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Tom Williams (left) and Brett Anderson will leave from Minnesota State University today for a 95-mile walk to the state Capitol where they hope to bring attention to rising tuition costs and university cuts.
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Want to draw attention to college students’ concerns

By Tim Krohn
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When Tom Williams and Brett Anderson campaigned for the Minnesota State University Student Association, they talked the talk about fighting higher tuition and lower state funding for higher education.

Now that they’ve been elected, they’re going to walk the walk — all the way to the state Capitol.

At noon today the two seniors will leave campus on a 95-mile walk to St. Paul, where they hope to bring attention to their issues with the specific goal of getting the gubernatorial candidates and lawmakers to visit campus this fall.

“We hope if we put the effort in, they’ll feel compelled to come here next fall and see what the cuts have done to students,” said Anderson, vice president of the association.

Williams, president of the association, said they want the state to live up to its commitment of funding 50 percent of higher education costs. “In 2009, students paid 55 percent of all revenues,” Williams said. “We understand it’s tough budget times, but a commitment has been made.”

They say cutting class offerings and faculty at public colleges will have long-term impacts, considering that the University of Minnesota and the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities produce 70 percent of the state’s undergraduates.

“Those are our future leaders and the future of our economy. Our degrees are being devalued,” Anderson said.

They are getting help on spreading the word of their trek from MnSCU, the state student association and local lawmakers. They hope their efforts will result in a public forum at MSU in the fall where gubernatorial and legislative candidates, as well as other lawmakers, will meet with students.

The two will take the Sakatah Trail to Faribault, then follow roads running parallel to I-35, then into the Twin Cities on Cedar Avenue with hopes of hitting the Capitol steps Monday. They will camp and stay at friends’ homes along the way. They will average 20 to 35 miles a day.

The two admit they haven’t done a lot in the way of preparation for a long trek, as finals week just concluded and planning for the trip took up their time.

“We’ve done a little to loosen up. Like the nature of a student, we waited till last minute,” Anderson said.

EYE ON FUTURE: They say class cuts, tuition increases will damage state economy in the long run