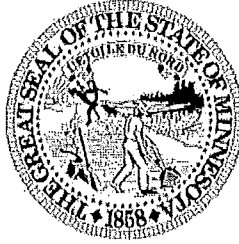


STATE OF MINNESOTA

Executive Department



Governor Tim Walz

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SEP 21 2020

President of the Senate

NOTICE OF APPOINTMENT

Oballa Oballa
Congressional District 1

Because of the special trust and confidence I have in your integrity, judgment, and ability, I have appointed you to the office of:

Community College Student Member
Minnesota State Colleges and Universities Board of Trustees

Effective: September 22, 2020

Expires: June 30, 2022

This appointment carries with it all rights, powers, duties, and emoluments granted by law and pertaining to this position until this appointment is superseded or annulled by me or other lawful authority or by any law of this State.

Signed and sealed September 17, 2020..



Handwritten signature of Tim Walz in black ink.

Tim Walz
Governor

Handwritten signature of Steve Simon in black ink.

Steve Simon
Secretary of State

Replacing: Samson Williams

Filed on September 17, 2020
Office of the Minnesota
Secretary of State,
Steve Simon

Application for the position Student

Part I: Position Sought

Agency Name: Board Of Trustees Of The Minnesota State Colleges And Universities System
Position: Student

Part II: Applicant Information

Name: Oballa Oballa
Phone: (605) 681-5172
County: Mower
In House District: 27B
S House District: 1
Recommended by the Appointing Authority: True

Part III: Appending Documentation

Cover Letter and Resume

Type	File Type
Cover Letter	application/pdf
Resume	application/pdf

Additional Documents (.doc, .docx, .pdf, .txt)

Type	File Name
Jews Article	Building A Future for Himself and Other...ry - Immigrant Law Center of Minnesota.pdf
Publication	Civic Nation BrandVoice- An American St...ice, Civic Engagement, And Citizenship.pdf
Letter of Recommendation	Oballa Oballa-recommendation-Poppe-Trustees.docx
Veteran:	No Answer

Part V: Signature

Signature: Oballa Oballa
Date: 6/28/2020 1:03:37 AM

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President of the Senate

Oballa Oballa

The Honorable Timothy Walz,
Governor of the State of Minnesota,

Dear Governor Walz,

Minnesota has helped me bring the American Dream to life, and as the student representative on the Minnesota State Board of Trustees, I want to make sure that every Minnesota student has the same opportunity afforded to me. For over a decade I lived in a Kenyan refugee camp after fleeing a genocide in my homeland of Gambella, Ethiopia. In 2013, my family and I moved to America in search of a better education and a better life.

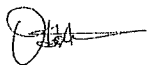
For the past several years I have lived, worked, and gone to school in Austin. That hard work has allowed me to obtain my high school diploma, earn educational certificates as a Certified Nursing Assistant and Trained Medical Assistant, and graduate with my Associates degree in Human Services from Riverland Community College in Austin. Throughout this time I have worked at Mayo Clinic in Austin to help pay for school, and am jointly attending Riverland Community College and St. Scholastica as I work toward receiving a bachelor's degree in social work.

For the last two years as a student leader at Riverland Community College I have worked address student basic needs so that they can focus on school instead of wondering where their next meal is going to come from. I led an effort to open the first food pantry to support students at Riverland College, work that became a model for other community colleges across the state. I continued this effort when I was elected the president of LeadMN, a statewide student association representing the 180,000 community college students in Minnesota. Last year I worked with a bi-partisan group of state legislators to pass the Hunger Free Campus Act, which provides a roadmap that colleges can follow to address this epidemic of food insecurity on campuses. The act has been a success at motivating colleges to take serious steps to address these issues with sixteen colleges being designated Hunger Free this spring.

For the last five years, I have been a member of the Austin Human Rights Commission and this year I was appointed by Mayor Stiehm as the Honorary City Council member. I have been working as a positive change agent in our community by bringing young and old people together.

I will roll up my sleeves for all students and residents of Minnesota. I will bring a fresh voice and proven leadership track record of success to the Minnesota State Board of Trustees. Thank you for considering my application.

Sincerely,



1000 14th St. NW apt 203, Austin, MN 55912-1458

oballaoballa2020@gmail.com

605-681-5172

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President of the Senate

Oballa

Oballa

1000 14th St NW Apt 203, Austin, MN
55912-1458
oballaoballa2020@gmail.com
605-681-5172

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President of the Senate

Profile

Proven track record of bringing people together to solve complex problems within higher education. A hard-working student pursuing a social work degree who brings strong listening and empathy skills to every conversation.

- ✓ **COMMUNITY LEADER:** Led efforts in my city, campus and across the state by bringing together diverse stakeholders to address challenges that face our community.
- ✓ **EMPOWERING UNDERREPRESENTED VOICES:** Has been a passionate advocate to lift up the voices of students and young people who have traditionally been unseen and unheard by decisionmakers.

Key Skills

- ✓ Social Media Expert
- ✓ Project Management
- ✓ Strategic Planning
- ✓ Creative Marketing
- ✓ Media Relations
- ✓ Public Presentation
- ✓ Customer Relationship Management
- ✓ Budget Management

Professional Experience

LeadMN - College Students Connecting for Change, West St. Paul, MN
President **JUL 2018 - JUN 2020**

Led the largest student association in Minnesota that works to tear down institutional barriers that students face in achieving their version of the American Dream.

- ✓ Led the movement in Minnesota to address the 2 in 5 students who face insecurity on college campuses through grassroots advocacy. Passed the Hunger Free Campus Act through the Minnesota legislature that provided a road map for colleges to address this epidemic.
- ✓ Testified regularly before the Minnesota State Board of Trustees and monthly meetings with Minnesota State Chancellor to make changes to improve the opportunity gap, college affordability, and uplifting student voices.
- ✓ Oversaw all operational and financial aspects of LeadMN's \$1 million plus budget. Specifically, I reviewed the organization's executive director twice a year and convened the governing board regularly to ensure proper oversight of the organization's work.

Oballa Oballa

1000 14th St. NW apt 203, Austin, MN
55912-1458
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Professional
Experience

LeadMN - continued

- ✓ Led the organization's get out the vote campaign that registered over 3,300 students to vote and gathered over 15,000 pledges to vote. This effort was pivotal in moving Minnesota to lead the nation in youth voter turnout in the 2018 election.

President of the Senate

Minnesota Office of Higher Education, Saint Paul, MN

Student Advisory Council President Co-Chair

JUL 2019 - JUN 2020

The Office of Higher Education has one standing advisory group, the Student Advisory Council, which convenes students to provide input to the Commissioner on ways to improve student access to higher education.

- ✓ Worked with the office to bring greater attention to food insecurity issues by having the Governor issue a proclamation recognizing the issue of food insecurity on college and university campuses.

City of Austin MN, Austin, MN

Austin Human Right Commissioner

JUL 2016 - Current

The mission of the Human Rights Commission is to cultivate a just and inclusive community where diversity is valued and human rights are respected.

Mayo Clinic Health System, Austin, MN

Health Unit Coordinator

JUL 2015 - Current

Communicated with patients with compassion while keeping medical information private. Coordinated delivery of exceptional patient care by evaluating workflows and facilitating positive changes. Oversaw unit of 32 patients, providing daily functions such as grooming, bathing, feeding and turning in bed.

Riverland Community College - Austin, MN

Student Senate President

JUL 2016 - JUN 2017

The purpose of the Student Senate is to further the interests and promote the welfare of students, foster a college community, facilitate appropriate relationships, and to serve as the representative for students of Riverland Community College's Austin Campus to the administration and faculty of the college.

- ✓ Worked with the campus administration to open up the campus's first food pantry and worked with community partners to fill the pantry.

Education

College of St. Scholastica - Saint Paul, MN

Bachelor of Science Social Work

Current

Riverland Community College - Austin, MN

Associate of Science Human Services

Current

To whom it may concern,

I am writing this letter of support for Oballa Oballa who is seeking a student position on the Board of Trustees. I have known Mr. Oballa since he first began his collegiate career at Riverland Community College and I worked there as a college counselor.

Although I haven't been the student senate advisor for a number of years, I know how much a college benefits with strong student leaders. Exceptional student leaders engage other students and energize the campus community. They know how to advocate and inspire. And some embrace their growth beyond the local college and seek greater challenges.

Oballa began by effecting change locally within the Austin Student Senate and was successful in seeking the position of president of LEADMN. He exudes confidence and positive energy. His own life story and student experiences has shaped his agenda to always advocate for students and to speak up for those less likely to do so on their own.

I am proud to say I had him testify before the MN House Ag and Food finance and policy division. He told his hunger story and captured everyone's attention. From that first legislative exposure, he transformed his personal experience into legislation and Hunger Free Campus designations across the entire state. His initial effort was on behalf of two-year public college students but his message carried over to the four-year university students and the private colleges.

Without a doubt Oballa Oballa is a FORCE for good! Everyone who meets him comes away inspired and delighted to "be on his team". He would make an excellent addition to the Board of Trustees. He listens intently and acts purposefully.

My recommendation is strong and sincere. Please give him proper consideration!

Thank you.

Jeanne

Representative Jeanne Poppe

https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/MNHOUSEDFL/subscriber/new?topic_id=MNHOUSEDFL_58

District 27B

1-651-296-4193

1-888-682-3180

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President of the Senate

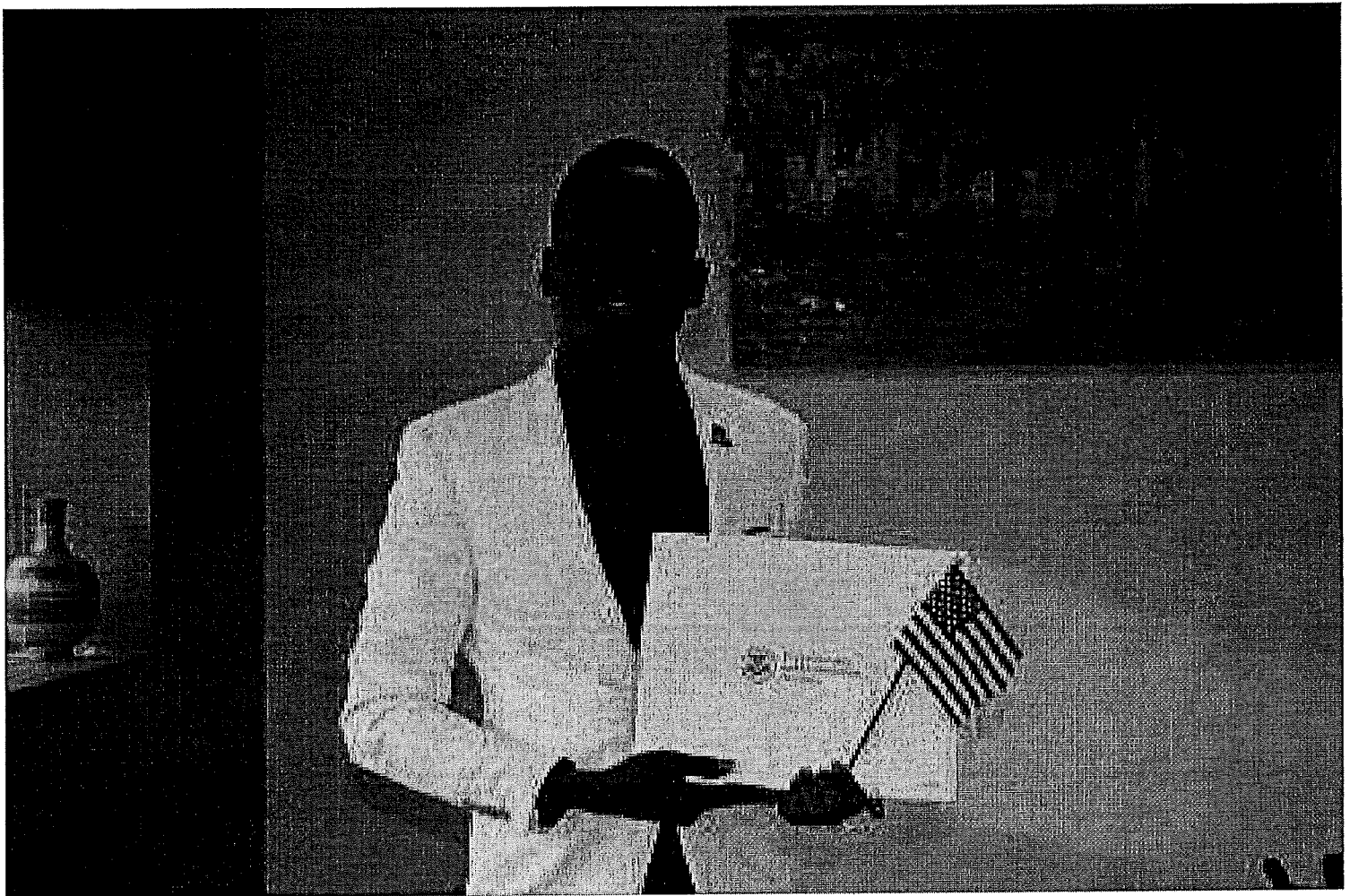
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[NEWS > \(/NEWS\)](#), ILCM IN THE NEWS

President of the Senate

Building A Future for Himself and Others: Oballa Oballa Tells His Story



POSTED ON MAR 09 2020

"It was a Saturday. A lot of people were killed—within 12 hours more than 424 people were dead. I could hear the bullets. I saw one of my uncles die."

This is how Oballa Oballa's immigration story began. He was ten years old on December 13, 2003 in Gambela, Ethiopia. "The government tried to get rid of our whole tribe," he said. "We were kicked out of our homeland suddenly. But even before that we had been mistreated by the government because of our land and resources."

After walking nearly seven days, Oballa crossed the border into Sudan to get to Kenya. After some time living in Nairobi, he went to a refugee camp in Dadaab, Kenya and lived there from 2005-2013. In the camp, food was distributed just twice a month—if at all. There were water shortages too, but throughout it all Oballa and his family remained optimistic.

“Every day the hope is that one day we will be able to leave,” he said. To do that, they had to go through the long, complicated, and often opaque process of refugee resettlement.

“Some people come to a refugee camp and will stay there for more than 20 years without getting an opportunity to resettle. Some people will stay for more than 10 years. Our name was picked after we had been in the camp for about 6 years, but even from there the process was really difficult.”

“When your name is finally picked you have hope. Our name was posted in 2008 and every morning I would wake up and go to the post station to see if anything had changed. My mom would ask me for an update and then we would pray that tomorrow something will come up.”

“Even once we were chosen for resettlement it took forever before we were granted permission to come to the United States. We had to go through a lot of interviews, and were constantly having to prove to different lawyers that our story was true and that the conditions in our country were as bad as we said they were. It was an exhausting process, and we went almost three years without any real progress. Finally, at the end of 2012, we heard that the UNHCR wanted to send us to the United States.”

Oballa and his family arrived in the United States in December 2013, ten years after the massacre that drove them from their home. Initially, they lived together in Maryland before Oballa moved to Sioux Falls, South Dakota for Job Corps training. His mother moved to Austin, Minnesota, and Oballa joined her there after completing his Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) certificate.

“I don’t see myself moving to any other city apart from Austin,” he said. “I want to pay back the help that I got in Minnesota by working here and helping the community that helped me become who I am today.”

Oballa first heard about the Immigrant Law Center of Minnesota (ILCM) while interpreting at the Austin Welcome Center. “I liked the website and thought their work was awesome,” he said. Soon after, he met with ILCM staff attorney Sara Karki to become a citizen himself. “Having an attorney translate all the information and talk me through it was really helpful,” he said. “The whole process was really smooth.”

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Oballa’s naturalization process lasted around six months. “Sara has been so helpful, and because of her my case was really fast,” he said. “A lot of my friends say to me ‘your case was so fast,’ and some people are sitting here and it takes forever.” Oballa now recommends ILCM to others looking to apply for citizenship.

President of the Senate

Oballa has worked at Mayo Clinic since 2015. He is a health unit coordinator and CNA in the psychiatric unit. Though he values his work at Mayo highly, Oballa sees an even greater need in the community for social workers and has discovered a deep passion for social work. He graduated from Riverland Community College last May with an Associate of Arts and Associate degree in Human Service and is now pursuing a bachelor’s degree in social work with the long-term goal of becoming an immigration social worker. “I like working with refugees when they come here,” he said. “Without the social worker who helped me when I first arrived I wouldn’t be where I am today.”

Oballa views immigration as one of the biggest issues of the current day and wants to be a voice for that issue both within immigrant and refugee communities and for the public as a whole.

“People are saying that refugees are only here to bring the economy down. That is not true. I myself did not come to the United States to beg. I came here to work and have a better life. Refugees are boosting the economy of the U.S.A. So if someone who doesn’t know a refugee’s background says, ‘You people make America bad,’ we have to look back—who is saying that? Apart from Native Americans, everyone in this country is either an immigrant or a refugee. So I feel like people shouldn’t make that decision that, ‘We don’t allow you here.’”



(<https://www.ilcm.org/latest-news/building-a-future-for-himself-and-others-oballa-oballa-tells-his-story/oballa-with-judge/>).

Oballa shaking the Judge’s hand after his naturalization ceremony.



[\(https://www.ilcm.org/latest-news/building-a-future-for-himself-and-others-oballa-oballa-tells-his-story/oballa-testifying/\)](https://www.ilcm.org/latest-news/building-a-future-for-himself-and-others-oballa-oballa-tells-his-story/oballa-testifying/)

Oballa testifying at the Minnesota State Capitol Building

Oballa has long been a public voice, even before becoming a citizen. Starting when he was a student, Oballa worked with LeadMN, an organization that represents the 180,000 two-year college students in Minnesota and works with those students to elevate future leaders and overcome systemic barriers to success. In this role, he championed issues including bills to combat food insecurity on campuses and provide open electronic textbooks to bring down the cost of course materials. In both cases, his work involved testifying at the capitol, and thanks to the efforts of Oballa and other student activists, both bills passed.

Oballa also traveled around visiting Minnesota community colleges talking to students in order to take their concerns up with the board of trustees and then the house and senate. Oballa was elected president of LeadMN in 2019, after previously serving as vice president.

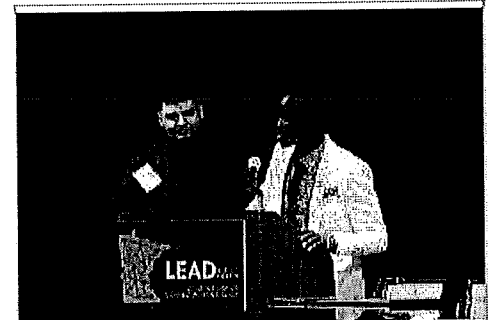
Having registered to vote at his naturalization ceremony, Oballa is looking forward to also engaging in different forms of political involvement.

"I am so happy because now I can vote and serve on a jury. I'm excited about jury duty. It is a privilege. Looking at my background even as a citizen I might be less likely to be picked for a jury, but having my voice and being someone who is civically engaged in the community I can volunteer myself. There are a lot of immigrants, refugees, and black people who are being convicted and sent to jail because there aren't juries who represent them. I am also looking forward to running for office someday to represent my community."

Oballa believes that "refusing refugees is not what the United States is supposed to be."

"People need to understand refugees before judging them. Refugees come to the United States for good reasons. They don't have other places to go and this opportunity is a blessing to them. It is a blessing for me to be here, and there are still refugees with hope that they could come here too. No one should be able to take that away."

President of the Senate



[\(https://www.ilcm.org/latest-news/building-a-future-for-himself-and-others-oballa-oballa-tells-his-story/oballa-with-leadmn/\)](https://www.ilcm.org/latest-news/building-a-future-for-himself-and-others-oballa-oballa-tells-his-story/oballa-with-leadmn/)

Oballa speaking as president of LeadMN

[Immigration In Minnesota \(/news-immigration-in-minnesota\)](/news-immigration-in-minnesota)

[View All \(/news-immigration-in-minnesota\)](/news-immigration-in-minnesota)

[Restaurant Owner Whose Business Burned Calls For Justice For George Floyd \(https://www.ilcm.org/latest-news/restaurant-owner-whose-business-burned-calls-for-justice-for-george-floyd/\)](https://www.ilcm.org/latest-news/restaurant-owner-whose-business-burned-calls-for-justice-for-george-floyd/)

JUN 03 2020

[In Minneapolis, African Refugees See American Dream In Tatters \(https://www.ilcm.org/latest-news/in-minneapolis-african-refugees-see-american-dream-in-tatters/\)](https://www.ilcm.org/latest-news/in-minneapolis-african-refugees-see-american-dream-in-tatters/)

JUN 02 2020

[URGE TO BUY LOCAL IN TIME OF PANDEMIC PUSHES HMONG FARMERS TO MOVE ONLINE](https://www.ilcm.org/latest-news/urge-to-buy-local-in-time-of-pandemic-pushes-hmong-farmers-to-move-online/)

[\(https://www.ilcm.org/latest-news/urge-to-buy-local-in-time-of-pandemic-pushes-hmong-farmers-to-move-online/\)](https://www.ilcm.org/latest-news/urge-to-buy-local-in-time-of-pandemic-pushes-hmong-farmers-to-move-online/)

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[View All \(/news-immigration-in-the-united-states\)](/news-immigration-in-the-united-states)

[What does the DACA decision mean for you? – Facebook Live \(https://www.ilcm.org/latest-news/what-does-the-daca-decision-mean-for-you-facebook-lives/\)](https://www.ilcm.org/latest-news/what-does-the-daca-decision-mean-for-you-facebook-lives/)

[Leave Site \(https://www.google.com/\)](https://www.google.com/)

133,403 views | Jan 7, 2020, 01:40pm EST

An American Story Of Service, Civic Engagement, And Citizenship

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Michael Dean Brand Contributor
Civic Nation BRANDVOICE | Paid Program
Leadership

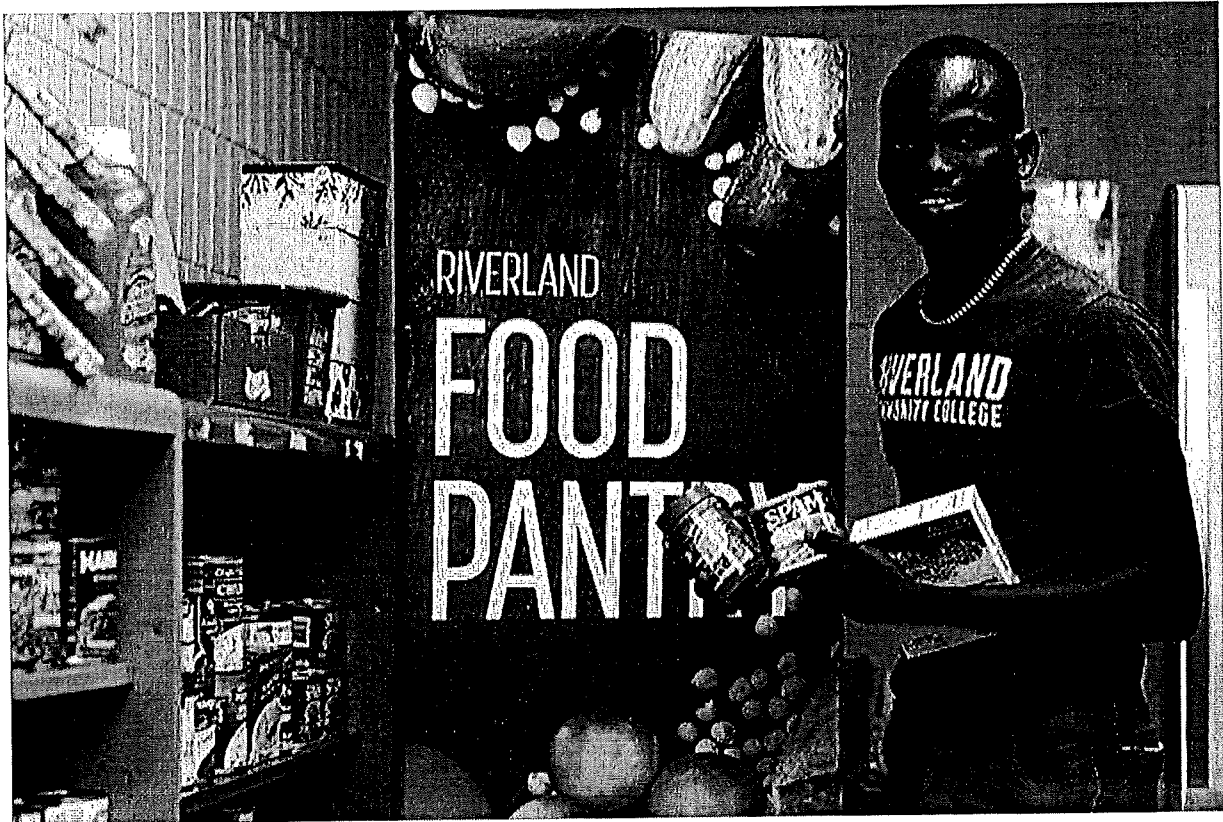
SEP 21 2020

President of the Senate

Mike Dean is the Executive Director of LeadMN (College Students Connecting for Change). He earned the Standout Campus Partner Award from the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge at the ALL IN Awards Ceremony in November 2019.

The American Story has long been written by immigrants. Too often, however, we look at their economic success rather than their contributions to strengthening our democracy. In fact, the founding fathers were not American citizens when they signed the Declaration of Independence. They spent decades, after the founding of our country, building a country that would live up to the ideals that they set, ideals that each subsequent generation of immigrants drives towards.

Over time, immigrants came for many different reasons. Some fled religious persecution, while others sought economic security or the freedom to pursue their own version of the American Dream. That was the case for Oballa Oballa, who spent many years of his life in a Kenyan refugee camp after fleeing his homeland of Gambella, Ethiopia. Oballa came to America in search of a better education and a better life.



Oballa at the Riverland Austin Food Pantry, which he helped open. LEADMN

When he arrived, he was told that he did not need an education because, at 20, he was too old to obtain his high school diploma and instead should get a factory job. Oballa knew that education was the key to future success and instead pursued his GED through the Job Corps program.

After achieving his high school diploma he enrolled in community college. After his first semester, his fellow students approached him about getting involved in student government on campus to help register students to vote. While Oballa could not vote in the upcoming election because he was not a citizen, he knew he could still have his voice heard by helping his fellow students register to vote. On Election Day, he drove students to the polls to cast their ballots. Oballa's engagement speaks a lot about his character but also the culture in Minnesota that supports civic engagement. During the 2018 midterm election, Minnesota led the nation in voter turnout with 64.25 percent of eligible voters casting a ballot.

In 2018, Minnesota led the nation in youth voting (18-29 year olds) and a total of thirteen colleges received a platinum award from the ALL IN

Campus Democracy Challenge for having a campus voter turnout rate of 50 percent or higher in the 2018 midterm election. In fact, Hamline University had a campus voter turnout rate of 63.3 percent, on par with the statewide rate, debunking the myth that young people are not politically engaged. Hamline University earned a Best in Class Award from the ALL IN Challenge for having the highest voter turnout for a medium-sized private 4-year institution. The University of Minnesota Twin Cities earned a Best in Class Award for having the highest voter turnout rate for a large public 4-year institution with 58.7 percent of students voting in 2018. The Minnesota institutions earn recognition for the 2018 election include private colleges, land grant institutions, and even community colleges that have all institutionalized a culture of voting on their campuses.

It is the intentional work of campuses to increase nonpartisan democratic engagement and Minnesota's strong bipartisan election laws, like same day registration and no photo ID laws that reduce the barriers that college students too often face when voting across the country. But that campus engagement goes beyond just voting and includes building civic agency within students to empower them to advance changes that will improve their community during and between elections.



Minnesota Governor Tim Walz signing the Hunger Free Campus Act, with Oballa by his side. LEADMN

That is exactly what Oballa did after the 2018 election, when he worked with students across the state to address food insecurity on college campuses. During one legislative hearing Oballa shared this story with elected officials about how at the start of one semester he needed to withdraw almost all his money from his savings account to pay for textbooks. He then went to the

cafeteria to grab some lunch, but only had \$1.50 left and he needed \$2.50 to buy some french fries and chicken nuggets.

I looked up and cried inside as I walked away from the line. Being food insecure makes me feel bad about myself because it's painful. I feel like I cannot succeed and that makes me more worried about my future. It makes me feel unworthy because I don't have the energy to do things like my homework. My story is similar to many shared with me by students from across the state.

His story inspired legislators to pass the Hunger Free Campus Act in Minnesota, which provides campuses a road map on how colleges can better support the two in five community college students who suffer from food insecurity on a monthly basis. It is this work—of not only engaging students to vote but also creating positive policy change that will impact the tens of thousands of students affected by food insecurity—that is creating lifelong engaged citizens.



Oballa being congratulated at his citizenship ceremony. LEADMN

And on December 17, 2019, Oballa Oballa officially became a US citizen, even though he has already been acting like the engaged citizen we should all strive to be for the last several years.

More than 585 colleges and universities currently participate in the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge. Learn more about the Challenge and donate to advance our work here.

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SEP 21 2020



Michael Dean

President of the Senate

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Statement of economic interest for a public official

Official: Oballa, Oballa

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Statement last updated: 10/11/2020

Occupation: Minnesota State College and Universities Board Of Trustee

Employer: Minnesota State
30 E 7th St,
St Paul, MN 55912

Positions held

Agency	Position held	Appointment date	Appointment ends	Appointment authority
Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (/reports-and-data/officials-financial-disclosure/agency/71400000/)	Community College Student Member	9/22/2020	6/30/2022	Governor

Sources of income

Name of source	Relationship to source							
	Director	Officer	Owner	Member	Partner	Employer	Employee	Honorarium
None				✓				

Business or professional activity categories

None reported

Securities

Name of security
None

Real property

None reported

Pari-mutuel horse racing interests

None reported