

# Inter Faculty Organization

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## *Faculty Update Newsletter*

Volume XXXIV No. 6

www.ifo.org

January 2012

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### IFO PRESIDENT'S COLUMN: TREND IS NOT DESTINY?

by [Don Larsson](#), *IFO State President*

I just came across a 1971 essay by microbiologist, environmentalist and writer René Dubos titled "[Trend Is Not Destiny.](#)" After four decades, Dubos' words are still noteworthy. The essay's purpose was to address the accelerating domination of technology in people's lives, well before the even more explosive acceleration with which we now live. Dubos, though, takes note of an even earlier document, the official guidebook to the Chicago World Fair of 1933, which declared that technology and business would inevitably rule people's lives under this formula:

Science finds.  
Industry applies.  
Man conforms. [Dubos, page 7.]

Dubos, however, rejects that formula without rejecting technology itself. It is possible, he argues, for human beings to take control of science and technology and adapt them to real human needs, rather than merely conform. "Trend," he affirms, "is not destiny" [10].

Dubos' essay caught my attention because we have been besieged lately by pronouncements about trends in higher education. For example, [the Lawlor Group, a Minneapolis firm that specializes in public relations for private colleges and universities](#), recently released [a paper identifying five trends for higher education in 2012](#):

- College is becoming unaffordable.

- Consumers are demanding results.
- Social media is normalizing [*sic*] transparency.
- Competition is breeding commodification.
- People are expressing discontent with higher education.

[You can link to [a PDF of the entire report](#) from this page as well. Thanks to Alex Friedrich of Minnesota Public Radio for posting this link at [his "On Campus" blog](#).]

The Lawlor paper is addressed to those in private higher education, but those trends seem undeniable for all of us in colleges and universities, whether private or public. And we know that there are many in politics, business, and higher education itself who would want us to agree that Trend *is* Destiny and that Destiny requires us to “conform” to their expectations. (For another cautionary note about such pronouncements, see Melonie Fullick’s online essay on “[Lazy Higher Ed Journalism](#),” posted just today at [Inside Higher Education](#).)

But I believe that Trend does not have to be Destiny. I believe that as scholars and teachers and as IFO members, we can make our voices heard to shape our destinies. And I believe that our destinies as professionals are intertwined with those of our universities, our students, our state and our nation.

Dubos is often credited with creating the phrase “Think globally, act locally.” That’s not a bad motto for anyone who aims for change in the face of current trends, and as faculty members we will soon have some important opportunities to act locally and make our voices heard.

In the next few weeks, you will see announcements of “Faculty Forums” meant to provide venues for the “deep conversations” that Chancellor Rosenstone has promised regarding his emerging Strategic Framework. As faculty members, we cannot ignore those forums and conversations, but as IFO members we must assure that individual conversations do not substitute for the collective voices of our campus Faculty Associations and the IFO. One of the IFO’s stated goals is “to improve higher education” but through the mechanism of “faculty participation in governance.” As the Chancellor himself has repeatedly affirmed, the former cannot happen without the latter.

Also beginning soon will be another session of the Minnesota State Legislature. Even though this is a bonding year and not a year for new legislation, we can expect hearings and questions about our jobs, our contracts, our benefits, and how we serve our students—and not just from the majority party. See Russ Stanton’s column below for more about IFO relations with state government and lobbying efforts, including the upcoming IFO Lobby Days. That will be another important way in which we can make our voices heard.

Finally, let me remind you that registration is open for the [IFO’s biennial Delegate Assembly](#) in March. This is the opportunity for IFO members to have direct input to the operations and future of the IFO. I urge you to make your voices heard within the IFO by attending or at least submitting resolutions that will guide the organization and our negotiators.

In other news, the IFO is not sitting still as an organization. We are using technology and other means to shape our future as an organization. You will find more information about these efforts below in this newsletter or in future communications, but here are a few things that the IFO is doing now:

- The IFO Board of Directors has approved creation of an Ad Hoc Committee on Contingent Faculty, which will examine issues of interest to Adjunct, Fixed Term and Non-Tenure Track faculty members.
- Our negotiators continue to engage with MnSCU administration in interest-based bargaining, which has yielded several tentative agreements on changes in contract language (that will go into effect when a complete contract is finally negotiated and approved).
- We have been engaged in an extensive review and revisions of the IFO Constitution and Operating Procedures. Several amendments to the Constitution will come before you for membership approval during statewide IFO elections in April.
- Those elections will be facilitated by an electronic voting system. Watch for further details.
- We are getting close to unveiling a new version of the IFO website. Watch for requests for your comments and suggestions as it goes online.

Some people believe that the year 2012 will be an apocalyptic year because of a calendar prediction by the ancient Mayans, but I am optimist enough to believe that if we think globally and act locally, predictions and trends do not have to be destiny. In that spirit, I wish all of us and our students a successful new year.

## DEADLINE APPROACHING FOR IFO PRESIDENT NOMINATIONS

by [Keith Marek](#), *Chair of IFO Nominating Committee*

As noted below, the deadline for making nominations for IFO president is February 9, 2012. So far, the only announced candidate is incumbent Don Larsson.

**The IFO Nominations Committee encourages all union members interested in running for IFO President or in nominating another IFO member to serve as IFO president to contact a member of the Nominating Committee as soon as possible.**

Nominations for IFO president for the 2012 – 2014 term will be accepted from the floor at IFO Board of Directors meeting to be held at **6:30 p.m. on February 9, 2012 at the IFO Office at 490 Concordia Ave, St. Paul, MN 55103**. Self nominations are permitted.

Any IFO member in good standing is eligible to nominate candidates at the nominating meeting or to run for IFO president. IFO presidents may serve no more than two consecutive two-year terms. IFO presidents may not hold FA office simultaneously.

Nominations may also be made in writing. Written nominations must be received by the IFO Nominating Committee prior to the nominating meeting on February 9, 2012. Written nominations may be submitted in person, by e-mail or by mail to the addresses specified below. Nominations should include the name and home university of the person being nominated.

Candidates must accept nomination at the nomination meeting or, if not in attendance, submit a written acceptance to the IFO Nominating Committee by no later than February 16, 2012. Acceptances may be submitted in person, by e-mail or by mail to the addresses specified below.

The IFO Nominating Committee encourages interested members to declare their candidacy. We are in the process of putting together a more detailed job description to send to interested faculty members to aid them in their decision making process. If you would like to receive the job description please contact any member of the IFO Nominating Committee. If you want to put your name forward now, please contact any member of the committee at your convenience.

**E-mail** to the IFO Nominating Committee should be addressed to:

[Keith Marek](#)  
[Bruce Svingen](#)  
[Barbara Carson](#)

**Mail** to the IFO Nominating Committee should be addressed to:

Keith Marek, Chair  
IFO Nominating Committee  
112 Stoner Avenue SE  
Bemidji, MN 56601

A secret ballot election will be held on April 10, 2012, to elect an IFO President for the term beginning July 1, 2012 through June 30, 2014. The names of qualified candidates nominated at the February 9, 2012, nominating meeting will appear on the ballot. However, votes for write-in candidates will be permitted.

## IFO BOARD VOTES TO OFFER ELECTRONIC VOTING OPTION IN IFO ELECTIONS

by [Connie Howard](#), *IFO General Council*

At its January meeting, the IFO Board voted to amend the IFO Operating Procedures to offer an electronic voting option in upcoming statewide IFO elections. The changes in the operating procedures, which were adopted in response to a 2010 Delegate Assembly resolution, will apply to the April 2012 IFO votes to consider amendments to the IFO constitution and to elect an IFO president for the 2012-2014 term. The new provisions call for the IFO to provide and administer a uniform statewide electronic voting system that protects ballot confidentiality, security and accountability.

Under the new operating procedures, individual Faculty Associations (FAs) will have the option to continue using in-person voting or to use the uniform, statewide electronic voting system provided by the IFO for statewide IFO elections. Campuses may **not** combine in-person and electronic voting for such IFO elections. Individual FAs have until February 9, 2012, to notify the IFO which method their campus will be using in the upcoming elections. However, FAs are urged to notify the IFO of their decisions as soon as possible so the union can complete negotiations with the vendor selected by the Board to provide voting services for the April 2012 election.

The Board also voted to switch to a statewide mail ballot system for absentee voting. That means that the IFO state office will be handling absentee voting for all campuses for IFO statewide elections in the future. Requests for absentee ballots for such should be addressed to the IFO rather than to individual Faculty Associations.

The changes in the IFO Operating Procedures do not deal with local FA elections. Faculty Associations will continue to have the autonomy to conduct their local elections. However, to avoid confusion in connection with concurrent IFO and FA elections, some Faculty Associations are considering using electronic voting for FA as well as IFO votes.

Additional information regarding the upcoming IFO elections and the voting procedures that will be used on individual campuses will be posted on the IFO website following the Board's February 9 – 10, 2012, Board meeting.

## JANUARY NEGOTIATIONS UPDATE

by [Brent Jeffers](#), *IFO Chief Negotiator*

The negotiating team is committed and fully expects to continue bargaining through the Interest Based Bargaining (IBB) process for the entire spring semester and possibility throughout the summer of 2012. There is no strategic advantage at this point moving towards positional bargaining without a clear understanding of the economic picture for the state and the MNSCU system. Alternatively, we can continue to pursue substantive language changes through IBB. A driving force in the MNSCU economic picture is the coalition bargaining for the state employee health plan and it is to our advantage to wait for a settlement on our health coverage before we present our economic opener.

The IBB process has worked well for us over the past ten months; we have either agreed to substantive changes that benefit faculty or we have restructured articles that make the contract easier to read and understand. Negotiating a contract always requires persistence and endurance but the fight over language can be the most intense of the collective bargaining process because these items speak directly to our values in the academy. Because the MNSCU team consists of few academic Deans and is top heavy on administrators from the central office, there often seems to be a lack of respect for the integrity of faculty protecting the craft of teaching. One distinct advantage of IBB is the opportunity for your negotiating team to articulate our values and the rationale that is grounded in pedagogy. These sometimes lengthy discussions may help us in positional bargaining as we seek understanding from key members of the MNSCU team.

The spring semester always seems to go fast, negotiations rarely goes fast, especially this early!

## IFO BOARD ADOPTS GOALS FOR 2012 SESSION

by [Russ Stanton](#), IFO Director of Government Relations

At its January meeting, the IFO Board adopted a list of 38 goals and positions to guide lobbying efforts during the 2012 legislative session and the election campaigns next fall. These goals address issues ranging from funding, to proposed constitutional amendments, to retirement and equity issues. You can find a complete list of the goals [HERE](#).

The 2012 legislative session will begin on January 24th. This is likely be a short legislative session. The biennial operating budget for the state (which runs through June 30, 2013) was set last year, and the November budget forecast projected a \$876 million budget surplus, which was placed in the state's cash flow and "rainy day" fund. Therefore, it is unlikely we will see much of an effort to either cut budgets or increase taxes. I don't expect much discussion of the operating budget this session. However, there will likely be action on several other important issues, including:

### Bonding

Both the legislature and the governor want to pass a bonding bill this year—the only question is how much. This should be a good year for bonding; interest rates on bonds are at historical lows, contractor bids are coming in very low, and the bonding bill will provide at least a temporary boost to employment and local economies. MnSCU is requesting a total of \$278.7 million for general obligation bonding to build and repair facilities across the system. **IFO is supporting the MnSCU request.** So far, the governor is supporting \$112 million for MnSCU. We are hoping to improve upon that as the session progresses. Here is a link to the governor's bonding recommendations: <http://www.mmb.state.mn.us/doc/budget/bud-cap/12/gov-rec.pdf>.

### Viking Stadium

Much of the session will center on the stadium issue which won't have much impact on MnSCU or the IFO.

### Constitutional Amendments

The most controversial items that are likely to be considered next session are proposed constitutional amendments. There are three amendments being talked about:

1. An amendment to require an extraordinary 60% vote to raise taxes or spend reserves. This would be devastating to higher education. Whenever the state comes up short on revenue, legislators usually cut aid to higher education and force the cost on to student tuition, and/or they cut aid to local government and force costs on to local property taxes.
2. A "right to work" amendment that would prevent unions from charging "fair share" representation fees to non-members. This would weaken union strength in the state.
3. An amendment to require a photo ID to vote. This would likely suppress student voting because students would have to change their driver's license address to vote at their college address. Lower student turnout means less political influence for higher education constituencies.

Constitutional amendments require only a majority vote to pass the House and Senate. The governor cannot veto a constitutional amendment—if passed by the legislature the proposed amendments go on the ballot in the November election.

**IFO opposes all of the proposed constitutional amendments, as well as the constitutional amendment on marriage that passed the legislature last session and that will be on the ballot this fall.**

### Pension Changes

There will likely be efforts to change the assumed interest rate that will be earned on defined benefit pension plan (like TRA) assets. There are proposal to drop the interest rate from 8.5% to 8%. Rep. King Banaian is proposing

to drop the interest rate assumption to 7.5%. While this may seem like a boring subject, it has large implications for us all—the change in interest rate assumptions from 8.5% to 8% would create a billion increase in the projected unfunded liability of TRA. It would take a contribution increase of 1.5% of pay for both the employer and employee to keep the fund on track toward full funding. That would essentially mean 1.5% less take-home pay for TRA members, plus millions of dollars less on the bargaining table at MnSCU in the future. Pension fund investments are very long term investments—so the interest rate assumption should be based on long term averages. The return on TRA investments have averaged 5.9% per year for the last 10 years; 8.8% per year for the last 20 years; and 10.1% since 1980. **IFO will oppose the change in the interest rate assumption.**

A second pension issue, being championed by Rep. Morrie Lanning of Moorhead (who chairs the Pension Commission), is the conversion of defined benefit retirement plans (like TRA) into a “hybrid” plan that would be part defined benefit and part defined contribution (like IRAP). There are many ways this could be structured, and so far there are no specific proposals. From the conversations at the Pension Commission, it appears they would only convert to hybrid plans for future hires—not current pension plan participants. **IFO opposes a change to a hybrid plan—at least during the 2012 session.** This is a major change, with huge financial implications for our members, and we believe it needs much more research before a decision is made.

### **Hearing on Severance Pay**

The Legislative Subcommittee on Employee Relations will meet next Thursday to review progress on state employee collective bargaining negotiations. Also on the agenda is a review of MnSCU severance payouts. I think most of the focus will be on large administrative payouts, but I asked the LSER committee staff if faculty severance payouts will be considered, and I was told they will. I asked to testify when the issue comes up—I would rather have us defend our severance benefits than someone else.

### **Labor Contract Ratification**

The union coalition for health care bargaining met most of the day on both Tuesday and Wednesday of last week and exchanged proposals with the state. Some important progress was made, but the sides are still far apart. The unions are getting increasing pressure to settle—the governor would like to take at least the AFSCME and MAPE contracts before this session of the legislature for a ratification vote. I expect things to somehow come to a head on the AFSCME and MAPE contracts soon. Before we broke up, AFSCME and MAPE went through all the articles on the table to see what the different units felt they absolutely had to have to agree to the health package. Most agreed that a majority of outstanding issues could be dropped to get a decent settlement, but IFO and MSCF pushed very hard to keep domestic partner benefits on the table, as well as a contribution to the HRA. Even though the pressure of settlement is being applied to AFSCME and MAPE units, we will be impacted by this because whatever AFSCME and MAPE agree to on health care is likely to be incorporated into our contract. We are all under a single self insured health plan. It is hard for IFO to move forward on an economic agreement until we know what the health plan will include.

### **Expect a Short Session**

This will likely be a short tumultuous session. All legislators are up for re-election this year because of redistricting. The courts have given legislators and Governor Dayton until February 21st to agree to a redistricting plan or the courts will impose a plan. Many legislators will find themselves in radically altered districts, often with other incumbent legislators. Legislators will want to get out of St. Paul as soon as possible to meet the new set of delegates that will be attending the endorsing conventions in March and April, and the constituents in their newly drawn legislative districts.

## DELEGATE ASSEMBLY AWARD NOMINATIONS DEADLINE

by [Patrice Arseneault](#), *Director of Grievances and Equity*

If you know an IFO member who has made outstanding contributions to improve the professional lives and working conditions for LGBT faculty members or for the advancement of women faculty in the state universities, please nominate the member to receive recognition for his or her good work. If you would like to recognize significant contributions to the IFO by a woman member, complete a nomination form for this IFO award.

In order to nominate an IFO member for the 2012 James Eric Chalgren Award for Outstanding Contributions to the Advancement of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) Issues, submit a [Chalgren Award Nomination form](#) by email to [arsen@ifo.org](mailto:arsen@ifo.org), by this Friday, January 20. To nominate an IFO member for his or her outstanding contributions for the advancement of women within the state universities, submit an [Advancement of Women Award Nomination form](#) by email to [arsen@ifo.org](mailto:arsen@ifo.org) by next Monday, January 23.

If you would like to recognize a woman IFO member who has made outstanding contributions to the IFO, please submit an [IFO Award Nomination form](#) by email to [arsen@ifo.org](mailto:arsen@ifo.org) by Monday, January 23.

The IFO Feminist Issues Committee will select nominees for the awards for outstanding contributions to the IFO and to the advancement of women in the state universities. The IFO GLBTA Issues Committee will select a nominee for the James Eric Chalgren Award for Outstanding Contributions to the Advancement of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender issues. Recipients of the 2012 awards will be honored on Friday, March 23, 2012 at the Delegate Assembly banquet at the Radisson Roseville.

## FINAL CALL FOR FEMINIST ISSUES GRANT APPLICATIONS

by [Patrice Arseneault](#), *Director of Grievances and Equity*

This is the final call for **applications for the 2012-2014 Feminist Issues Grant of \$3,000**. To apply, you must submit your proposal by [email](#) (in Word or PDF format) no later than (midnight) Monday, January 23.

For more information, please see the 2012-2014 FI [Grant Announcement](#) and Outline on the IFO webpage, or contact your local campus [Feminist Issues Committee representative](#).

The two-year \$3,000 grant is made possible by funding from the Inter Faculty Organization through the statewide Feminist Issues Committee (FIC).

## MAKE A REAL DIFFERENCE AND BECOME AN IFO DELEGATE

by [Cindy Kellerman](#), *IFO Membership Coordinator & Administrative Assistant*

As the supreme governing body of the Inter Faculty Organization, Delegates set IFO policies, negotiations strategies, dues and budgets for the succeeding two fiscal years as well as deliberate over resolutions dealing with legislative goals. It is through the efforts of all of us working together as union members that we advance our interests and welfare in our contract, our campus governance, and our state universities' missions. As our seven state universities, the MnSCU system, and higher education around the country face new and accelerating challenges, we need to be able to confront them with a common purpose and a united voice.

There are many ways to be involved in the organization. The Delegate Assembly event is where most of the organization's goals and positions are formed. If you are a member of the IFO, and would like to be a delegate for your campus or submit a new resolution, contact your [local faculty association](#), [Cindy Kellerman](#), Delegate Assembly and Membership Coordinator, or click [HERE](#) for more details. Only IFO members can become appointed Delegates. If you are not a member of the IFO and would like to become involved in shaping the future of our state universities and/or supporting those who are, please fill out a [membership application](#) and your membership card will be mailed to you shortly.

The IFO Delegate Assembly will be held at the Roseville Radisson on March 23-24, 2012. Faculty are contractually released from duty on Friday, March 23.

P.S. If you have an idea for entertainment at Friday's dinner banquet, [email](#) your suggestion.

## CONTACT US

The IFO *Faculty Update* is published and distributed by the [Inter Faculty Organization](#). If you need to contact the Inter Faculty Organization, our 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 send us an email by clicking [HERE](#).