recipients
  - Penny Fellowship – 3 applicants: 3 recipients
  - Elizabeth Pegues – 2 applicants: 2 recipients
  - Jared P. Stene – 13 applicants: 1 recipient

- **\$48,500 awarded**

- **22 Recipients**
  - **From all seven Minnesota State Universities**



# Minnesota State System and University Advocacy

## Student Voice

- **Tuition and Fees**

Fee maximums were raised to reflect the financial needs of each campus with student consultation required and a 5-year review process implemented by Minnesota State System Office.

- **Campus Climate Survey**

Students United staff, officers, and CLF interns collaborated with the Office of Equity and Inclusion at the Minnesota State System Office to review the 2023 Campus Climate Survey and ensure questions reflect the experiences of historically underrepresented students, staff and faculty including experiences of BIPOC, LGBTQ+, disabled students, and student-parents on campus.

- **Virtual Forum for International Students**

Students United hosted our pilot virtual forum for international students with students from all seven state universities in attendance. The international students shared their higher education experiences and recommendations to Students United system advocacy. We created Students United's resource page for international students with the feedback we received at the forum.

# Minnesota State System and University Advocacy

## Student Leadership

- **Connecting with 20+ Campus Support Centers**

Staff met with several support centers on each campus to raise awareness of Students United's state and federal agenda, advocacy opportunities (i.e. advocacy conference, virtual forum, etc) and career opportunities.

- **Minnesota Transfer Curriculum (MNTC) Final Revision**

Staff and officers advocated for changes to MNTC #7, "Human Diversity," and collaborated with the Academic and Student Affairs MNTC workgroup to draft revisions to this transfer curriculum. MNTC #7 is now "**Human Diversity, Justice, and Power,**" and requires revision of existing courses and development of new courses.

- **Discretionary Sustainability Fee**

Student leaders from Bemidji State University brought forth concerns regarding sustainability initiatives on campus and urged our support for establishing a discretionary sustainability fee. Students United staff and officers advocated for this fee creation at the system office - both towards the Chancellor and Board of Trustees - giving students the power to decide if they want to leverage their resources for sustainability efforts on campus.

# Legislative Victories

## Federal Government

### • Increasing the Pell Grant

Consistent outreach from Students United secured an increase in the maximum annual Pell Grant award to **\$7,395 – a \$500 increase**. This represented the largest increase to the Pell Grant in more than a decade.

### • Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program

For the thousands of graduates of the Minnesota State university system that pursue careers in public service, this was a step in the right direction. The Department's rules removed burdensome repayment requirements, established greater access to the program, and created a remedy for those who are initially denied.

### • National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement

As part of our Get-Out-The-Vote (GOTV) efforts, Students United collected The National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE) data from three campuses and coordinated with a GOTV student-leader from those campuses. Our comprehensive voter engagement plan contributed to a strong turnout amongst students, with **Minnesota finishing second – behind only Michigan – in youth voter turnout in the 2022 election**.

# Legislative Victories

## State Government

### • North Star Promise

Under this program, **Minnesota's public colleges and universities will be free to residents** whose families earn less than \$80,000 annually, starting in the 2024-2025 academic year. This had long been a goal for Students United, and we will continue to advocate for expansions to the program.

### • Two-Year Tuition Freeze

This past session was only **the second time the Legislature provided funding to freeze tuition** at state institutions. As a result, the Minnesota State Board of Trustees announced an operating budget for FY2024 that included a freeze in undergraduate tuition at FY2023 levels.

### • Menstrual Equity

Our students passionately pursued stronger investments for their basic needs this legislative session. In particular, Students United was able to craft legislation to secure funds for **Minnesota State to offer menstrual products at no charge for students.**

### • Student-Borrower Relief

Students United has long advocated for student-borrower relief. Legislation supported by Students United was the first bill signed by Governor Walz last session and it **brought Minnesota's tax code into conformity with federal tax rules.** As a result, Minnesota's student loan borrowers will avoid an unexpected tax hike.

# 55th Celebration



We celebrated our 55th year of operation with students, alumni, and many of our partner organizations at the Grain Exchange in Minneapolis. We were thrilled to bring together our community to invest in the future of our organization.

Our celebration hosted 120 attendees and **raised \$15,585** towards our general fund.

Thank you to our sponsors!





# A Night of Black Excellence

The Scholarship and Alumni Advisory Board presents:  
A Night of Black Excellence



On March 30th Students United hosted A Night of Black Excellence at Can Can Wonderland in Minneapolis for a night of art and community.

With performances from Papa Bleu, Se'Anna on da Mic, Mia Abdullah, and Kelvino, Students United **raised \$16,110** for our scholarships that benefit Black, Indigenous, other students of color, and low-income university students.

Thank you to our sponsors!

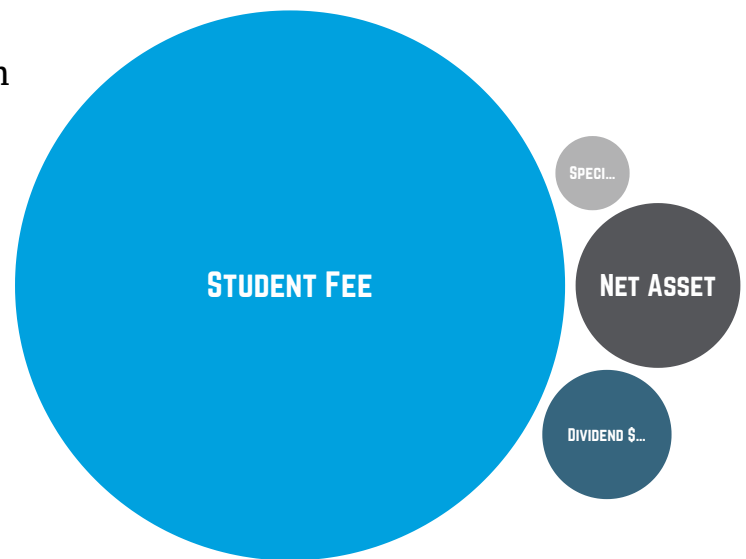


# FY23 Financial Summary

Students United's Board of Directors sets the annual budget. Each year, students are asked to provide budget feedback to help the board pass a budget that reflects the values and priorities of students.

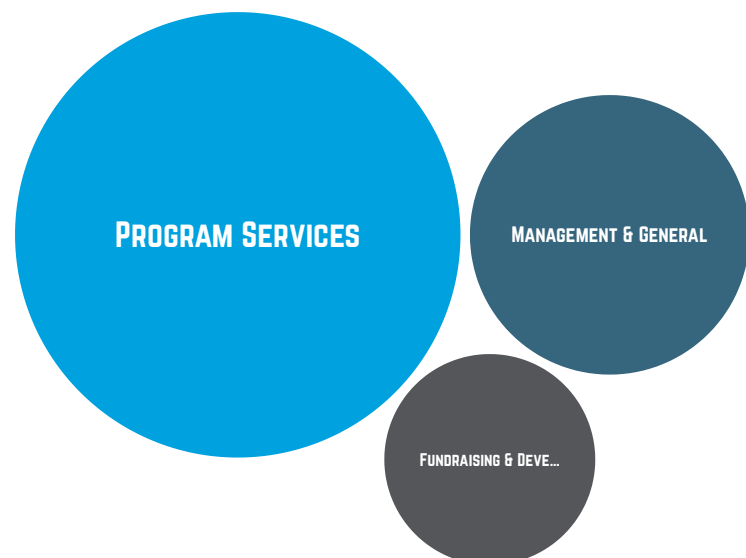
## • Income

- **Student Fees - \$964,126:** Per credit fees from students attending Minnesota State Universities
- **Net Assets Released from Restrictions - \$86,534:** Endowment Funds used for Scholarship Disbursements
- **Special Events & Contributions - \$17,544:** Includes revenue from the 55th Celebration, Night of Black Excellence, and Penny Golf Scramble, as well as scholarship donations
- **Dividend & Misc - \$53,227**



## • Expenses

- **Management & General - \$227,458:** General and administrative expenses and personnel expenses
- **Fundraising and Development - \$129,517:** The management and administration of scholarships, grants, and community outreach
- **Program Services - \$577,628:** Expenses and staff salaries that supported our student advocacy efforts, student conferences and events, the community leader fellowship, and the development of our student leaders



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

## Students United

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### State Officers

**State Chair:** Kaileigh Weber

**Vice Chair:** Axel Kylander

**Treasurer:** Moshood Agboola

### Board of Directors

**Bemidji:** Kendra Draeger

**Metro:** Marcelus Ifonlaja

**Mankato:** Emma Zellmer

**Moorhead:** Max Thompson

**Saint Cloud:** Arslan Malik

**Southwest:** Ashton Ayres

**Winona:** Malorie Olson

### Staff

**Executive Director:** Thomas Anderson

**Associate Executive Director:** Kalista Mangahas

**Government Relations:** Ben Reimler

**Student Leadership & Equity:** Meg Bartlett-Chase

**System & University Relations:** Samantha Raghu

**Operations:** Connor Newby

**Public Relations:** Caitlin Johnson

**WE THANK YOU  
FOR YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT IN  
OUR PROGRAMS**