

Dear Higher Education Conferee,

As you begin your work to reconcile the differences between the House and Senate Omnibus Higher Education bills in conference committee, we'd like to express our sincere gratitude for your service and commitment to ensuring positive outcomes for all Minnesota students.

As in any session, there are key differences between the House and Senate Omnibus bills. We respectfully offer our comments and recommendations on specific provisions for crafting a compromise. These policy positions were developed by EdAllies to support and prioritize the needs of historically underserved students and help achieve educational equity for all in Minnesota. We strongly urge the conferees to:

- Fund the underrepresented student teachers grant to the level in the House bill (5.28) We appreciate that both bodies invested in this critical area of our teacher workforce, and we urge the committee to adopt the higher appropriation featured in the House bill. Furthermore, we hope the committee will include language to ensure these dollars are not treated as financial aid, so student teachers receive a wage for their work at this critical juncture in their path to the classroom.
- Fund the Fostering Independence Higher Education Grant to the level in the Senate bill (9.11). While committee budgets are particularly tight this session, we urge the committee to focus resources on our most vulnerable students.
- Adopt the standard financial aid offer form provision in the Senate bill (38.23). This provision would help all Minnesota families make informed decisions about the financial implications of their higher education options. A standardized financial aid letter reduces the risk of unnecessary financial hardship stemming from confusion or unfamiliarity with the financial aid process.
- Adopt the Senate's Direct Admissions provision, ensuring all students attend Direct Admissions high schools by the end of the decade (29.12). Early data shows the Direct Admissions program empowers more Minnesota students to apply to and attend college in-state, especially those from low-income families. This bipartisan proposal [HF 1128 \(Mueller\)/SF1474 \(Gustafson\)](#) received hearings in the House and Senate and expands the Direct Admissions program which sends the message to students that they are college material, helps them understand their options, and encourages them to choose a Minnesota college or university for their higher education.

Thank you for your consideration and your commitment to improving higher education access for Minnesota students.

Sincerely,
Matt Shaver, Senior Policy Director
mshaver@edalliesmn.org

**Bringing Direct Admissions to Every High School Senior:
A Simple Intervention with a Significant Impact**

No student should miss out on higher education based on the false belief that they “aren’t college material.” Across Minnesota, there are post-secondary programs aligned to numerous pathways and aspirations—and as a state, we owe it to our students to open as many doors as possible.

The Direct Admissions Program does just that. Launched in 2022-23, the program uses high school course data to automatically admit students to colleges across the state. Students receive a letter in the fall letting them know which of the 55+ technical schools, tribal colleges, community colleges, four-year public and private universities they have been accepted to—all they have to do is finalize the application.

In the first two years of implementation, the program has shown success on many measures:

- **More students file the FAFSA**, connecting them to resources to pay for college. At participating high schools, 50% of students filed the FAFSA in the year before Direct Admissions, and 58% filed in the first year of Direct Admissions
- **More students enroll in a Minnesota college**. At participating high schools, 31% of recent graduates enrolled in a Minnesota college in the year before Direct Admissions, and 33% enrolled in the following year.
- **Improved outcomes held true across demographics**, including for low-income students and students of color.
- **Early adoption is going well!**
 - 57 colleges and universities are signed on to proactively admit students
 - 120 high schools are participating, with more in the pipeline
 - 59% of students at Direct Admissions high schools are in the 7-county metro and 41% are in Greater Minnesota

All Minnesota students should benefit from the Direct Admissions Program! The upfront investment to build out the program is a worthwhile effort that can bridge the gap between K-12 and college. It’s a program that benefits all students—but most importantly, helps ensure students on the fence about their college potential don’t fall through the cracks. This simple intervention makes a big difference for Minnesota kids and should be a universal practice across the state.

Organizations that support statewide expansion of Direct Admissions

