

**Written Testimony of Jacqueline R. Johnson, Chancellor
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**Before the U.S. Senate Committee
On Health, Education, Labor and Pensions' Hearing on the
Need for Assistance in Fulfilling Certain Federal Mandates to Provide Educational
Opportunities to American Indians**

In the beginning...

The campus of the University of Minnesota, Morris (UMM) sits on land that was once home to people of the Anishinaabe (Ojibwe) and the Dakota and Lakota (Sioux) nations. Before the era of westward expansion, this land provided support and sustenance to the members of these Indian tribes.

In 1887, in what they saw as a well-intended effort to bring their religious beliefs and their teachings to others, members of the Catholic order of Sisters of Mercy established an American Indian Boarding School on these former Anishinaabe and Dakota/Lakota lands, which had, in 1847, become the state of Minnesota. The school removed young Indian children from their families and villages across this region and brought them to Morris to study and learn non-native ways and "industrial trades". The Sisters of Mercy ran the school until 1896, when they turned it over to the U.S. federal government's Bureau of Indian Affairs. The Bureau renamed the school the Morris Industrial School for American Indians and continued to run it for ten more years.

In 1909, through federal legislation and a Minnesota state statute, (in Laws 1909, chapter 184), the land, some 290 acres, and buildings were deeded to the State of Minnesota for the purpose of establishing an agricultural boarding high school under the auspices of the University of Minnesota.

From an "Act of Congress, March 3, 1909, the Sixtieth Congress, Session II: Chapter 268":

Minnesota. Morris School: That there is hereby granted to the State of Minnesota, upon the terms and conditions hereafter named the following described property, known as the Indian school at Morris Minnesota...Aggregating two hundred and ninety acres, with buildings, improvements, and other appurtenances thereon. Provided, That said lands and buildings shall be held and maintained by the State of Minnesota as an agricultural school, and that Indian pupils shall at all times be admitted to such school free of charge for tuition and on terms of equality with white pupils.

The governor of the state of Minnesota in 1909—the honorable John Johnson—expressed concern at the legislative acceptance of this offer from the federal government over what he perceived to be (in more contemporary language) "an unfunded mandate" about to be assumed by the State of Minnesota. In a letter to the Acting Commissioner of the Department of the Interior, he expressed his doubts:

I find that under the act of congress authorizing the transfer of this property to the state, and under chapter 184 of the Laws of 1909 adopted by the last legislature, it is contemplated that the state should take possession of this property on the first of July, 1909, but I find that the

legislature has made no appropriation for the care and maintenance of the school... (University of Minnesota, Morris Archives)

The transfer happened in spite of his concerns.

For more than 60 years, the West Central School of Agriculture provided secondary school opportunities from October through April--literally after harvest and before planting-- for the sons and daughters of area farmers. Although our records are not perfect, it appears that only a handful of American Indian students were able to take advantage of this tuition-free educational experience during the agricultural high school era. In a sense, this was a rural version of an "exclusive" boarding school experience, but in this case with modest tuition costs and expansive educational opportunities.

Just as the American Indian Boarding School movement began to wane in the early 1900's, so too the fate of the agricultural boarding school movement--it had run its course by the late 1950's. Community leaders in the small farming town of Morris, Minnesota began, then, to lobby state legislators for what they imagined could be an exceptional and somewhat unusual educational opportunity for the children of residents of this region—a public liberal arts college, fashioned after the elite private liberal arts schools that were and are such an important part of the upper Midwest and the eastern coast of the United States. The citizens prevailed, and the University of Minnesota, Morris was established as a four year public liberal arts college of the University of Minnesota in 1959.

The original Minnesota state statute of 1909 was revised accordingly (1961), affirming the original directive regarding American Indian students. From "Minnesota state statutes: Chapter 137 (a statute which updates Minnesota Statute 184 of 1909)":

State Chapter 137. Section 137.16 MORRIS BRANCH; ADMISSION OF INDIANS. Subdivision 1. The University of Minnesota, Morris branch, situated in whole or in part on the lands described in laws 1909, chapter 184, shall admit Indian pupils qualified for admission at all times free of charge for tuition and on terms of equality with white pupils." (Subdivision 2 of this statute provides that subdivision 1 is a substitute for the provisions of Laws 1909 chapter 184.)

I include this brief historic account in my written testimony because the legal and moral legacy reflected in our history shapes our institutional mission today. The University of Minnesota, Morris is tied inextricably to the land and to *all* the peoples who have called it home. The educational institutions which have resided here are just as inextricably tied to greater social movements and initiatives in this country—from the American Indian boarding school movement to the agricultural boarding high school movement to the expansion of American higher education which occurred in the 1960's. This expansion promised to prepare a workforce for a growing American economy and it promised to open public educational opportunities to a broader array of people—those less privileged, those underrepresented in American higher education.

As the most racially and ethnically diverse campus of the University of Minnesota, (more than 22% students of color in a state that is not very racially diverse), as a campus with selective admissions standards that serves a high proportion of first generation college students (nearly 40% in this year's entering class), and as a campus that serves many students whose families exhibit significant financial need (33% are Pell grant recipients; 96% receive financial aid), we are fulfilling that obligation and that promise. In 2011, 40% of Morris's American Indian students were "low income"; 45% were first-generation college students.

This is our legacy. We honor it. We are proud of it.

Why does this matter?

American Indians represent about one percent of baccalaureate college-attending students nationally and in the State of Minnesota. At Morris, on our residential, undergraduate-focused liberal arts campus of 1,800 students, more than 275 American Indian students comprise over 15 percent of the student body. This significant Native student population makes Morris one of some forty schools in the country eligible for designation by the federal government as a Native American Serving Non-Tribal Institution (NASNTI).

American Indians, who are underrepresented nationally in all fields of study, find greater success at UMM than at other universities: 61% of UMM's Native students graduate in six years compared with 39% statewide. (2010 cohort data) National, state and regional priorities call on us to increase undergraduate participation in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) fields, particularly of students from underrepresented groups. The University of Minnesota, Morris is responding to this challenge in a number of ways.

This spring, UMM was awarded a Howard Hughes Medical Institute grant that includes provisions to support American Indian students in undergraduate summer research. Morris hosts an NSF funded "WindStep" program that provides a summer immersion experience for middle and high school students from reservations in the state and region. These students live on campus and conduct real research in renewable energy both on the campus and on Indian reservations. Morris is a participant in another NSF-funded program—the Louis Stokes Alliance for Minority Participation in STEM fields (LSAMP). This program provides support for students of color, including American Indian students, to engage in undergraduate research in STEM disciplines. The campus has a strong and active chapter of the American Indian Science and Engineering Society (AISES) and will host the regional AISES meeting this spring. And the AISES publication, *Winds of Change*, named Morris as one of the top 200 educational institutions in the country for its support of American Indian students in 2011 and again this year.

We are also working on language revitalization on this campus, with courses in the Anishinaabe language offered as part of our regular curriculum and occasional courses offered in the Dakota/Lakota languages—one-half of Morris Native students are Anishinaabe and nearly a quarter are Dakota/Lakota. UMM has submitted a grant application to the state to provide additional funding to prepare K-12 teachers to teach these Native languages. We are working with our tribal community college partners in the region to facilitate the transfer of American Indian students who have completed associates degrees there to our baccalaureate granting school.

The tuition waiver is a major factor in promoting the attendance and success of American Indian students on this campus. These students benefit from the many programs we have established. Eighty-six percent of American Indian students who are offered admission end up enrolling compared to 38% of students overall. As the **cost** of tuition increases, so, obviously, does the **value** of the waiver.

This campus has demonstrated its unique and exceptional ability to promote educational experiences and opportunities for American Indian students, thus fulfilling both its legal and moral obligations. But, as Governor John Johnson recognized more than one hundred years ago, there are significant challenges that come with a mandate whose funding has not been carefully thought through. With the passage of

Senate Bill 3504 and its companion bill in the House, the federal government has an opportunity to support our success by funding its fair share of the costs of the tuition waiver—that is the portion associated with out-of-state students.

What is the financial impact of the waiver on the state of Minnesota, the University of Minnesota and the University of Minnesota, Morris?

The number of Native students has increased steadily at Morris since the University's founding in 1960, and it has grown exponentially over the course of the past five years.

We estimate that since the Morris campus opened as a public liberal arts college in 1960, we have waived over \$20 million in tuition for American Indian students. The value of the tuition waived for out-of-state students in that same time period is estimated at over \$6 million. (There is no in-state/out-of-state tuition differential for University of Minnesota, Morris students. Tuition for the 2012-2013 academic year for all full time students is just under \$12,000.)

In 2010 and 2011, 25% of Morris's American Indian students receiving tuition waivers were from out-of-state. Fifty federally recognized American Indian tribes and Alaskan Native villages are represented on this campus, and most of our non-resident Native students are from states surrounding Minnesota—North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wisconsin. We anticipate that in addition to the \$20M already waived since 1960, we will waive an additional \$3 million of tuition in the current fiscal year alone, with nearly \$750,000 attributable to out-of-state students (25%).

Why we ask for support for Senate Bill 3504

The logic in Senate Bill 3504 is sound. In running the American Indian Boarding School the U.S. federal government's Bureau of the Interior did not restrict enrollment only to those students who were from within the State of Minnesota. It drew students from across this region, just as we do now. In relegating American Indian peoples to reservations, the U. S. Federal Government did not restrict its actions to one or two tribes. It was inclusive in its disruption of the lives of Native people across the nation. Thus our obligation to honor the federal and state statutes by admitting qualified American Indian students on the same basis as other students and our practice of admitting students without respect to their state of residence follows directly from the past.

And yet, in Colorado and in Minnesota, the cost associated with this mandated financial requirement is now borne entirely by the two states themselves. In Minnesota, the state legislature provides a direct general allocation to the University of Minnesota. The University of Minnesota system, in turn, distributes this allocation among its five separate campuses. In recent years, the University of Minnesota system has allocated directly to Morris a portion of the unrealized revenue that results from this waiver.

For example, in fiscal year 2012, (academic year 2011-2012) the University of Minnesota's central allocation to Morris to support the tuition waived for American Indian students was \$1.65M, approximately 65% of the total tuition waived. Over one-third of the waiver, approximately \$900,000, was unfunded and absorbed by the University of Minnesota, Morris. Our campus is one of modest financial resources and this growing revenue gap is a significant concern for us. We are certified by the U.S. Department of Education as eligible for Title III, IV and V grant funding, with our average

educational and general expenditures per full time student falling below the four-year public college average (Title III 2011 application, 2009-2010 data).

If modest growth in our American Indian student population continues over the course of this decade (2010-2019), we anticipate that the total tuition waived in this decade will be more than \$30 million. If the federal government were to assume a fair share of this mandate by funding the waiver for out of state students--as Senate Bill 3504 suggests that it should--Morris would gain modest revenues of around \$750,000 annually.

Education matters

U.S. Census Bureau data (in a 2004 report) show that American workers 18 years and older with a bachelor's degree earn on average \$51,000/year, compared to an annual income of \$28,000 for workers with a high school diploma. Education matters and it remains a critical part of the American dream. In the United States, 28% of adults nationwide have earned bachelor's degrees compared to 13% of American Indian adults; in Minnesota, 32% of adults have earned bachelor's degrees compared to 12% of American Indian adults.

The American Indian tuition waiver represents an effort from the past to redress wrongs done by the federal government and the American people to members of our sovereign Indian nations. The waiver has been instrumental in promoting the success of many students over the course of the fifty years of UMM's existence. Paulette Fairbanks Molin, White Earth Band of Ojibwe, is UMM's first American Indian student graduate (UMM 1966). In 1995, she was a recipient of our Distinguished Alumni award. In receiving this award, she recounted her experience in coming to this campus.

As an honors student in high school, she noted that she was discouraged by a high school counselor who believed she was better suited for marriage or attendance at an Indian trade school in Kansas than she was for a college degree. Nevertheless, she persevered and enrolled. She recalled her mother shivering when they arrived on campus, saying it reminded her of an Indian Boarding School. Her mother would know, having herself attended the boarding school at Pipestone, Minnesota.

Paulette went on to earn a doctorate at the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities and then became a higher education administrator, serving as assistant dean of the graduate college and director of the American Indian Educational Opportunity Program at Hampton University in Virginia.

At the end of the tribute that marks her acceptance of the distinguished alumni award, Dr. Molin says, "UMM exposed me to new ideas and fostered my love of reading and learning while providing me with a home away from home. UMM also introduced me to new possibilities, possibilities that could transform lives, families, communities, and, indeed, the world. I was destined to remain on campus for four years, confounding expectations and beating the odds to graduate. Finally, there is this. UMM was pretty young, but built upon an American Indian foundation, a perfect match for a 17-year old with the same profile."

The wrongs of the past and this contemporary effort to address them weave their way into the future in a most positive way. That American Indian families trust their sons and daughters to be educated on the land and in the buildings where not that long ago a concerted effort was made to obliterate their culture and language is a matter of great significance to us. And it is a matter of great pride for the University of Minnesota, Morris that we are able to move these young people along the path of educational success.

Senate Bill 3504 distributes the cost of this endeavor more reasonably between the federal government and the states and provides an opportunity for the federal government to join with us to foster the success of the population in this country that lives with the greatest educational and economic disparity.