

January 23, 2023

Minnesota State Senate
Higher Education Committee
3219 Minnesota Senate Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

Attn: Omar Fateh, Chair, Higher Education Committee

RE: Dennis Olson, Commissioner, Minnesota Office of Higher Education

Dear Members of the Higher Education Committee,

I am writing to commend the recent reappointment of Dennis Olson as Commissioner of the Minnesota Office of Higher Education. I have had the opportunity to work with Dennis in his capacity as commissioner over the past four years and have appreciated both his depth and breadth of knowledge as well as his cultivation of an agency that advocates and supports all of Minnesota's students. Dennis' ability to address student concerns through policy and programmatic solutions serve all Minnesotans well.

Two years ago, Commissioner Olson was elected by his peers to serve as a member of the Executive Committee for the State Higher Education Executive Officers (SHEEO) Association. As the president of SHEEO, I have had the opportunity to work closely with Dennis. His contributions and leadership have spurred us to more effectively pursue our vision of the equitable education of all students.

Two notable areas in which Commissioner Olson and his team have led nationally are utilizing postsecondary data to improve equity and opportunity for all students and the effective alignment of postsecondary education and workforce outcomes. These two areas are paramount to our nation's future, and Dennis and his team have demonstrated leadership on both fronts. Their work addressing data and equity was presented at our national Policy Conference last August and was very well received.

Dennis is also a great colleague and collaborator. I have personally appreciated his advice and support, but he has also demonstrated these traits within Minnesota. Both the Minnesota Office of Higher Education and Minnesota State were co-recipients of the SHEEO Exceptional Agency Award last year. This marked the first time in our history that this prestigious award has been shared. A key reason for recognizing dual recipients in the same state is their strong partnership in collaboratively addressing issues of import to Minnesotans. For example, both agencies created and jointly implemented the Next Generation Nursing Assistant initiative during the pandemic. This project addressed staffing shortages within health care and met the state goal of training at least one thousand new nursing assistants. Strong partnerships such as this are critical to expanding access to postsecondary education and strengthening the workforce pipeline. The example set in Minnesota is one we all should emulate.



I congratulate Dennis, the Minnesota Office of Higher Education and all public servants who strive to provide better opportunity and create more robust outcomes for all Minnesotans on the reappointment of Commissioner Olson. This is a win for all. I and my staff look forward to a continued partnership in the months and years ahead.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robert E. Anderson", written in a cursive style.

Robert E. Anderson
President