



March 20, 2020

The Honorable Tina Smith
United States Senate
309 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Smith:

I reach out to you today to share a bit about the stress of the COVID-19 pandemic at the College of Saint Benedict. In the last week, we have made rapid and difficult decisions to ensure the health and safety of each person in our community and the continued academic success of our students.

At this point, we have moved classes online for the remainder of the semester. We have taken immediate and emergency steps to support our students, staff and faculty through this health crisis. At the College of Saint Benedict:

- We have provided travel assistance to students departing campus, including paying for plane and train tickets and driving students to the airport ourselves. We have also provided financial assistance to hundreds of students returning suddenly from educational experiences abroad.
- We continue to provide housing and services to about 170 students on our campus. These students are international students who are unable to travel home, are homeless or have unhealthy homes, or have family members at home who are at high risk for COVID-19.
- We are accommodating many federal work study positions working remotely, but not all student jobs can be completed online. We are considering paying students for the work they were not able to complete, to ensure that they do not lose this essential financial support for their education.
- We are providing free physical and mental health care to our students during this time of stress and uncertainty.
- We are providing refunds for room and board, for the portion of the semester that students are not able to stay on campus. This comes at a cost of \$6 million at the College of Saint Benedict.
- At present, we continue to pay all our staff, regardless of whether they can complete their work tasks from home. Some staff jobs cannot be completed remotely, and many staff are affected by the K-12 closures in Minnesota.

In these actions, the College of Saint Benedict could not wait for Congress to act. We are financially stretched because of the ways we have already tried to make students whole. I expect that this crisis will substantially test our ability to achieve our mission and serve future generations of young women.

I urge you to support the proposal that will shortly be made by higher education through the American Council on Education (ACE). As president of an institution that has long and admirably served Minnesota, I ask you to act on behalf of colleges in the state and the students we serve.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mary Dana Hinton". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of each name being capitalized and prominent.

Mary Dana Hinton, Ph.D.
President