

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

Morris Campus Student Association 16B Student Center 600 East 4th Street Morris, MN 56267-2134

Last month, Regent Steve Sviggum accepted my invitation to the Morris campus and we ate lunch together. My friends who joined us described his conduct as defensive, insincere, and bitter. A word that I would use is unserious: Regent Sviggum showed us that he is not *seriously* willing to strengthen his commitment to the University of Minnesota's core values of equity and a diverse student body, despite what he claimed in his apology letter. For that reason, I ask that Regent Steve Sviggum resign from the University of Minnesota Board of Regents effective immediately.

Regent Sviggum had one message for students that he restated frequently during our lunch: That he has a fiduciary duty to the University of Minnesota, and asking questions (even harmful ones) is a part of that responsibility. Our rebuttal is that he also has a duty as a policymaker to act responsibly and refrain from placing targets on the backs of BIPOC students. He fell short of admitting he made a mistake and instead tried to defend himself.

I grew up on the Rosebud Indian Reservation, one of the poorest areas in the country. I was exposed to drug abuse, domestic violence, and extreme poverty at a very young age. I have lost several close friends and relatives to teen suicide. I think about them every day. In May, I will become one of the first in my immediate family to receive a bachelor's degree. One of the first, but not one of the last. And when I complete my education, I will return to the Sičhángŋu-Oyáŋke to help where I can. I am not just pursuing a college degree for my own upward mobility – I'm also doing it to empower my community's livelihood and sovereignty. None of that would be possible without the American Indian Tuition Waiver and the University of Minnesota's institutional commitment to equity and a diverse student body.

Across the University of Minnesota system, and in many high school classrooms, you will hear stories like mine. When Regent Sviggum asked whether the Morris campus has become too diverse, he brought our dreams into question. And when he visited the Morris campus, looked us in the eyes, and tried to justify that question – he proved that he is unwilling to make up for that mistake. In fact, he thinks it's a part of his job.

During his visit, Regent Sviggum talked at length about our enrollment issue, and would frequently question what was truly causing our low enrollment numbers. Here's my take: Students do not want to attend universities that are led by people willing to target BIPOC students and question diversity. Sviggum's continued presence on the Board of Regents threatens enrollment on all of our campuses.

Dylan Young
Morris Campus Student Association President
ummmcsa@morris.umn.edu