

STATE OF MINNESOTA

Executive Department

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JAN 3 2022

President of the Senate

Governor Tim Walz

NOTICE OF APPOINTMENT

Dennis Olson

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

Commissioner

Minnesota Office of Higher Education

Effective: January 2, 2023

Expires: January 4, 2027

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it all rights, powers, duties, and emoluments granted by law and pertaining to this position until this appointment is superseded or annulled by me or other lawful authority or by any law of this State.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 January 2, 2023.



Handwritten signature of Tim Walz in black ink.

Tim Walz
Governor

Handwritten signature of Steve Simon in black ink.

Steve Simon
Secretary of State

Reappointment

Filed on January 2, 2023
Office of the Minnesota
Secretary of State,
Steve Simon

Dennis William Olson, Jr.
1450 Energy Park Drive, Suite 350
St. Paul, MN 55108
(651) 642-0567

Profile

Enrolled citizen of the Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa with a Master's degree in Education and Master's degree in Liberal Studies, both with a focus on American Indian education and Federal Indian policy. Currently hold an executive appointment with the State of Minnesota as the Commissioner of the Office of Higher Education. Previously appointed as Executive Director of the Minnesota Indian Affairs Council. Prior to this appointment, served as the Director of the Minnesota Department of Education - Office of Indian Education. Prior to serving in state government, held an executive appointment as Commissioner of Education for the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe. Worked formerly with American Indian communities, schools, elected officials, and tribal governments through federally-funded grant initiatives at the University of Minnesota, Institute on Community Integration. Over twenty-two years' experience working directly with state and federal officials and agencies, tribal elected leaders, community-serving organizations, students, youth, and families.

Education

- 2003-2010 ***Master of Education*** (American Indian Education)
University of Minnesota, Duluth, MN
- 2002-2004 ***Master of Liberal Studies*** (Federal Indian Policy)
University of Minnesota, Duluth, MN
- 1998-2002 ***Bachelor of Arts*** (American Indian Studies, Sociology, and Communication Studies)
University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN

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Experience

- 1/19-present ***Commissioner, Minnesota Office of Higher Education – Governor's Appointee***
State of Minnesota. St. Paul, MN
 - Oversee all operations of the cabinet-level state agency including administration of the Minnesota State Grant Program, other state scholarship and grant programs, P-20 data and research, tuition reciprocity programs, Minnesota SELF Loan, Minnesota's 529 College Savings Plan, institution licensing and registration, an early college awareness program, and college access initiatives for youth.
- 11/16-1/19 ***Executive Director, Minnesota Indian Affairs Council – Executive Appointee***
State of Minnesota. St. Paul, MN
 - Serve as the primary liaison between governor's office, state legislature, state agency executive leaders, and elected tribal leaders, tribal nations, and urban Indian communities.
 - Analyze and make recommendations to tribal elected leaders, members of the legislature, and the governor on legislation and programs, proposals, and projects of importance to tribal governments.
 - Draft key legislative proposals and prepare and deliver relevant testimony in support of proposals that have an impact on tribal nations.
 - Oversee implementation of the Minnesota Private Cemeteries Act, mandating agency oversight and authority over American Indian cemetery and burial sites statewide.

- Provide direct input to establish Indian advisory councils and tribal liaison positions in cooperation with state agencies that deliver services to the federally recognized tribes in Minnesota and the urban Indian communities.
- Assist the governor's office with implementation of Executive Order 13-10, mandating tribal consultation between tribal elected leaders and state agency executive leaders.
- Assist state agencies in implementing and updating studies of services delivered to the federally recognized tribes in Minnesota and urban Indian communities.
- Connect with private organizations that develop and implement programs to serve Indian people and serve as an advisor when such programs may affect state agencies and departments.
- Develop and prepare the agenda for the annual summit of elected tribal leaders, legislative leaders, and the governor.

9/12-11/16

Director, Office of Indian Education – Executive Appointee

Minnesota Department of Education, Roseville, MN

- Serve as the chief liaison between the Department of Education and the eleven tribal nations in Minnesota, the Tribal Nations Education Committee, the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe, and the Minnesota Indian Affairs Council.
- Direct and administer state-funded Indian Education grants, formula funding, and scholarship programs (K-12 American Indian Education revenue, Minnesota Indian Teacher Training Program, BIE school equalization, Tribal Early Childhood Family Education, and Ethel Curry American Indian Leadership Scholarship).
- Monitor and provide technical assistance to all independent school districts receiving federal Indian education funding (Title VII, Johnson O'Malley, and Impact Aid).
- Monitor school district compliance with all Minnesota statutes included in the Indian Education Act of 1988.
- Provide training, technical assistance, and professional development on all aspects of Indian Education programming to schools, districts, community-serving organizations, and local and state agencies as requested.
- Advise the Commissioner of Education on all American Indian education issues including administration of the commissioner's duties under state legislation.
- Propose legislative changes that will improve the quality of American Indian education.
- Develop strategic plans and long-term frameworks for American Indian education.
- Increase American Indian student achievement, including increased levels of proficiency and growth on statewide accountability assessments.

5/09-8/12

Commissioner of Education – Executive Appointee

Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe, Onamia, MN

- Plan, direct, monitor, and review all activities and operations of the Department of Education.
- General and day-to-day supervisory authority over divisions within the department including: Early Education (Early Head Start & Head Start), Daycare, K-12 (Bureau of Indian Education funded - Nay Ah Shing Schools), Higher Education, and four branches of the Mille Lacs Band Boys & Girls Clubs.
- Member of the Tribal Nations Education Committee (TNEC) serving as liaison between the Minnesota Department of Education, Minnesota Chippewa Tribe, Minnesota Indian Affairs Council, and the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe for all education initiatives.
- Serve as member of the Mille Lacs Band's Administration Policy Board.
- Serve as member of the Chief Executive's Cabinet.
- Serve as ex-officio member of the Nay Ah Shing School Board.
- Develop, manage, and oversee all budgets for the Department of Education.
- Day-to-day administration of the Mille Lacs Band Department of Education contracts including negotiation and execution with individuals, vendors, State of Minnesota, Federal government, and private foundations.

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6/04-5/09

Project Coordinator

University of Minnesota, Institute on Community Integration. Minneapolis, MN

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- Oversee daily activities, manage data, and report outcomes of State of Minnesota and federally funded grant projects including:
 - Title III – U.S. Department of Education, Office of Postsecondary Education (Small Business/Entrepreneurship Degree development with Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College)
 - Pathways to Employment – Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (High School/High Tech E-mentoring)
 - Project Intersect – U.S. Department of Education, Office of Innovation and Improvement (Teacher training on American Indian arts education implementation)
 - Project Challenge – U.S. Department of Education, Office of Indian Education (Youth transition and leadership development on the Red Lake Reservation)
 - Pathways to Possibilities – U.S. Department of Education, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education (Youth transition on the Fond du Lac Reservation and surrounding communities including public school Indian Education programs)
 - Outreach to Empower – U.S. Department of Education, Office of Indian Education (Youth transition on the Lower Sioux Reservation and surrounding communities including public school Indian Education programs)
 - Future Bound – U.S. Department of Education, Office of Indian Education (Youth leadership development with four Minnesota Dakota communities)
 - Expanding the Circle – U.S. Department of Education, Office of Indian Education (Youth transition with seven Minnesota Ojibwe Reservations)
- Provide on-site programming as well as technical assistance and training to project site staff.
- Research, develop, and author new federally funded grant opportunities.

9/02-6/04

Graduate Research Assistant

University of Minnesota, Institute on Community Integration. Minneapolis, MN

- Coordinated Pathways to Possibilities northern project sites on the Fond du Lac Reservation and surrounding Cloquet Public Schools.
- Coordinated Outreach to Empower northern project sites on the Fond du Lac Reservation and surrounding Cloquet and Carlton Public Schools.

5/02-9/02

Professional and Administrative Staff

University of Minnesota, Institute on Community Integration. Minneapolis, MN

- Curriculum development for Expanding the Circle: Respecting the Past, Preparing for the Future transition curriculum.
- Researched and developed federally funded grant-writing opportunities to support the eleven reservations and communities in Minnesota.

1/00-5/02

Undergraduate Research Assistant

University of Minnesota, Institute on Community Integration. Minneapolis, MN

- Provided assistance for youth summer programs, training sessions, and curriculum development.
- Collected data on student retention for Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College Business/Finance 2-year degree program.

Published Works

- 12/11 Ness, J.E., & Olson, D.W. (2011). Preparing American Indian youth for the transition from high school to college. Voices of Native American Educators.

- 4/10 Ness, J.E., Maciewski, B., & Olson, D.W., (2010). The young American Indian entrepreneur. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota.

Honors and Activities

- 2022 *State Higher Education Executive Officers Association (SHEEO), National Agency of the Year Award (Minnesota Office of Higher Education and Minnesota State Colleges and Universities)*
- 2021-2022 *Young Women's Initiative Executive Council*
- 2021-present *State Higher Education Executive Officers Association (SHEEO) Executive Committee member*
- 2020 *Minnesota Education Equity Partnership (MNEEP) All My Relations Award for Education*
- 2020-present *State Higher Education Executive Officers Association (SHEEO) Equity Advisory Board Member*
- 2019-present *Education Commission of the States (ECS) Commissioner, Appointed by Minnesota Governor Tim Walz*
- 2019 *National Center for American Indian Economic Development 40 under 40 Award.*
- 2019-present *Midwest Higher Education Compact (MHEC), Appointed to compact by Minnesota Governor Tim Walz.*
- 2016 *State of Minnesota Senior Leadership Institute (SLI), Humphrey School of Public Affairs, University of Minnesota*
- 2012-2018 *Minnesota Historical Society Indian Advisory Board.*
- 2015 *Minnesota Indian Education Association Administrator of the Year Award.*
- 2012-2016 *Minnesota Indian Education Association Board of Directors, Ex-officio member representing Minnesota Department of Education – Office of Indian Education*
- 2013-2016 *St. Cloud State University American Indian Advisory Board.*
- 2013-2015 *University of Minnesota MRSEC Education and Human Resources Advisory Board.*
- 2013-2014 *Northeast Higher Education District Intercultural Advisory Council, Five member colleges of the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities System.*
- 2012-2014 *Minnesota Academic Excellence Foundation (MAEF), Appointed to foundation by Minnesota Governor Mark Dayton.*
- 2011-2012 *Boys & Girls Clubs of 10,000 Lakes Board of Directors, North central region of Minnesota, Vice president.*
- 2010-2012 *Minnesota Chippewa Tribe - Tribal Nations Education Committee (TNEC), Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe, appointed representative.*
- 2009-2012 *President's Regional Advisory Council, Central Lakes College, Brainerd, MN.*
- 2002-2005 *Anishinaabe Student Organization, University of Minnesota-Duluth, student representative.*

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- 2002-present *Jackie Robinson Foundation Alumni Association.*
- 1998-2002 *Jackie Robinson Foundation/Kirby Puckett Scholar.*
- 2001-2002 *American Indian Science and Engineering Society (AISES), University of Minnesota Student Chapter, president.*
- 1998-2001 *American Indian Science and Engineering Society (AISES), University of Minnesota Student Chapter, treasurer.*
- 1998-2002 *Presidents Distinguished Faculty Mentor Program Scholar.*

References Available Upon Request

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