



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

April 29, 2019

**Contact:**

Sarah Lemagie  
PR & Communications Officer  
(612) 672-3877  
[slemagie@mplsfoundation.org](mailto:slemagie@mplsfoundation.org)

## **The Minneapolis Foundation Names New Chair, Three Trustees**

MINNEAPOLIS, Minn. — The Minneapolis Foundation is pleased to announce the appointment of three new members to its Board of Trustees. **Khadija Ali, DeAndre Cunningham** and **Michael Rodriguez** joined the board at a meeting this month.

“These new Trustees bring diverse perspectives, deep experience in their fields and a shared commitment to strengthening this community, and I look forward to their contributions on our board,” said R.T. Rybak, President and CEO of The Minneapolis Foundation.

In addition to welcoming the new board members, the Foundation welcomed **John Sullivan**, a Trustee since 2013, to his new role as Chair of the foundation’s Board of Trustees. Sullivan, who is also Executive Vice President and General Counsel of Carlson, succeeds Phil Smith, who has completed his term as Chair.

During Smith’s tenure, The Minneapolis Foundation set a record for charitable gifts made to the foundation in a single year, raising more than \$100 million in fiscal year 2018. The foundation followed that milestone by setting a new record for grants made to the community, with \$80 million distributed to charitable causes and organizations during the year that ended on March 31, 2019.

The Board of Trustees is composed of three dozen residents of the Minneapolis-Saint Paul metro area who are leaders in the public, private and nonprofit sectors. Ali and Rodriguez have been appointed to four-year terms on the board; Cunningham will serve for two years as a representative of The Minneapolis Foundation’s Fourth Generation program.

The new Trustees are as follows:

**Khadija Ali** is a successful entrepreneur in the language services, staffing and cultural competence industries, and she has become a leader in creating opportunities for immigrant communities. Born in Somalia, Ali immigrated with her family to the United States in 1996 by

way of a refugee camp in Kenya. After learning English in school, she began serving as an interpreter for her family. A family experience in which language became a life-threatening barrier led her to pursue a career in health care. In college, she worked as a medical assistant, then as a medical interpreter, before founding her own interpreter agency. That business grew to one of the largest interpreter agencies in the state, with more than 900 interpreters speaking more than 100 languages. In 2015, she founded a new business focusing on language services, staffing and recruiting, and teaching cultural competence to corporations and other organizations. She serves on the boards of Aeon, the Minneapolis Regional Chamber of Commerce and the Final Four Impact Advisory Council. Ali attended St. Paul Community College, the University of Minnesota and Harvard University. In 2017, she was a member of Harvard Business School's 2017 Young American Leaders Program.

**DeAndre Cunningham** is a Senior Finance Analyst at General Mills. His corporate experiences span broadly across finance and include the financial planning and analysis of a multibillion-dollar segment to support business operations and investments in North America. At General Mills, he has also led the financial analysis of new product development on brands like EPIC Provisions, Yoplait, and Cascadian Farm. He was recently elected to serve as president of the General Mills Finance Analyst Community, a company-sponsored network of more than 100 finance analysts. Cunningham was also recently recognized by peers and company leaders with a Black Champions Network Emerging Leaders Award. In the Minneapolis community, he serves on the Fourth Generation Advisory Board and was elected to serve as chair for the group's upcoming grantmaking cycle. Cunningham holds a B.S. in Finance and Psychology from Minnesota State University, where he graduated with honors.

**Michael C. Rodriguez** is Professor of Quantitative Methods in Education in the department of educational psychology at the University of Minnesota. He received his PhD in Educational Measurement and Quantitative Methods from Michigan State University in 1999. He holds the endowed Campbell Leadership Chair in Education and Human Development with a focus on educational equity and is a member of the University's Academy of Distinguished Teachers. He is member of the Board of Directors of the National Council on Measurement in Education and currently chairs the U.S. Department of Defense Advisory Committee on Military Personnel Testing and the Technical Advisory Group for the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards. Dr. Rodriguez is the recipient of the 2005 Albert J. Harris Research Award of the International Reading Association. His research and publications address item writing and test design, classroom assessment, measurement accessibility, early literacy and language development, social and emotional learning, and teacher development. Dr. Rodriguez has co-authored two books: *Developing and Validating Test Items* (2013) and *The College Instructor's Guide to Writing Test Items: Measuring Student Learning* (2017). He is a fifth-generation Minnesotan and lives in Saint Paul with his son.

###

***About The Minneapolis Foundation:*** For more than 100 years, The Minneapolis Foundation has connected people, resources, and ideas to improve lives in Minnesota and beyond. The

*Foundation manages \$890 million in assets, providing customized and tax-smart giving solutions that result in the average annual distribution of more than \$50 million in grants. The Foundation brings people together to unite behind common goals and spark positive change in our community. [www.minneapolisfoundation.org](http://www.minneapolisfoundation.org)*