

The UPDATE

*Newsletter for the
faculty of the seven
Minnesota state
universities.*

Fiscal Year 15- No.3
December-2014

Bemidji ♦ Mankato ♦ Metropolitan ♦ Moorhead ♦ Southwest ♦ St. Cloud ♦ Winona

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

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Embracing Change

BY JIM GRABOWSKA, IFO PRESIDENT, grabowska@iffo.org

By now, most faculty will be aware of the actions taken over the past few weeks, especially the IFO's decision to withdraw our appointees from Charting the Future implementation teams and the votes of no confidence that have been held on each campus. They will be familiar with our concerns over the lack of transparency, the lack of shared governance, that lack of recognition of the unique cultures and practices that exist on each of the state university campuses and at the system level. The decisions to withdraw and to hold votes of no confidence were made after thorough and deep conversation with leadership from each campus.

In the case of our withdrawal from the administration-

dominated CtF process, we held additional conversation with the faculty who sat the different teams. The November 7 Meet & Confer session with the Chancellor added another element to our concerns.

On Thursday, November 6th, the System Office informed the IFO

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of their request for mediation to resolve concerns about CtF. Immediately following the announcement and prior to any conversations, the System Office released information about their request across the system and to

the press. This was followed by an email from the chair and vice-chair of the Board of Trustees. IFO considered this an attempt to co-opt the process to garner favorable public

opinion and to push the IFO in a direction that had not been discussed until the moment of the emails, rather than a serious attempt to resolve our concerns.

At the Friday, November 7, Meet & Confer, we declined to participate in mediation. When we asked the Chancellor to articulate the specific issues that

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It's Time to Fix the System

The icy standoff between campus faculty and the leadership of the Minnesota State College and Universities (MnSCU) needs to end . . . but let's first get to the root of the problem.

MnSCU has been leading an experiment to change campuses into quasi-private franchises for years. Producing more degrees quicker and more cheaply has been its hallmark. Never mind that the quality of the education may suffer when change is put in the hands of political appointees and corporate advisors.

To gild the lily of misguided privatization, MnSCU also pays for multi-million dollar consultants, such as McKinsey and Co., to manage system planning, regardless of faculty and student objections. And it's only a matter of time before we learn how much is being spent on consultants to "rebrand" the system.

The crux of the problem is this: without the campus autonomy necessary to meet student needs, no amount of "change management" and corporate "rebranding" will help protect and enhance the quality of higher education.

It's time for a public conversation about change

Students, faculty, staff, and taxpayers deserve an honest and

open conversation about change. This conversation could start by recognizing that even good ideas can come at an untenable price. No public funds have been appropriated for system-wide planning, so isn't it reasonable to know what is being sacrificed by pursuing new directions? When sacrifice gets down to the campus level, it could mean fewer programs, fewer majors and minor degree options and fewer options for students – ultimately it means less freedom to serve our students.

Some have hopes that private mediation is the answer – that too is short-sighted. The problem of disappearing autonomy for the campuses is not a small issue suited for secret meetings. MnSCU's leadership is facing an epidemic of distrust and withering support.

This distrust was first made public when the Inter Faculty Organization (IFO) presented nearly 40 specific complaints about Chancellor Rosenstone's leadership to the Chancellor himself and to the MnSCU Board of Trustees in June of 2014. Lacking meaningful responses to these complaints, the seven state university faculty associations cast votes of "no confidence" in Chancellor Rosenstone's leadership. The IFO and the two-year college faculty union, along with one

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student association, pulled out of the Chancellor's Charting the Future initiative, and two student senate organizations voted "no confidence" in the Chancellor.

Indeed, this type of change isn't what MnSCU leaders were looking for, but it is clear that faculty and many students have gone to unusual lengths to curtail centralized management of the campuses.

It's time to recognize that faculty know how to change

Chancellor Rosenstone recently said something that is painfully true, "change is uncomfortable." And yet the questions that should have been asked (but weren't) are: *Why is it so hard today for MnSCU leadership to change in a way that supports the campuses? And does MnSCU need to be reminded that campuses already know how to change?*

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were to be the subject of mediation, the Chancellor did not answer our question.

The arguments presented by the System Office since our withdrawal have focused on how faculty resist change and that if we only come back to the table, we will be welcomed with open arms. However, we have not “left the table.” We removed our representatives from a set of

with the Chancellor at Meet & Confer sessions, and we will continue to make use of these meetings to advise him about Charting the Future. More seriously, the System Office is spreading the false message that faculty oppose any and all change, and that we will sacrifice the education of our students in favor of the status quo. What is fundamentally wrong about these arguments is that

our offices advising students; we practice change in the preparation of our classes, in our uses of technology, in the very notion of a “teachable moment” in the classroom. It is for those reasons that we demanded changes to Charting the Future and why each campus has weighed their confidence in the Chancellor's leadership and found it wanting. Those of us who are most familiar with change and who work most closely with students should not have reduced roles at any table on any issue. We absolutely stand for access, affordability, student success and an extraordinary education. That is what we deliver every day and we will not be denied our voice in favor of a single centralized system that ignores the unique nature of each of the state universities. ●

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dysfunctional, ad hoc committees in which faculty and student voices are marginalized. We continue to meet regularly

faculty not only do not resist change, they embrace it. It is part of our everyday lives: we live it in the classroom, in the lab, in

MEMBERSHIP

Spring Adjunct Dues/Fees and IFO Membership Information

BY DONNA LYNN BLAKE, CONTROLLER/MEMBERSHIP COORDINATOR, blake@ifo.org

Most spring adjunct member dues/fair share fee deductions will start on the 2/6/15 paycheck. Please note that you can sign up for membership in the IFO at any time by going to our website, www.ifo.org, and clicking on the

“[Join IFO Click Here](#)” red link at the top of the page. Your membership will be processed immediately and you will receive an IFO membership card and bumper sticker in the mail in approximately 1-2 weeks. Also, if

you have had a recent name or address change, please contact me with your new information. Faculty who have had a name change can request a new IFO membership card too.



Winona State University

BY DARRELL DOWNS, PRESIDENT, WSU FACULTY ASSOCIATION, ddowns@winona.edu

The WSU Faculty Association's commitment to campus autonomy and educational excellence remains unparalleled. Even in light of the FA Senate October 20th vote of "no confidence" in Chancellor Rosenstone, the spirit of reform to strengthen the university has never been more alive. We are very happy to have 21 newly tenured and/or promoted faculty and a relatively stable enrollment. We are working with administration (especially our three newest deans) to reach a common understanding of the contract, and we are working to increase the number of probationary hires for next year. This is some of the positive news that continues to empower our faculty to sustain its strong tradition of campus-driven leadership.

On the other hand, never has it been more disappointing to hear that MnSCU leadership

suggests that we're avoiding "critical conversations." Serious discussion about academic quality, new and revised programs, and nearly all matters of university governance continue each week at WSU, as well as at all of the state universities, and there is no basis for anyone to claim that objections to top-down management represent the faculty's reluctance to change.

Serious recognition of this campus-driven leadership will signal the beginning of a more sustainable relationship with the MnSCU System Office. Meanwhile, the WSU Faculty Association works hand in hand with the IFO in its active and engaged involvement with students, legislative leaders, and community partners to enhance public higher education.



Metropolitan State University

BY ALLEN BELLAS, PRESIDENT, METRO STATE FACULTY ASSOCIATION, ALLEN.BELLAS@METROSTATE.EDU

It's been a lively first half of November at Metropolitan State. Our student senate passed a vote of no confidence in Chancellor Rosenstone and our faculty council, in support of our students and our colleagues at the other universities, followed suit a few days later. The four points reported out of council were, "neglect of students, lack of transparency, lack of respect for the bargaining process, and mismanagement of MnSCU." In contrast to our issues with the central office, our faculty association is pleased to maintain a good working relationship with our local administration

and, as a result of this, several of our more experienced members are looking forward to positive responses to their proposals for phased retirement. We continue to be active in our community, providing both apples and apple pies for our neighbors and investigating options to revive a greenhouse on our campus with the goal of using it for community development and academic endeavors. Finally, a group from Metropolitan State traveled to Detroit to plant fruit trees as part of a community effort to bring nutrition to an urban food desert.

*Fix the System,
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The IFO was the first state-wide organization two years ago to support a tuition freeze. This occurred at the same time that

It's time to put everything on the table and put the focus back on the campuses and the classrooms where it belongs.

MnSCU leadership and the Chancellor were urging the legislature to raise tuition, which would have added to the state's already staggering level of student debt. The IFO worked

successfully with key legislative leaders, such as Rep. Gene Pelowski, to stop MnSCU's raise-tuition-first strategy. This was meaningful change.

Meaningful change also happens on campus. Campus faculty and staff are continually redirecting their scarce resources to meet the needs of students. Academic programs are changed and new courses are created and modified through careful and frequent deliberation. New partnerships are built with businesses, governments, and non-profits, and new directions for the universities are developed on a regular basis. Chancellor Rosenstone is correct in saying that change is hard, but he is wrong to imply that it's not already happening.

It's time for real change

Real change should empower, not weaken, campuses. We're

accustomed to demoralizing change that reduces the capacity of the campuses. It would be more helpful to reduce the footprint of the state's higher education bureaucracy.

Real change would also allow the campuses to say "no" to initiatives that don't fit. What works in St. Cloud might not work in Bemidji, and what doesn't work in Winona just might work in Moorhead, and so on. Ignoring the distinctive needs of our campus communities was an important and early misstep with the Charting the Future initiative.

In the end, it's time to put everything on the table and put the focus back on the campuses and the classrooms where it belongs. ●



Minnesota State University, Moorhead

BY TED GRACYK, PRESIDENT, MSUM FACULTY ASSOCIATION, IFO@MNSTATE.EDU

On November 11, 2014, the Faculty Senate at MSU Moorhead formally endorsed a resolution of "no confidence" in the Chancellor. Although the topic of Charting the Future was not mentioned in the list of reasons that we sent to the Chancellor and then released to the press, the system office issued a prepared statement from Tom Renier, chairman of the Board of Trustees, in which Renier criticized our stance on Charting the Future. We are disappointed that the Chancellor and Chairman Renier do not actually read our mail before they respond to it. In the weeks prior, the Moorhead action committee

made a strong effort to support our endorsed House of Representatives candidate, Ben Lien. Among our other activities, we were able to place several letters of support in the local paper; unfortunately, they adopted a policy of printing only a small selection of letters sent on politics in the days leading up to the election, so some of our work was stymied. Nonetheless, our candidate prevailed instead of the opponent, who had pledged to make Minnesota a "right to work" state! We are thankful that so many of our faculty helped to re-elect Representative Lien.

IFO'S FIRST LGBTIQAA CONFERENCE A SUCCESS

By KATHRYN ENGDAHL, IFO CONTRACT & ENFORCEMENT OFFICER



The IFO Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender and Allies (GLBTA) Issues Committee presented the **First IFO LGBTIQAA Conference** on Friday, October 24, 2014, at the MSU Mankato extension campus in Edina. This faculty conference featured two concurrent sessions on LGBTIQAA issues in the workplace for those teaching and working with LGBT populations within the MnSCU system, as well as an opening plenary session on queer pedagogies and a closing

plenary session on LGBTIQAA issues and diversity initiatives in the MnSCU system. Faculty from all seven universities attended and benefitted greatly from the conference. The presentations were excellent, sparking spirited discussions and shared experiences across campuses and academic disciplines. Those in attendance highly rated the conference and enthusiastically requested an encore!

TIME TO REVIEW YOUR HRA ACCOUNT BALANCE

By PATRICE ARSENAULT, DIRECTOR OF GRIEVANCES AND EQUITY

One of the benefits the IFO negotiates on behalf of faculty is an annual tax-free contribution to a medical expense reimbursement account. Each January, \$800 is contributed to either your Health Reimbursement Arrangement (HRA) account for paying current medical expenses with pre-tax dollars, or into a Health Care Savings Plan, which you can

use to pay for medical expenses after you separate from employment.

The balance that you have remaining in your current HRA account as of December 31, 2014, will determine whether your new \$800 contribution will be deposited in your HRA account or into a Health Care Savings

Plan. If you have a balance of less than \$700 in your HRA account as of December 31, the employer's 2015 contribution of \$800 will be added to your HRA account at the beginning of the 2015 calendar year.

If you have \$700 or more in your HRA account as of

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JOIN TODAY

To join the union, you can sign up instantly by using the convenient online membership application found on the membership webpage www.ifo.org/membership-information, or by clicking on the "Join IFO" link at the top of the home page www.ifo.org. To check on the status of your membership, contact Donna Blake at blake@ifo.org.

FINAL CALL FOR EQUITY ISSUES GRANT APPLICATIONS

By PATRICE ARSENEAULT, DIRECTOR OF GRIEVANCES AND EQUITY

The deadline for submitting an application to the IFO for the 2015-2017 Equity Issues Grant is December 31, 2014.

The Equity Issues Grant of up to \$6,000 is designed to further the findings of the IFO's November 2012 Campus Climate Survey and the IFO WSU Feminist Issues Committee's Woman-Friendly Workplace Study conducted in 2012-2013.

The IFO equity committees' request for proposals is a call to action for projects that will implement recommendations made in either the September 2013 Campus Climate Report Executive Summary, or the March 2014 Executive Summary for the Woman-Friendly Workplace Study.

To apply for the Grant, submit your proposal by email (in Word

or PDF format) to arsen@ifo.org no later than (midnight) December 31, 2014. Applicants must specify the amount of funding requested up to a maximum of \$6,000. The amount of funding awarded will be commensurate with the applicant's proposed expenses. The grant period extends from March 2015 to March 2017.

The successful grant applicant will be notified by March 2, 2015.

The two-year \$6,000 grant is made possible by funding from the Inter Faculty Organization through the statewide Feminist Issues Committee (FIC), Multicultural Issues Committee (MIC), and the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender and Allies (GLBTA) Issues Committee.

The 2015-2017 IFO Equity Issues Grant Selection Criteria and other information on the Grant may be found on the [IFO website](#).



Equality ≠ Equity

HRA, continued from previous page

December 31, 2014, the employer's \$800 contribution for 2015 will go into a Health Care Savings Plan instead of your HRA account.

Money deposited into a Health Care Savings Plan is also tax-free, but you cannot access the funds to pay for medical expenditures until you separate from employment. You will still be able to use any monies

remaining in your HRA account from 2014 to pay for medical expenses incurred in 2015.

If you desire to have your \$800 contribution deposited in your HRA account in 2015, then you must have less than \$700 remaining in your HRA account at the end of 2014. If you want to spend down the balance in your HRA account to below \$700, your medical expense claims must be received by Eide Bailly on or before December 31, 2014.