



The UPDATE

Newsletter for the faculty of the seven Minnesota state universities.

Fiscal Year 14- No. 8
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Bemidji ♦ Mankato ♦ Metropolitan ♦ Moorhead ♦ Southwest ♦ St. Cloud ♦ Winona

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

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Upcoming Events that Affect Faculty

BY NANCY BLACK, IFO PRESIDENT, black@iffo.org

It has been one long winter, but we are now heading toward spring with the Minnesota legislative session beginning February 25, 2014, state-wide Inter Faculty Organization presidential, constitutional and campus elections held from March 29, 2014 to April 8, 2014, and the IFO Delegate Assembly March 28 and 29, 2014. I hope that you have had the opportunity to read the Special Election Edition Update emailed to you this week. Remember that only IFO members may participate in elections and the Delegate Assembly. It is critical for all faculty to stay aware of unfolding IFO notifications as events that may dramatically affect you unfold over the next few months. See you at Delegate Assembly!

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

IFO's Proposed Retirement Changes Heard

BY RUSS STANTON, DIRECTOR OF GOVERNMENT RELATIONS, stanton@iffo.org

Although the 2014 Minnesota legislative session does not begin until February 25th, action has already begun on several of IFO's legislative goals. On February 12th the Legislative Commission on Pensions and Retirement heard three bills proposed by the IFO.

BESI Extension

The first of these bills (SF 713/HF 872) would repeal the June 30, 2014 expiration date on the law authorizing MnSCU to grant Board Early Separation Incentives

(BESI's). The BESI legislation, which was advanced by IFO five years ago at the start of the recession crisis, has saved MnSCU an estimated \$18.6 million dollars by turning over higher salaried senior employees instead of laying off lower paid newer employees. In the first four years of the BESI program, 382 MnSCU employees were offered and accepted BESI's; 215 of those were state university employees. This year, additional BESI's are being offered at MSU-Moorhead, Winona State University and Southwest

Minnesota State University. The IFO wants to keep the BESI law on the books so MnSCU can use it to soften the blow of downsizing at many of our campuses that are currently experiencing enrollment decline.

IRAP to TRA Option

The second of these bills (SF764/HF871) would extend current law that allows newly-tenured faculty members in MnSCU to have a second chance to choose between the Individual Retirement Account Plan (IRAP) and the Teachers Retirement Association (TRA). This law is also set to expire on June 30, 2014. The IFO, which initiated the original law, is seeking to repeal that sunset provision and continue this option for newly-tenured faculty. Since the passage of the law five years ago, 1015 faculty members in MnSCU achieved tenure or its equivalent. Of these, 92, or about 9% actually switched from IRAP to TRA. Even though this is

not a widely used law, it is an important choice for the faculty members affected.

AEP Earnings Maximum

The IFO is also seeking legislation (SF765/HF870) to raise the amount that faculty members can earn without penalty while on phased retirement under the Annuitant Employment Program (AEP). Currently, if a faculty member earns more than \$46,000, TRA subtracts a dollar off the participant's TRA benefit for each two dollars the participant earns above \$46,000. The amount subtracted is put in a savings account and given to the participant when he or she retires completely. The current \$46,000 maximum was set more than a decade ago, and is out of date because of inflation. IFO would like to set the maximum at two-thirds of base salary, so it doesn't require adjustment in the future. TRA would like to see a set dollar amount adjusted for the CPI (which would bring

the limit up to around \$62,000).

All three retirement bills are chiefly sponsored by Senator Sandra Pappas in the Senate, and Representative Phyllis Kahn in the House. The co-sponsors are members of the Legislative Commission on Pensions and Retirements, and are from both political parties. MnSCU, the Minnesota State University Faculty, and Education Minnesota submitted letters of support for all three bills. The bills received a very favorable hearing, with no opposition, but the commission lacked a quorum, so it won't be voting on them until the next commission meeting. If passed, they will be rolled into a large omnibus pension and retirement bill and moved through the legislative process. Aside from some minor tweaks, I don't anticipate any difficulties in passing the proposed legislation.

**IFO STAFF
UPDATE**

Call for Academic Affairs Coordinator

BY NANCY BLACK, PRESIDENT, black@ifo.org

The Inter Faculty Organization is seeking a qualified university faculty member to serve in a one-half release time (12 credits/year) position as an Academic Affairs Coordinator for a two-year term beginning July 1, 2014 through June 30, 2016. This demanding coordinator position fully requires a half-time commitment.

This is one of two half-time Academic Affairs Coordinator positions. The other position is currently held by Dr. Tom Hergert (St. Cloud), whose two-year term ends June 30, 2015.

Major Responsibilities:

- Convene and co-chair meetings of the IFO Academic Affairs Committee (AAC). Keep the AAC informed

about various MnSCU initiatives and shared governance activities. Gather information from campus representatives regarding academic issues that may need consideration at the state level. Seek input from the AAC to inform IFO positions on these and other academic issues.

- Under the direction of the President, serve as an IFO representative with respect to academic matters within MnSCU. Attend and report on IFO and MnSCU meetings concerning academic matters. Collaborate with the other Academic Affairs Coordinator in establishing a mutually agreeable plan to divide position duties, in consultation with the IFO President.

Call for Academic Affairs Coordinator (continued from page 2)

- Keep the President, Executive Committee, Board of Directors, Negotiating Team, and membership informed about academic matters involving the campuses, MnSCU and other state and national organizations. Meet with and give reports to the President, IFO Board of Directors, and Executive Committee on an established basis. Make recommendations to all of the above as appropriate. Attend statewide meet and confers. Provide information as needed to the membership through the *IFO Update* and other communications.
- Oversee Academic Affairs office and files at the IFO office. Includes responsibility for:
 - ◇ keeping records about and communication with IFO members of MnSCU committees to assure they are attending meetings and informed of IFO perspectives
 - ◇ directing and providing information to IFO Website Coordinator on all committees including meeting agendas and notes for posting on the IFO website
 - ◇ assuring that records for all committees are organized and maintained at the IFO office
- The Academic Affairs Coordinators shall meet with the IFO President, who may also assign other duties or determine priorities for the coordinators' activities. The coordinators shall keep the IFO President apprised of emerging, developing and ongoing issues that require her/his attention.

Compensation:

Academic Affairs Coordinators will be paid at their base salary rate of twelve (12) credits per year of reassigned time from their home institution or, if on leave from home institution, at regular duty day rate times 60 duty days. (By law, this may have to be paid as wages, subject to withholding for tax purposes as required.) Additionally, there is possible compensation of \$1,000 for the summer (for serving July 1 to August 15) and reimbursement of travel expenses as per IFO policy. There are no additional benefits.

Required Qualifications:

- Full-time probationary or tenured faculty member at Bemidji State University; Metropolitan State University; Minnesota State University, Mankato; Minnesota State University Moorhead; Saint Cloud State University; Southwest Minnesota State University; or Winona State University.
- Doctorate or equivalent terminal degree.
- IFO member*
- Strong organizational and communication skills
- Experience in working on the departmental, campus or system level with issues related to Academic Affairs, such as accreditation (disciplinary and/or institutional), advising, assessment, curriculum, instructional technology, transfer of credits, other academic policies, etc.

*If you are not certain that you are an IFO member, there is a good chance that you are not. Please check with your campus Faculty Association or Donna Blake (blake@ifo.org) for details.

Other Considerations:

- Familiarity with national and international issues and trends affecting higher education in Minnesota, the U.S., and abroad
- Experience working with administrators and staff on campus and/or system level
- Familiarity with IFO contract or willingness to learn.

To apply for this position, please submit a statement of intent that indicates your qualifications and background, the reason that you are interested in this position, and a current copy of your C.V. Please send these materials by email to Melissa Anderson in the IFO office (anderson@ifo.org) **no later than Monday, April 7th**. Applications will be considered by the IFO Board of Directors at the April 10-11 meeting.



Inter Faculty Organization

2014 Delegate Assembly

Radisson Hotel in Roseville

March 28th and 29th

Delegates attending the assembly are contractually released from duty for March 28, 2014.

Contact your Faculty Association President if you are interested in being a delegate. <http://ifo.org/support-contacts>



Below are two editorials recently published by MnSCU faculty member, Matt Filner (Metropolitan State University, Mankato) regarding “Charting the Future.” I appreciate members and others who take the time to challenge the *status quo*. If you would like to share an interesting perspective please email me at black@ifo.org.

Let’s keep the conversation going! — Nancy Black, President



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MnSCU’s New Plan: Charting Whose Future?

BY MATTHEW FILNER, PHD, METROPOLITAN STATE UNIVERSITY, matthew.filner@metrostate.edu

In the past few years, a reform effort has been advancing that will dramatically alter how Minnesota delivers

higher education. The recently adopted report of the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MnSCU), *Charting the Future*, articulates this reform vision. It restates many points raised previously in the Itasca Project’s *Partnerships for Prosperity*. In my view, this reform vision will do substantial harm to higher education in Minnesota.

On first examination, the vision *Charting the Future* presents seems appropriate, advocating “extraordinary education” and the “most affordable education option” for Minnesota students. Those of us working within the higher education system are committed to ensuring Minnesotans receive an extraordinary and affordable education. We are also committed to reforming MnSCU institutions to improve the student experience and reduce bureaucracy.

Looking closer at the vision in the context of current debates over so-called “workforce development,” administrative actions on our campuses, and negotiating positions for faculty and staff contracts, it is clear that the reform vision has profound and serious negative consequences.

In this first of a two-part series, we’ll examine the negative consequences in detail, and offer a competing vision for the future of higher education in Minnesota.

The first profound shift is who should chart higher education’s future. According to *Charting the Future*, MnSCU will: “Develop a collaborative and

coordinated academic planning process that advances affordability, transferability and access to our programs and services across the state.” Superficially, this sounds reasonable enough—we all want higher education to be affordable, for student credits to transfer easily, and for our programs to be accessible. Digging deeper, however, reveals some troubling strategies. One strategy suggests that we should “align our course and program offerings ... to regional and state workforce needs.” In practice, this means that programs that help provide our large corporations with job training programs should be promoted, while programs that don’t directly align with the stated needs of corporate job training programs will be deemphasized and potentially eliminated.

That leads me to wonder what our college campuses will look like when entire fields of study no longer exist. Yes, we want our students’ skills to match available jobs in their communities, but let’s not confuse this with subsidizing companies’ job training programs. Students need to learn a wide variety of transferrable skills both for career advancement and if local employers close up shop or replace workers with technological advancements.

For example, even if a region’s jobs are mainly in manufacturing, students must still study language, culture, society, economics, psychology, politics, or any number of fields not “adequately aligned” with job needs. The recent revelations that Minnesota State University-Moorhead (one of the seven MnSCU state universities) is considering eliminating entire liberal arts departments reflects this dangerous trend.

MnSCU's New Plan: Charting Whose Future? (continued from page 5)

And even if we were to agree to an “alignment” of business needs and course offerings, what is equally pernicious in *Charting the Future* is the notion that administrators, whether in the central MnSCU office or on our campuses, should determine what is appropriate curriculum. This recommendation is a direct attack on faculty control of our curriculum, the education equivalent of giving insurance bureaucrats (rather than doctors) the power to decide what procedures a patient needs. It transfers too much decision-making authority from experts on teaching and learning to administrators and corporate leaders in the name of “workforce development.”

According to *Charting the Future*, MnSCU will: “Work together under new models to be the preferred provider of comprehensive workplace solutions through programs and services that build employee skills and solve real-world problems for communities and businesses across the state.”

Historically, higher education institutions provided students with a broad range of skills for a wide range of jobs. Businesses would invest in employees with job specific training. Corporations are increasingly looking to the public to pay for training, a pernicious corporate welfare system. Our administrators are bending over backwards for corporations driven by profits, rather than supporting communities committed to a healthy middle class and vibrant state. It’s no surprise, then, when the kinds of programs that are deemed “fits” with their “workforce needs” do not focus on higher order thinking skills.

Higher education should certainly prepare our students to be able to compete effectively for the best jobs our state and nation can offer. But the way to do that is broaden rather than narrow the possibilities of our students thinking critically.

It isn’t just students whose capacity and drive to think critically is threatened. According to *Charting the Future*, MnSCU will: “Redesign our financial and administrative models to reward collaboration, drive efficiencies and strengthen our ability to provide access to an extraordinary education for all Minnesotans.” An extraordinary education for all Minnesotans is absolutely the right goal. But a closer examination of the specific strategies reveals MnSCU seeks to weaken opposition voices and strengthen centralized control.

MnSCU faculty are unionized and our contract determines the size and scope of the “financial model.” *Charting the Future* seeks to redesign this model to “reward” those faculty who support the recommendations of the report. If a faculty member acts to promote greater centralization and bureaucratization, s/he will be rewarded. Faculty who persist in valuing decentralization, strong communities, and independence of mind will not.

And it isn’t just an idle threat: MnSCU seeks artificially to depress wages under the stated goal of “making college affordable.” One of the common examples Chancellor Rosenstone uses to promote his vision is the savings that results from bulk purchasing—of paper, computers, desks, and other commonly used materials on our college campuses. It makes perfect sense for there to be bulk purchasing. Yet anyone familiar with higher education budgets is well aware that the relative costs of these products pales in comparison to the faculty and staff costs of our institutions. Therefore, the only practical way to reduce costs significantly is to lower labor costs. Relatively low wages and benefits at large institutions puts tremendous downward pressure on wages and benefits throughout our communities. It is simply not the right approach to depress wages at higher education institutions in order to lower the price for corporations to get pre-trained employees. Instead, we should seek high wages and high benefits both on our campuses and for the employees of these corporations. Only such upward pressure on wages and benefits will result in a vibrant middle class and therefore vibrant communities throughout the state.

In Minnesota, higher education has historically served a function of great importance—the place where students learn essential skills of citizenship. Students have learned how to think critically, write persuasively, argue and listen attentively. These skills are essential to a well-functioning democracy. In the quest to provide more efficiencies to meet the “needs” of our workforce, Minnesotans need to pay attention to what is being crowded out: the development of our citizens throughout the communities of our state.

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Stronger Communities, not Centralized Bureaucracy

BY MATTHEW FILNER, PHD, METROPOLITAN STATE UNIVERSITY, matthew.filner@metrostate.edu

AS DISCUSSED IN the first part of this series, under a new grand plan, the schools and communities in the Minnesota State Colleges and University system will undergo significant changes that could see, among other alterations, courses of study cut completely, replaced by more taxpayer-subsidized training programs for private industry.

MnSCU serves over 430,000 students at 31 state universities, community and technical colleges in every corner of Minnesota. Its large geographic and economic footprint demands our attention.

In *Charting the Future*, MnSCU seeks to: “Dramatically increase the success of all learners, especially those in diverse populations traditionally underserved by higher education.” This, of course, is an absolutely essential goal and should be highly prioritized in any higher education initiative. Typically, when an institution wants to improve its work in a particular area, it will look to best practices. That’s why it’s puzzling when the universities within MnSCU that have decades of innovation in this area are ignored.

For example, the institution with 40 years of experience doing exactly this is totally absent from *Charting the Future*. Metropolitan State University does an outstanding job helping traditionally underserved students succeed in higher education. We have small class-sizes, faculty and advisors who are highly en-

gaged with students, challenging courses that push students to learn critical thinking skills, and supportive programs and offices that catch students when the challenges they face exceed their current capacity. One logical strategy would be to increase the size and scope of Metro State in order to reach these students. Another logical solution would be to support innovative programs throughout our state that will attract a diverse array of students from the Metro area.

Yet the five strategies listed make no mention of the great expertise we have on our campuses in the metro area, and also across the state. The omission is startling, and reflects a deeper and destructive aspect of *Charting the Future*: the assumption that more centralized, bureaucratized and standardized thinking (even if delivered at remote locations) is always better. This is a recipe for MnSCU growth, not academic success for the underserved.

Moreover, *Charting the Future* argues: “We must find the balance between honoring our commitment to serve communities across the state and, at the same time, investing where demand is increasing.” This quote is listed along with a series of strategies to replace campus offerings with more online services. It is clear that this strategy involves moving resources from traditional brick-and-mortar campuses to more online delivery mechanisms.

MnSCU’s recent announcement that its first step in implementing *Charting the Future* is a significant increase in its IT

capacity makes this intention crystal clear. While investing in technology as a supplement is appropriate, this strategy obfuscates the tremendous harm that will be done to our communities. Our universities in Bemidji, Mankato, Marshall, Moorhead, St. Cloud, St. Paul, and Winona—not to mention the dozens of community and technical colleges in communities across the state—do more than “serve” the communities in which we are located. These universities and colleges are essential institutions within our communities. The identity and health of these communities are integrally linked to the identity and health of MnSCU institutions. Because *Charting the Future* shifts resources out of our communities and into MnSCU’s central office, it represents a direct threat to these communities.

The fact is that investment in our local colleges and universities provides an outstanding return on investment for our communities and our state. A recent Wilder Foundation report found the colleges and universities within MnSCU generated about \$8.3 billion of economic activity in MN in 2011 on about \$550 million of taxpayer investment. Of that, \$5.2 billion was in Greater Minnesota college and university communities. *Charting the Future* will drive down those economic benefits and increase the negative consequences to our university and college communities.

Overall, *Charting the Future* seeks to create more bureaucracy and more standardization that poses a direct threat to

Stronger Communities, not Centralized Bureaucracy (continued from page 7)

the unique communities and campuses, academic freedom, and the ability of faculty to shape what we know works to provide an extraordinary education. Language within MnSCU increasingly reflects common language among for-profit institutions: administrators talk about “selling more credits” and “maximizing credit-load,” while they work to lower faculty and staff real wages and consolidate institutions in the name of efficiency.

What is lost in this process is the possibility of helping our students become full citizens and dynamic, flexible employees, which requires slow, careful, and conscientious thought about their hopes and dreams for themselves, their families and their communities.

A better approach strengthens communities by investing in them, challenges students by providing diverse and flexible higher order thinking skills, and supports

the strengthening of the middle class by keeping tuition low and minimizing centralized administrative costs. Charting the Future builds the central MnSCU bureaucracy. Instead, we should build the capacity of our students and our communities. -- Matthew Filner is a Political Science Professor and chair of the Social Science Department at Metropolitan State University. His views do not necessarily represent the views of his employer.

Report from The Campaign for the Future of Higher Education

By Debra Leigh, St. Cloud State University; Jeff Kolnick, Southwest Minnesota State University; Kim Park Nelson, MSU Moorhead; and Michal Moskow, Metropolitan State University

IFO Presence at the Conference

Four IFO members attended the *Sixth National Gathering of the Campaign for the Future of Higher Education* (CFHE) in New York City, New York, January 17-19, 2014. The Campaign for the Future of Higher Education is a consortium of higher education union leadership from across the United States. The group met to highlight the major issues facing higher education, to share strategies, and to build campaigns to defend and promote higher education. Most of the major faculty unions in the nation were represented including AAUP, AFT, NEA, as well as the major unions in California, New York, and Pennsylvania. Also in attendance was the leadership for the New Faculty Majority, a national advocacy group for contingent faculty. (<http://www.newfacultymajority.info/equity/>).

The conference theme: “*Building Campaigns to Defend and Promote Higher Education*” engaged faculty in the urgent issues of contingent faculty, unions as organizing versus service organizations, building campaigns as a way to influence public perception, and to grow and develop

our base around specific issues.

Union leaders in attendance were able to share skills for organizing grassroots campaigns, learn about each other’s work and plan ways to involve more people in CFHE. IFO members Jeff Kolnick and Debra Leigh were among the presenters for Case Studies of Effective Higher Education Campaigns, describing the organizing work on campuses that helped to defeat the Marriage and Voter ID amendments in Minnesota and to elect a more progressive legislature.

Contingent Faculty

There was a large presence and a lot of activity among contingent faculty at the conference. Contingent faculty voiced concerns about wages, working conditions, large student debt, lack of health care benefits and limited access, if any, to personal offices, telephones, computers, software, technological tools and training. Conference discussions highlighted the growing numbers of contingent faculty across the nation (already 75% of the higher education work force) and that faculty working conditions equate to students’ learning conditions. The Cam-

campaign for the Future of Higher Education pledged to continue to rally for better wages and working conditions for contingent faculty. (See articles about Contingent Faculty: *Who is Professor Staff?* <http://academeblog.org/2012/09/16/cfhes-report-on-contingent-faculty/> and “Ivory Tower?” *Think again.* <http://futureofhighered.org/ivory-tower-think/>)

Call to Action for Minnesota Faculty

The IFO faculty representatives came away from the conference with a number of recommendations for IFO Board discussion including:

- Should the IFO move towards an organizing model rather than primarily a service model. This includes having action plans in place before a crisis occurs. The unions that organize as a regular part of their operations (CUNY, SUNY, Cal State, Penn State) work to have a nearly continuous stream of action

(as often as once a month on some campuses) with a cadre of about 20 people on any given campus. *That said it is essential to note that serving the membership and enforcing the contract continue to be priorities.* The idea is to serve and organize.

- Should the IFO launch a campaign for diversity across the system to be used as an opportunity to build our base; to educate faculty and communities about the issues of access and equity; and reverse the statewide and national trends that quietly eliminate ethnic studies, languages, the arts, diverse students and faculty.

We can benefit from spreading the idea that “faculty working conditions are student learning conditions.”

The next gathering of CFHE will be in Albany, New York in May.

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.

CONTACT US

The IFO Faculty Update is published and distributed by the [Inter Faculty Organization](http://www.ifo.org). If you need to contact the Inter Faculty Organization, our mailing address is 490 Concordia Avenue, Suite 125, Saint Paul, MN 55103, or you can reach us by phone at 800/325-9644 or 651/227-8442. You can also send us an email by clicking [HERE](#).