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IFO PRESIDENT'S COLUMN: DEEPER CONVERSATIONS

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

“95% of Opinions Withheld on Visit to Family”
(reprinted headline, *The Onion* Family Edition, 11/22/2011)

It may be the season to be somewhat cautious about saying what you really think during family gatherings, but it is just the start of an academic season when university faculty voices will need to be heard more than ever. At the November meeting of the MnSCU Board of Trustees, Chancellor Rosenstone began to fill in the “Strategic Framework” that he first presented in September, although the framework still lacks a roof and floor and walls. The suggestions he has offered so far about how to fill in those details have generated both enthusiasm and skepticism from faculty members and others, but it is easy to overreact in either direction.

Almost all of us are likely to support the Chancellor’s three broad goals:

1. *Ensure access to an extraordinary education for all Minnesotans*
2. *Be the partner of choice to meet Minnesota’s workforce and community needs*
3. *Deliver to students, employers, communities and taxpayers the highest value / most affordable option*

Those goals are now a bit clearer, however, in the somewhat more specific “projects” that the Chancellor outlined to the Trustees. Here are a few, taken from the 17 projects outlined in the Chancellor’s document:

- *Redesign the classroom experience and curriculum . . .*
- *Develop thoughtful measures of learning outcomes and deliver programs that enable graduates to meet those standards*
- *Increase access to baccalaureate degrees . . . Engage our seven universities to expand ‘university centers’ at the two-year colleges and other sites*
- *Increase collaboration among faculty across our colleges and universities to create the best possible courses and learning experiences that can be shared across the system.*

(The Chancellor’s expanded Strategic Framework document is available at the MnSCU Board of Trustees web page:

<http://www.mnscu.edu/board/materials/2011/nov16/bot-3-handout.pdf>)

The devils, as usual, will continue to be in the details. **What** needs to be “redesigned” in the classroom experiences we currently offer? **Why and how** should curriculum be redesigned? **What programs** lack “thoughtful measures of learning outcomes”? **How** will faculty collaboration **be supported**? It is obvious from these goals and projects that faculty members and the IFO will need to work on filling in those details before someone else offers to do it for us. The Chancellor has said repeatedly that he wants to collaborate on these details and engage in “deep conversations” and “deep consultation” on his goals and how best to start working on them in the 2012-2013 academic year. We should take him at his word.

Before calendar year 2011 ends, the IFO will already be engaging with the System Office in discussions about how to have those conversations and provide that consultation. Some of these deep discussions—whether on the campus or state level--are likely to be held in informal venues, but ultimately we need to use our established shared governance processes to make clear what the IFO as the representative for state university faculty has to say.

Anyone who has been paying attention to higher education issues across the country knows that these kinds of discussions are going on everywhere, sometimes with little or no meaningful input from faculty. To counter that trend, a national coalition of higher education faculty groups began to form last year under the name Campaign for the Future of Higher Education. The IFO has been in on some of those formative discussions, and last week the IFO Board of Directors formally endorsed [the Campaign’s basic principles](#) and named **Jeff Kolnick** (Southwest) to the Campaign’s national steering committee. These principles are consistent with the stated goals of the Chancellor’s framework, stating that quality higher education in the 21st century

1. “must be inclusive . . . available and affordable . . .”
2. must offer a “broad and diverse” curriculum
3. “will require a sufficient investment in excellent faculty . . .”
4. “should incorporate technology [that expands] opportunity and [maintains] quality”
5. “will require the pursuit of real efficiencies and the avoidance of false economies”
6. “will require substantially more public investment”
7. “cannot be measured by a standardized, simplistic set of metrics”

These principles, and the IFO’s own stated goals of improving higher education and promoting the welfare of the faculty (which ought to amount to the same thing), will help to guide our discussions on our campuses and at the state level.

We will continue to update you as these deep conversations develop. But when you return to Spring Semester 2012, please watch for (or ask for, or demand) opportunities to **make your voices heard**. This is no time for any of us to withhold our opinions. I wish you all a satisfying end to Fall Semester 2011, a happy holiday and vacation, and a stimulating new year.

Delegate Assembly Resolutions

Below you will see an announcement of the biennial IFO Delegate Assembly. This meeting is the supreme governing authority of the IFO, and becoming a delegate is a chance to make your voice heard within the IFO. Please remember that all IFO members—probationary, tenured, non-tenure track, fixed-term and adjunct—are qualified to be delegates. In January, we will say more about introducing resolutions for consideration at the Assembly, but if you are thinking about resolutions to guide the IFO in coming years, please keep the following principles in mind:

- Keep the resolution short, concise, and clear—it should be easily understood by others.
- Avoid being too detailed, especially in regard to contract negotiations. The Negotiating Team needs flexibility to achieve our desired goals.
- Avoid the word “priority” in your resolution. Any resolution adopted by the Assembly is treated as a priority by the IFO and the Negotiators.
- Consider working with colleagues to craft resolutions that will avoid conflicts and achieve common goals.

NOTICE OF NOMINATIONS FOR IFO PRESIDENT

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 Ave. 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.

REVENUE FORECAST WILL CHANGE DYNAMICS OF 2012 SESSION

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

The Budget Surprise

The November state budget forecast projecting that Minnesota will have a \$876 million budget balance at the end of the 2012-13 biennium surprised almost everyone—most observers expected a significant budget shortfall. The projected surplus will change the agenda of the 2012 legislative session from what it would have been if there was a projected budget shortfall.

Tax Increases Unlikely

Debate around raising taxes on wealthy individuals, which brought state government to a shutdown earlier this year, is probably dead for the 2012 session. Governor Dayton has already said he would not push the issue this year, and tax increases of any kind were opposed by the Republican majorities in the legislature last session. With the state now sitting on a small surplus, the urgency for raising revenue in the short term has dissipated. There may still be efforts to reform the tax system to more fairly distribute the tax burden—but not this session. All members of the legislature are up for election this year, and raising taxes right before an election, especially when there is a projected surplus, would not be smart politics.

Budget Cuts Unlikely

It is unlikely we will see another round of budget cuts on top of the draconian cuts of last year, when higher education funding was cut \$351 million (12%) from the previous biennium. While budget cuts are popular with some conservative constituencies, a large majority of constituents were opposed to the cuts in areas like education and higher education. The political advantage has shifted to Governor Dayton on budget issues. Last session the governor needed the legislature to pass appropriations to keep state government operating, and he had to make huge compromises to end the shutdown of state government. Now that the budgets for state government are set and funded until June 30, 2013, the governor does not have to compromise with legislators on legislation he disagrees with—he can just veto the legislation.

Efforts to Restore Cuts Unlikely

While some legislators would like to restore some of the cuts made during the special session, and other legislators would like to cut taxes, it is very unlikely that either will happen. All of the surplus will, by law, go first to replenish the state's cash flow account and then to the "rainy day" reserve. These two funds were drained in recent years to cover budget shortfalls.

Risky Assumptions

The budget "surplus" is a *projected* balance at the end of the current biennium, which ends June 30, 2013. The projection is based upon a lot of risky assumptions, such as the extension by the U. S. Congress of both the payroll tax cuts and unemployment benefits. In addition, the European debt crisis adds a lot of uncertainty to the economic forecast. Therefore, there seems to be consensus among Governor Dayton and legislative leaders to hold the surplus in reserve as a protection against negative developments.

Impact on Bonding

In even numbered years the legislature normally passes a capital bonding bill to borrow money to build and repair state facilities. The MnSCU system is usually the biggest recipient of bonding appropriations. This is a good time to borrow and build because interest rates are at historical lows, construction bids are coming in 15-20% less than expected because contractors are hungry for work, and construction creates jobs. The state's improved financial picture makes passage of a large bonding bill more feasible. MMB Commissioner Jim Schowalter told reporters at the forecast press conference that the state has room in the budget to finance a substantial bonding bill next session.

Probably a Short Session

The next session of the legislature will still be chaotic. This legislature is very polarized along partisan lines. The

political posturing will be insufferable. Because the legislators and the Governor could not agree on a legislative redistricting plan, the court has said it will impose a redistricting plan by February 21st, and is already considering plans submitted by the political parties and interested citizen groups. All of the plans will significantly alter legislative districts and in many cases pit incumbent legislators against one another in next year's elections. The precinct caucuses and legislative endorsing conventions will be taking place while the legislators are in session. Legislators will need to get back to their newly drawn districts to meet their new constituents and the delegates that will be voting on their endorsements. They will be eager to end the session and get home as soon as possible, and with a fight over the budget no longer necessary, legislators will be able to get out of town much sooner than expected.

I think everyone would welcome a short legislative session.

Here is a link to the forecast documents: <http://www.mmb.state.mn.us/fu-current-fore-nov>.

ACADEMIC AFFAIRS UPDATE

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

The new MnSCU Academic & Student Affairs Division's (ASA) Coordinating Council held its first meeting in November. That group is composed of the leadership from all academic unions and management. The Council approved charges for the 4 governance councils: *Policy*, *Student Affairs*, *Information Technology*, and *Academic Affairs*. The IFO has 3 representatives on each of those councils. The [Policy Council](#) remains essentially unchanged from the past: it reviews all new and existing MnSCU policies on an annual rotating schedule and makes recommendations to the Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs. The [Information Technology Council](#) is the principal group responsible for advising the Vice Chancellor on all academic technologies that are piloted, adopted, and/or licensed for system-wide use. The [Student Affairs Council](#) advises the Vice Chancellor on emerging student issues as they are received from its related subcommittees and user groups. The [Academic Affairs Council](#) advises the Vice Chancellor on issues related to the quality of academic programs. Each council will meet via Web Ex, so that members do not need to travel to St. Paul to participate. Additional information is available on the IFO web site. We have sent out a call to each local [Faculty Association for volunteers to represent IFO](#) on one of the above councils. Please consider volunteering or encourage a colleague to volunteer as an IFO representative.

REMINDER: BENNY CARD STOPS DECEMBER 19

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

The "Benny Card" for paying medical expenses from your Health Reimbursement Arrangement (HRA,) and your voluntary Medical Dental Expense Account (MDEA) if you have one, is being replaced with a new card called the EideBailly OneCard. The Benny Card will stop working on December 19th, and the EideBailly OneCard will start working on January 1, 2012. If you have an HRA account or an MDEA, you will receive an EideBailly OneCard in the mail.

If you want to use your Benny Card to pay claims, do so by December 19th. You will not lose any unspent money in your HRA or MDEA because of this transition from the Benny Card to the EideBailly OneCard. During the transition period between December 19th and January 1st you can still submit reimbursement requests on-line or by paper reimbursement processes.

To access you account or accounts, go to www.eidebailly.com/som.

DECEMBER 31 HRA ACCOUNT BALANCE DETERMINES 2012 CONTRIBUTION

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

Now is the time to review the balance in your HRA account.

This is a reminder your HRA balance as of December 31 determines whether your health care reimbursement money for 2012 will go into a Health Care Savings Plan instead of your Health Reimbursement Arrangement (HRA) account.

If you have \$700 or more in your HRA account on December 31, 2011, the employer's \$800 contribution for 2012 will go into a Health Care Savings Plan instead of your HRA account. Money deposited in a Health Care Savings Plan is tax free, but you cannot access the funds to pay for medical expenditures until you separate from employment.

If you desire to have your \$800 contribution for 2012 deposited in your HRA account in January, you must have less than \$700 remaining in your HRA account at the end of 2011. 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, 2011.

FIC ACCEPTING NOMINATIONS FOR 2012 DELEGATE ASSEMBLY AWARDS

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

The IFO Feminist Issues Committee (FIC) is accepting [nominations for Outstanding Contributions to the IFO by a woman IFO member](#) to be recognized at the 2012 Delegate Assembly. The FIC is seeking to honor female IFO members who have made significant contributions in leadership capacities and advocacy within the organization on issues impacting women faculty.

The Feminist Issues Committee is also accepting [nominations for Outstanding Contributions to Women's Advancement in MnSCU](#) by an IFO member to be recognized at the 2012 Delegate Assembly. The FIC will recognize an IFO member who has improved the lives and working conditions for professional women within the MnSCU system by creating equity and opportunities for women faculty through serving in leadership capacities and by advocating on issues with substantial impact on women faculty in the system.

Nomination forms are available on the IFO website and may be sent by email to arsen@ifo.org or by mail to FIC Nominations, IFO, 490 Concordia Avenue, Suite 125, St. Paul, MN 55103. Nominations must be received by the IFO by **January 23, 2012**.

DEADLINE FAST APPROACHING FOR FEMINIST ISSUES GRANT APPLICATIONS

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

The **deadline for submitting an application** to the IFO Feminist Issues Committee (FIC) for the [2012-2014 Feminist Issues Grant](#) is **January 23, 2012**.

To apply for the \$3,000 Grant, submit your proposal by email (in Word or PDF format) no later than (midnight) January 23, 2012.

The successful grant applicant will be notified in March 2012. The grant period runs from March 2012 to March 2014. 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).

JAMES ERIC CHALGREN AWARD NOMINATIONS DUE JANUARY 20, 2012

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

The IFO Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, and Allies Issues Committee (GLBTA) will be accepting nominations until January 20 for the 2012 James Eric Chalgren Award for Outstanding Contributions to the Advancement of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) Issues. The GLBTA Issues Committee is seeking to recognize an IFO member who has made significant contributions to improve the professional lives or working conditions for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender employees in the state universities or otherwise who has advocated within the IFO or the MnSCU system on issues that have substantial impact for the LGBT community.

[Award nomination forms and the GLBTA committee's selection criteria are available on the IFO website](#) and may be submitted by email to arsen@ifo.org, or by mail to: Chalgren Award Nominations, IFO, 490 Concordia Avenue, Suite 125, St. Paul, MN 55103. Nominations must be received by the IFO by **January 20, 2012**.

The GLBTA Issues Committee will present the James Eric Chalgren Award at the 2012 Delegate Assembly banquet on Friday, March 23.

MAKE A DIFFERENCE - 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.

If you want to make a difference, there are many ways to be involved in the Delegate Assembly. 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 for Friday, March 23.

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

IFO ST PAUL HOLIDAY OFFICE HOURS

by [Donna Blake](#), *IFO Controller*

The IFO headquarters in St. Paul will be closed from Thursday, December 22, 2011 through Monday, January 2, 2012, in observance of the holidays. The St. Paul office will reopen on Tuesday, January 3, 2012. If you have an urgent issue during this time, please contact Don Larsson, IFO President, at 651-605-5302.

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](#).