

Inter Faculty Organization

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IN THIS ISSUE

- [IFO President's Column: Faculty Professional Development Funds Under Development/Underdevelopment](#)
- [Important Retirement Notification Date: October 17!!](#)
- [IFO Negotiations Update](#)
- [IFO Action Update](#)
- [Academic Affairs Update](#)

IFO PRESIDENT'S COLUMN: FACULTY PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FUNDS UNDER DEVELOPMENT/UNDERDEVELOPMENT

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

Over the last month, I have traveled to all seven of our state universities. The one question I heard faculty members asking on every campus was, “When we will have professional development money for this year?” You deserve an answer. I’m sorry to say it is, “We still don’t know!” Here is the background:

What the contract says:

Under the 2009-2011 IFO-MnSCU contract, departments received \$1,300 per full-time equivalent (FTE) faculty in Fiscal Year 2010 and in Fiscal Year 2011. That money was then to be distributed through a democratic process to faculty in the department. Most divided the money equally, but others voted to use different allocation formulas. The contract also allows departments to carry over any unused funds.

How “19B” Professional Study & Travel funds get used:

That \$1,300 per year barely—if at all—covers the cost of one professional conference, but we also use those funds for other professional travel, for professional memberships, for books and journals, for electronic subscriptions and software, and other resources that support our professional development. Since the contract allows departments to carry unspent funds over from year to year, some of us “bank” the yearly allotment in anticipation of costs for upcoming sabbaticals, major research projects and other large professional expenses for study and travel. Most IFO faculty members have gone for three years or longer without a salary increase, and this 19B money is an important resource.

What has happened to new 19B funding for FY 2012:

Departments have not received new 19B money this year. Our contract provided funds only for the contract years (Fiscal Years 2010 and 2011). No funding is currently provided for FY 2012. In the past when a contract expired while a new contract was being negotiated, the IFO and MnSCU routinely agreed to provide new 19B money for the year at the same rate as before. That rate would then be adjusted, if necessary, once a new contract had been approved.

This year so far, MnSCU has refused to follow that past practice. Last May, the IFO asked MnSCU if the system office would enter into such an agreement again. At that time, the administration's representatives claimed that they wanted to wait because they did not know what the state budget would be. Once the state shutdown was over in July, we approached MnSCU again.

The Chancellor's response:

About one month ago, as I was beginning my fall campus visits, I was informed by MnSCU administration that our new Chancellor, Steven Rosenstone, was concerned about the amount of unspent 19B money that was being carried over into this fiscal year and that he was reluctant to add more money on top of those unspent funds. We asked MnSCU for data so that we could see for ourselves how much money there was in the system, on each campus and in each department per Full-Time Equivalent faculty member.

What the data tell us:

The data have been slow in coming. Each university has a different way of recording and reporting these allocations and balances, and MnSCU has not collected these reports in a way that makes comparisons easy. The IFO has had to break down that data we have been given, find new data, and analyze what those data might mean.

By the time of our first state Meet & Confer session with Chancellor Rosenstone on September 9, we knew this much:

- On a statewide FTE basis, the carry-over reported by MnSCU is slightly over one year's allotment per FTE faculty member—an **average** of about \$1,500 per FTE.
- Carryover funds have been used in a consistent pattern from year to year.
- So far, neither the IFO nor MnSCU has accurate data about which individual faculty members in any given department have carry-over funds available for this year and which do not.

What the IFO IS doing:

- At state Meet & Confer and in informal conversations, we have explained to Chancellor Rosenstone the hardship that lack of funding for FY 2012 is causing for faculty members. Deadlines to commit funds for conferences and other activities for this year are already looming.
- We have explained why some faculty members carry over unspent funds in order to meet anticipated expenses that they will incur in meeting their professional development goals.
- On my campus visits, I have also explained our concerns about this issue to your university presidents.
- The IFO negotiating team has officially repeated our offer of an agreement that will continue to provide 19B Study and Travel funds at the same level for this year.
- We have explained to administration that we need to resolve this issue soon because faculty members' plans and schedules for the year are being affected **now**.

I am personally surprised and offended that Chancellor Rosenstone has chosen to make his objections to our contractual right for departments to carry over unspent funds an issue at this time. We have had no concrete language or data from Administration that will explain in detail just what the Chancellor wants. We have not yet received an acceptable counter-proposal for a different agreement for this year. Even so, the appropriate place for Administration to offer alternative forms of supporting professional development is through their negotiating team in positional bargaining with the IFO. Our negotiating teams are not yet exchanging financial proposals, and the Chancellor's emphasis on changing the allocation model for 19B funds now is premature.

THIS IS THE WRONG BATTLE AT THE WRONG TIME! The Chancellor's emphasis on this issue is a major

distraction from the many other and much more important issues that we will need to discuss as the system sets new directions and priorities and as we negotiate our contract for 2011-2013. The IFO will continue to press the case that our departments need to receive support for professional development activities for this year **now!**

What you can do!:

You can *make your voices heard!*

Below in this newsletter, and in a separate email, you will see that the IFO's Action Coordinator, Tom Hergert, is asking you to **mount a writing campaign**, and to let the Chancellor and your campus presidents know

- How you normally use and will use your professional development funds in the context of your Professional Development Plan;
- About your plans for more expensive activities if you have been saving funds from last year or earlier to meet those expenses;
- The impact on your professional development, especially scholarship, if professional development funds remain unavailable;
- Any other information that can help our administrators to understand our needs for the funds.

Chancellor Rosenstone is new to the system. He has expressed his respect for our faculty and his support for professional development, but he has had little opportunity to understand what we actually do in our professional lives. Your brief, factual and respectful emails and letters to state legislators last year had an impact. Your emails and letters to the Chancellor and your presidents can have an impact this time too!

IMPORTANT RETIREMENT NOTIFICATION DATE: OCTOBER 17!!

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

[Article 11](#) of the IFO/MnSCU contract provides that faculty members with at least 15 years of service and who are at least 55 years old are entitled to a final year two-step increase in salary. The two steps raise the salary by 4.85%. Because severance pay (based on unused sick leave) is computed off the final year of salary, the two steps also increase severance pay by 4.85%. In addition, if a faculty member is entitled to an early separation incentive, the incentive is based on the final year of salary and will be increased 4.85% by the two-step increase. **To get the two-step increase a faculty member must give notice of intent to retire by October 17, 2011**, for a retirement effective after the end of the academic year or before the start of the following (2012-13) academic year. The purpose of the incentive is to get faculty members to give early notice to enable adequate time for searches. (The deadline as written in the contract is October 15, but because that date falls on a Saturday this year, faculty members will have until the following Monday, October 17, to apply.)

[Article 16](#) of the IFO/MnSCU contract provides an early separation incentive for faculty who were initially hired prior to June 30, 1996, and who now have at least 15 years of service and are at least 55 years old. There are two parts to the incentive—a salary portion and a year of health insurance premiums. Eligible faculty members who retire at age 55 receive one year of base salary. The salary portion of the benefit decreases by 10% of a year's salary for each year a faculty member works beyond age 55. When a faculty member reaches his or her 65th birthday, he or she is no longer eligible for the entire incentive (both the salary portion and the year of health insurance). **To get the early separation incentive, a faculty member must give notice of intent to retire by October 17, 2011**, for a retirement effective after the end of this academic year and before the start of the 2012-13 academic year.

The IFO/MnSCU contract also provides for two types of phased retirement—the Contractual Phased Retirement Program and the Annuitant Employment Program. Under Contractual Phased Retirement, faculty members can work between 1/3 and 2/3 time (8 to 16 credits) but still contribute to IRAP or TRA as though they were working full time. If they do so, the employer will also contribute as though the faculty member was working full time, and the faculty member will get health insurance coverage as though he or she was working full time. The “high-5” salary for faculty members in TRA will be based upon their full salary instead of their part-time salary, and they

will get a full year of service credit. **To enter the Contractual Phased Retirement Program starting fall of 2012, a faculty member must apply by October 17, 2011.** The program is not an entitlement—the administration can say no to the proposal, but since this program saves the university money, they usually do not turn down the request.

The second type of phased retirement is the Annuitant Employment Program, or AEP. Under the AEP, faculty members can cut back and work between 1/3 and 2/3 time (8 to 16 credits), and at the same time draw their TRA or IRAP retirement. In addition, they will receive health insurance as though they were working full time. Again, the program is not an entitlement—but since the university saves a lot of money on the arrangement, the proposals are usually approved. **To begin the AEP in the fall of 2012 a faculty member must apply by October 17, 2011.**

Retirement Workshops/ Individual Appointments

During late August, September, and early October, Russ Stanton has been and will be putting on retirement workshops at all the universities for faculty nearing retirement and meeting with individual faculty members to assist them in [preparing for retirement](#). The workshops will cover contractual benefits related to retirement including:

1. The final year two-step increase
2. Severance pay
3. The contractual early separation incentive
4. Supplemental retirement
5. Retiree health care (the Health Care Savings Plan, staying on the state plan, etc.)
6. Phased retirement
7. The Annuitant Employment Program

The workshops will also cover TRA and IRAP benefit payout options. The purpose of the workshops is to show faculty how to maximize their retirement benefits. Faculty members who think they may be interested in retiring in the next five years should consider attending.

Workshops have already been held at Mankato, Moorhead, and St. Cloud. The following are the dates that Russ Stanton will be at the remaining universities. Please contact your local faculty association for specific times and places, or to schedule an individual ½ hour appointment with Russ.

Bemidji:	September 26th and 27th
Metro:	September 19th and 29th
St. Cloud:	September 28th
Southwest:	October 3rd and 4th
Winona:	September 20th and 21st (also Rochester)

Additional days will be added as necessary.

Attention New Faculty and Faculty Nearing Tenure!!

All new faculty members have one year from the time they are hired to choose between the Individual Retirement Account Plan (IRAP) and the Teachers Retirement Association (TRA) as their basic retirement plan while they work at MnSCU. The decision is complex, but very important—it can mean thousands of dollars in the short term, hundreds of thousands over the course of a career. Once made, the choice of a retirement plan is irrevocable for the rest of a faculty member's career, except that probationary faculty get a second one-year window to change plans once they are granted tenure.

If you are a new faculty member or a faculty member nearing tenure, you should schedule an appointment to see Russ Stanton of the IFO. He will explain the implications of choosing one plan versus the other, and will also assist you in making investment decisions and explain some very large tax breaks that are available to faculty.

The IFO does not sell or endorse any products or services—our focus is simply to assist IFO members to make informed decisions regarding their retirement benefits.

See the dates above when Russ will be on campuses. To schedule an appointment to meet with Russ when he is on your campus, please contact your faculty association. If necessary, additional campus meeting dates will be scheduled to accommodate demand. You can also contact Russ by phone at 1-800-325-9644, or by e-mail at stanton@ifo.org.

IFO NEGOTIATIONS UPDATE

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

Dear Colleagues:

As you are probably aware, the provisions of our IFO/MnSCU Bargaining Agreement that guarantee professional development funds for faculty use (Article 19) expired on June 30 with the end of the previous contract. While we continue to operate under the majority of that contract, these provisions “sun-setted” at the end of June.

The IFO Negotiations Team has presented a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) that proposes immediate release of funds for faculty professional development. As far as we know, Chancellor Rosenstone is reluctant to agree to an MOA that would simply release funds under the same terms as in the last two contracts. This has been the approach in similar circumstances in previous negotiation cycles.

The Negotiations Team has requested that I, as IFO Action Chair, elicit a writing campaign from our membership to encourage both local administrations and the central MnSCU administration to support the continuation of our professional development funds. We faculty can have impact if we approach this challenge with our individual perspectives through clear and respectful communication.

We can tell our stories to both campus presidents and directly to Chancellor Rosenstone. Please send emails and letters telling them:

- How you normally use and will use your professional development funds in the context of your Professional Development Plan;
- About your plans for more expensive activities if you are saving funds across multiple years;
- The impact on your professional development, especially scholarship, if professional development funds remain unavailable;
- Any other information that can help our administrators to understand our needs for the funds.

The chancellor has stated publicly that he does not intend to decrease the allotment of funds for our use. During previous rounds of negotiations, after contracts have expired, MOAs have been agreed upon that extended the provisions of the previous contracts. This is what we need to ask the chancellor to do now while negotiations continue. Please keep your messages **respectful, factual and brief**. Communicating well with the presidents and the chancellor can help achieve this outcome.

IFO ACTION UPDATE

by [Tom Hergert](#), IFO Action Chair

Dear Colleagues:

WE NEED YOUR HELP TO GET YOUR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT MONEY!

Chancellor Rosenstone has refused to sign an MOA that would release funds under the same terms as in the last two contracts.

We need your help to persuade local administrations and the central MnSCU administration to bring pressure to bear on Chancellor Rosenstone to release our professional development funds. The Chancellor has stated publicly that the money is available and that he doesn't intend to reduce faculty professional development funds.

Tell your stories to both campus presidents and directly to Chancellor Rosenstone. Please send emails and letters telling them:

- How you normally use and will use your professional development funds in the context of your Professional Development Plan (PDP);
- About your plans for more expensive activities if you are saving funds across multiple years;
- The impact of a delay in funds on professional development, especially scholarship, if the funds remain unavailable;
- We will expect a revision in evaluation standards if MnSCU doesn't provide the resources we need to fulfill our professional development obligations;
- Any other information that can help our administrators to understand our needs for the funds.

Keep your messages brief, factual and respectful, but tell the administration that we need our professional development money now!

In solidarity,

Tom Hergert
IFO Action Chair

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President Ronald Wood, Southwest Minnesota State University
President Judith Ramaley, Winona State University

ACADEMIC AFFAIRS UPDATE

by [Donna Brauer](#) and [Nancy Black](#), IFO Academic Affairs Coordinators

A new chancellor usually means big changes in the Chancellor's Office and Chancellor Rosenstone is no exception. You may recall that in May former Interim Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs Scott Olson announced a new structure for that division's committees. The new structure consists of 4 major councils: ASA Policy Council (existing), ASA Information Technology Council, ASA Student Affairs Council, and ASA Academic Affairs Council. Charges for each of these groups are currently being developed and should be approved by the end of September.

This change means that all previous task forces, work groups, and committees (except Policy Council) have been dissolved. IFO will have representatives on each new council. We will be sending a call for volunteers to your local Faculty Association soon.

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](#).