

**Testimony of Kyle Edwards, AFSCME 3800 Member  
Board of Regents Public Forum on the University Budget  
Wednesday, June 5, 2013**

Hello, my name is Kyle Edwards. I'm a clerical worker in the Political Science Department. I celebrated the end of my second year of employment here last week. I've lived in the Twin Cities Metro all my life; first in the southern suburbs before moving to Minneapolis six and a half years ago to start school in the College of Liberal Arts at the University of Minnesota. I'm here to talk about my experience at the U of M and the Regents Scholarship.

While I went to school here I worked, whether in retail, at unpaid internships, or as a student clerical worker in the Social Science Advising Community in Heller Hall. I went to a public university in my home state, studied the liberal arts, graduated in four years and worked between 20 and 40 hours a week the whole time. I am now \$35,000 in debt with interest piling up. While the \$320 a month I pay in student loans may not sound like much to a Regent or someone who makes more than \$600,000 a year, it causes me to live paycheck to paycheck. And my loan payments are only going to increase because I chose the graduated payment plan. I am unable to put any money into a savings account. I recently cancelled my membership at the recreation center and my bus pass to afford a raise in my rent. I consider myself lucky that shopping at second hand stores is stylish now-a-days.

I work and studied at an institution whose mission statement says in part that "all people are enriched by understanding. [The University] is dedicated to the advancement of learning and the search for truth; to the sharing of this knowledge through education." Even so, I am unable to continue my education at my alma mater because of the cuts to the Regents Scholarship. Tuition has gone up so much, that now the University ostensibly can't afford to educate their own workers. The cut to the Regents Scholarship limits my ability to advance my career. Even though I studied in the Political Science Department for four years, and have worked here for another two, and have an intimate knowledge of the program, professors, and courses, I am unqualified to advise undergraduate students about the major because I cannot afford a master's degree. The \$1500 dollars it cost me to take five credits in the Master of Liberal Arts program last summer is unsustainable for a low-wage worker and unsustainable for my personal budget. In contrast, a very highly thought of and celebrated clerical worker in my department left her job here last year for a clerical position at George Washington University in no small part because she could complete an entire master's degree in Political Science for less money than it took me to complete two classes here at the U of MN.

I'm very glad that the Board of Regents has listened to AFSCME workers, Civil Service workers, and others when they partially restored the Regents Scholarship for a first degree. I'm very proud of the union I'm in because we understand that education is good for its own sake. We understand that all workers should have access to all levels of education regardless of their income. But our work hasn't convinced the Board of the right policy, yet. You need to fully

restore the Regents Scholarship for all workers: for the first degree, a higher degree, or no degree at all. We will continue to fight until the Regents Scholarship is fully restored. Thank you.