Metropolitan State University lies at the heart of highly diverse urban communities in the Twin Cities of Minneapolis and Saint Paul. Our campus sites are spread throughout the metropolitan area and attract primarily adult learners, including 36% students of color, and 10-12% veterans and military students. With the inclusion of first-generation college students and Pell-grant-eligible students, and veterans and military students, over 70% of our students come from under-represented groups in higher education. Despite the very high diversity of the students we serve, we have developed very little support targeted specifically toward students of color.

A notable exception is our membership in the Northstar Chapter of the Louis Stokes Alliance for Minority Participation (LSAMP). This has been an important program for engaging and supporting over 100 of our science students since 2007. We recognize an unfortunate but significant limitation of the LSAMP program: ethnically Hmong students, who make up the largest minority group on campus are not eligible to participate in LSAMP. Federal programs like the NSF currently classify these students as Asian, a broad category that is not considered to be under-represented in STEM fields. Yet, Hmong students comprise a distinctly under-represented minority not just in STEM fields but in all of higher education.

In recent months, we have developed plans for six initiatives that would more explicitly and directly support under-represented student groups at Metropolitan State University, including an embedded tutoring program, faculty development for cultural competency, enhanced internship opportunities, and stipends for student-faculty research projects. We are currently seeking funding through national and local agencies to support these projects.