

Inter Faculty Organization

BEMIDJI - MANKATO - METROPOLITAN - MOORHEAD - SOUTHWEST - ST. CLOUD - WINONA

Faculty Update Newsletter

Volume XXXII No. 8

www.ifo.org

March 2010

IN THIS ISSUE

- [Notes from the President](#)
- [The Fast Moving Legislative Session - Where We Stand at the Moment](#)
 - [Governor Line-Item Vetoes Bonding Bill—MnSCU Hit Hard](#)
 - [House/Senate Higher Education Committees Pass Budget Cuts](#)
 - [TRA Reforms Progressing](#)
- [Supreme Court Hears Unallotment Appeal](#)
- [IFO Multicultural Issues Committee to Host Introductory Racism Analysis and Orientation to Anti-racist Organizing Workshop at Delegate Assembly](#)
- [IFO GLBTA Issues Committee is Accepting Nominations for the James Eric Chalgren Award for Outstanding Contributions to the Advancement of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender \(LGBT\) Issues](#)
- [Jack Sparrow meets the Marble Boat, Argh!](#)

NOTES FROM THE PRESIDENT

by [Roderick Henry](#), IFO President

Dear Colleagues:

Decimation. The word comes from Roman times when an army unit would be lined up and every tenth person would be eliminated. Decimation is what is happening to the faculty and their programs right now at places like Mankato and Moorhead, with others soon to follow. What makes this particularly bad is that, in the past, units would only be decimated if they performed poorly - we are being decimated despite doing an excellent job.

The IFO knows the state's budget difficulties and that cuts will be made. We know that the situation would have been worse were it not for the Federal Stimulus money which required that the state maintain its higher education spending at the 2006 level. We agree with the way the governor and legislature allocated the cuts between the U of M and MnSCU - which meant a \$10.5 million cut to MnSCU, and a \$36.5 million cut to the U of M.

Every faculty member is aware of our enrollment increases as well as the attempts to increase productivity by MnSCU's central office. Some of the techniques - increased class sizes, use of adjuncts, increased use of online offerings, and reductions in time to allow faculty to stay current in their fields, conduct research and other forms of scholarship - are short-term solutions with long-term negative consequences.

I can give you one example from my Marketing Management class. In the past, I had every student analyze a

different company from the *Star Tribune* 100 list. If the class has 20 students in it, that's 20 companies I have to know in detail. Increase the class size to 30 - as was done - and now you have group projects...meaning that students will not get the individualized attention many need even at the senior level. In short, students will get less for increased tuition.

Last year, the IFO took a 0 and 0 contract settlement. We were the first union in the state to settle and the first professors' union in the nation to settle. We took a lot of heat for it. We did it partly as a way to help our institutions, but, unfortunately, when last summer's unallotment came down, we found our campus allocations cut disproportionately compared to our central office. We calculate that the central office took about half the cut in state allocation that we feel they should have taken.

Time for Leadership

To sum it up, in a time when we are eliminating 80 faculty and their programs at 1 university alone, it is best if our central office took a much greater percentage - if not all - of the cuts. We look to the MnSCU system office to show leadership and take their fair share of any cuts rather than hiding behind accounting games. This will protect teaching and learning on the campuses. The Office of the Legislative Auditor has shown where to start - and unless MnSCU believes (to paraphrase Leona Helmsley) that "cuts are for the little people", we expect to see decisive action on their part.

The Fast Moving Legislative Session Where We Stand at the Moment

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

The Beginning of the End

The legislature has begun the process to bring the legislative session to an end. Last Friday, March 12th, was the deadline for legislative committees to act favorably on bills in their house of origin. Next Friday, March 19th, is the deadline for committees to act favorably on bills that met the first deadline in the other house. The following is a summary of the status of issues related to IFO goals.

Governor Line-Item Vetoes Bonding Bill—MnSCU Hit Hard

On even numbered years, the legislature takes up a large bonding bill that authorizes borrowing and appropriates money for infrastructure improvements. This year the legislature moved fast to pass a \$1 billion bonding bill within three weeks after the session convened. Legislative advocates wanted to take advantage of historically low interest rates and low construction costs to create jobs and stimulate local economies. However, the bill hit a roadblock when the governor announced he planned to veto the bill in its entirety because he thought it was too large and it didn't include some projects he strongly favored. Using a rarely used parliamentary procedure, the legislature called the bill back to the legislature before the governor had a chance to veto it, and they began working on a compromise.

Last Thursday the legislature re-passed the bonding bill and sent it to the governor. The reworked bill deleted numerous projects from the first bonding bill, including \$66 million worth of MnSCU projects, and added projects that Governor Pawlenty wanted, such as the Moose Lake sex offender facility and Veterans Home projects.

On Sunday, Governor Pawlenty signed the Bonding Bill into law, but only after using his line item veto to reduce the size of the bill from about \$999 million to \$680 million.

The governor's vetoes struck MnSCU particularly hard, reducing the total bonding authorized for MnSCU from \$239.92 million to just \$106.17 million. He vetoed 16 MnSCU projects.

State university projects vetoed included:

- \$1,908,000 for MSU-Mankato to design a Clinical Science Building
- \$14,901,000 for MSU Moorhead for the Livingston Lord Library and IT project

- \$200,000 for Southwest Minnesota State University to design science and math building renovations
- \$42,334,000 for St. Cloud State University for an Integrated Science and Engineering Laboratory Facility

The governor also vetoed a \$4,835,000 appropriation to design, renovate and equip science laboratories and classrooms at various MnSCU campuses, including Bemidji State University and MSU Moorhead.

The good news is that the \$52,000,000 appropriation to MnSCU for Higher Education Asset Preservation and Renewal (HEAPR) was signed into law, supplying millions of dollars to all of our campuses for much needed upgrades. A list of HEAPR projects, by campus, can be found on the IFO web page at www.ifo.org.

Also, Metropolitan State's \$5,860,000 appropriation to demolish the old power plant building and build technology enhanced classrooms was finally signed into law by the governor. The project had been vetoed twice in previous sessions. I guess the Metro folks wore him down.

Here is a [link](#) to a MnSCU spreadsheet showing the MnSCU request, House and Senate actions, the final compromises, and the final bill after the governor's vetoes.

This probably ends the bonding bill debate for this session. The legislature can try to over-ride the vetoes, and there are enough votes in the Senate to do so. However, the DFLers are three votes short of the 2/3 majority required to over-ride in the House. It is highly unlikely they can muster Republican cross-over votes.

House/Senate Higher Education Committees Pass Budget Cuts

The legislature began the session facing a projected \$1.2 billion state budget deficit for the remainder of this biennium. The projected deficit shrank to \$994 million when the February budget forecast was announced, but the legislature must still make major cuts and/or raise taxes to balance the budget. Governor Pawlenty has firmly stated he will veto tax increases, so it appears as though the entire shortfall will have to be made up through cuts in spending.

Fortunately, the federal stimulus money came with a requirement that the state's maintain their funding for higher education systems at least at the FY 2006 funding level. This means the amount of money that could be cut from the MnSCU and U of M systems is limited to \$147 million. The Governor unallotted \$100 million of the appropriations for MnSCU and U of M systems last summer, meaning the legislature can only cut an additional \$47 million this session.

The Governor's Position

Governor Pawlenty's budget proposal called for cutting the U of M by \$36.1 million and MnSCU by \$10.5 million. The governor also called for cutting financial aid programs to make up a \$42 million shortfall in the State Grant Program.

The House Bill

The House Higher Education Committee passed its version of a budget balancing bill late last week. The House bill cuts the same amount from the higher education systems as recommended by the governor—a \$36.1 million cut to the U of M and a \$10.5 million cut to MnSCU. What is different is the House bill requires \$3 million of the MnSCU cut come from the MnSCU central office, and each of the campuses is directed to cut their administrative costs by 10% (this amounts to about \$5 million system wide). Therefore, the cuts to academic programs would not exceed about \$2.5 million system wide.

On financial aid, the House committee cut several new initiatives stated last year in order to make up a \$42 million shortfall in the state grant program. House Higher Education Chair Tom Rukavina tried to pass a .6% income tax surcharge to make up the shortfall, but he didn't have the backing of the finance leadership in the House, so he had to remove that provision.

The Senate Bill

The Senate Higher Education Committee passed a bill a week ago that also cut the U of M \$36.1 million and cut MnSCU by \$10.5 million. The Senate bill does not specify cuts to the central office, nor does it cut administration

at the campus level. In fact, the Senate bill would repeal a line item limitation on how much of the appropriation to MnSCU can be spent by the central office. Senator Sharon Erickson Ropes (DFL-Winona) and Senator Kathy Sheran (DFL-Mankato) tried to remove the repeal of the line item—but their motion failed on a voice vote of the Higher Education Committee.

TRA Reforms Progressing

The Pension Commission has passed legislation to improve the financial stability of the major public pension funds, including the Teachers Retirement Association (TRA). The legislation is winding its way through the committee process and should reach the House and Senate floors next week.

The TRA legislation addresses a \$9.2 billion unfunded liability in the TRA fund (\$5.1 billion if a five-year “smoothing” of asset values is used). The shortfall is due to drops in the value of TRA investments, un-contributing in the past, and a flawed cost of living formula for retirees in the 1990s that linked retiree annual adjustments to investment returns. If the TRA shortfall is not addressed, the fund will run out of money to pay retirees by 2032. Even assuming 8.5% annual returns on investments, it will take a combined employer/employee contribution of 16.57% of salary from now until 2037 to get the TRA fund back to full funding. If the problem is not addressed, the cost of addressing it goes up sharply each year.

TRA is proposing to increase employer and employee contributions from 5.5%/5.5% to 7.5%/7.5% of salary, phased in over four years. As part of a “shared pain” strategy, TRA is proposing to suspend the annual 2.5% cost of living increases for retirees for two years. Thereafter, they propose reducing the 2.5% annual increase to 2%.

IFO is supporting the TRA financial stability measures; it is IFO’s position that we cannot allow the state’s defined benefit plans to fail. Almost all the other public employee unions, public employers and retiree groups support the stability measures. The big exception is Education Minnesota, which is opposing contribution increases unless the legislature passes benefit improvements. Their position has brought some sharp criticism from legislators who feel Education Minnesota has taken financially unrealistic positions in dire economic times.

Supreme Court Hears Unallotment Appeal

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

On March 15th the Minnesota Supreme Court heard arguments in appeal of a district court ruling that said Governor Pawlenty had overstepped his authority when he unilaterally unallotted (cut) \$2.7 billion in state spending. Among the Pawlenty unallotments were \$50 million each to the U of M and MnSCU. The court is likely to rule soon.

Whichever way the Supreme Court rules, it is unlikely to have any affect in the short term on the funding for the U of M and MnSCU. The federal stimulus money came with a requirement that the state cannot cut its overall funding of the higher education systems below the FY 2006 funding level (a total of \$147 million). Since the governor already cut the systems by \$100 million through unallotments, the most the legislature can cut is another \$47 million. The Governor, House and Senate are all proposing cutting the systems by another \$47 million. If the unallotments are overturned by the Supreme Court, the legislature will probably just increase their cuts by the amount of the unallotments, and we will still end up at our FY 2006 funding level.

IFO Multicultural Issues Committee to Host Introductory Racism Analysis and Orientation to Anti-racist Organizing Workshop at Delegate Assembly

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

The IFO *Multicultural Issues Committee (MIC)* will sponsor an introductory anti-racism workshop, “Introductory Racism Analysis and Orientation to Anti-racist Organizing” on Thursday, April 8, 2010, from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., at the Radisson Roseville on the day before the Delegate Assembly begins. The workshop is open to all

delegates.

In order to work on solutions to systemic racism, faculty members within the IFO need to work from a common definition and understanding of racism as more than individual attitudes and actions. The MIC has been active in anti-racism initiatives on several university campuses, and in past years, has worked to provide IFO leadership with anti-racism training opportunities. This year, the committee will host the April 8 workshop in conjunction with the IFO's Delegate Assembly, in order to provide a broader opportunity for faculty to learn how to initiate a process of systemic change and institutional transformation.

The overarching purpose of this workshop is twofold: to introduce a functional definition of racism and related systemic dynamics, and to consider practical implications of the definition for institutions, communities and individuals.

Workshop participants will enhance their capacity to understand racism as a systemic issue that is woven into the fabric of American life. The workshop will introduce the dynamics of systemic power and race: the quantifiable social disparities separating communities of Color from White society; the racial advantages promulgated by systems and institutions and the socializing dynamics that racialize individuals and institutions. The workshop presenters will share a template for organizing institutional change relative to the impact of race.

Presenters from the Minnesota Collaborative Anti-Racism Initiative (MCARI) will conduct the Introductory Racism Analysis and Orientation to Anti-racist Organizing workshop, on April 8, from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. in Salon D at the Radisson Roseville (same location as the Delegate Assembly). A buffet lunch will be provided to participants. There is no fee for attending the workshop but you must [register with Cindy Finch](#) if you are planning to attend. For more details, you may contact [Pat Arseneault](#).

IFO GLBTA Issues Committee is Accepting Nominations for the James Eric Chalgren Award for Outstanding Contributions to the Advancement of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) Issues

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

The IFO *Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, and Allies Issues Committee (GLBTA)* is accepting nominations for the 2010 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.

The [GLBTA committee](#) named the award in honor of the late James Eric Chalgren, a graduate of Minnesota State University, Mankato, and a strong advocate within the Mankato community on behalf of LBGT residents. Mr. Chalgren also advocated at the Minnesota state legislature for human rights legislation to protect LGBT citizens from discrimination.

To be considered for the James Eric Chalgren Award, nominees must be IFO members. [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, by facsimile (651-227-0505) 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 March 22, 2010.

The GLBTA Issues Committee will present the James Eric Chalgren Award at the 2010 Delegate Assembly banquet on Friday, April 9.

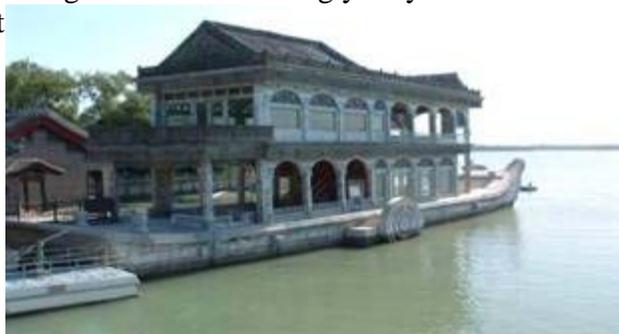
EDITORIAL: Jack Sparrow meets the Marble Boat, Argh!

by [Darrell Downs](#), Professor, Winona State University

A few years ago in a faculty newsletter, I drew attention to MnSCU's (Minnesota State Colleges and University) paranormal obsession for technology spending by comparing its System Office (SO) to the bureaucratic largesse of China's declining Qing Dynasty. I suggested that as the Empress Dowager built an enduring yet dysfunctional marble boat for the Summer Palace, so too has the Legislature built an interesting yet bureaucratic nightmare for higher education.

It's even clearer today that Minnesota cannot afford a centralized and bloated bureaucracy. Facing a multi-billion dollar statewide budget shortfall, all of the state's twenty-five colleges and seven state universities are planning for deep and possibly irreversible cuts (which they must do early to provide fair notice to students and staff). Meanwhile, the SO sits on an \$89 million per year budget that could – if common sense was a factor – be used in part

to sustain the campuses. It's time to remind ourselves that the SO remains afloat in the first place because we, the state colleges and universities, support it from below. Yet based on the recent evaluation by the Office of the Legislative Auditor, it appears that below the waterline, the campuses are drowning.



The Legislative Audit reveals that one of every eight dollars appropriated by the legislature goes to the SO. This \$89 million annual expense is, according to its statutory mission, to support and oversee academic programs, and control administrative costs at 32 colleges and universities. The issue is not whether the state has a legitimate role in steering the colleges and universities – it does. But as the SO bureaucracy was layered on top of campus administrations in 1995, this new administrative skeleton filled out faster than its capacity to support the very campuses it was created to serve. Consider the following observations in the report:

Forty-seven percent of the campus presidents believe the SO is too large. Only 41 percent believe it's about the right size. ***Translation: even among those hired and paid by the MnSCU Chancellor, there is little support for the existing scope of centralized management.***

Fifty-six percent of the campus presidents believe that SO oversight is either “fair” or “poor.” ***Translation: most presidents are not convinced that the System Office is carrying out one of its central missions.***

In 2010, the estimated cost in IT is expected to exceed \$33 million. ***Translation: the only thing more expensive than SO technology is James Cameron's blockbuster hit “Avatar,” and one has to wonder if the SO is trying to catch up.***

Sixty-eight percent of presidents note that the SO is not effectively and efficiently working with campuses to develop new curriculum opportunities. ***Translation: The SO is more of a burden than help where campuses have their own administrative and academic systems.***

The Legislative Audit found that the SO facilities planning and management adds cost or time to campus projects, sometimes with “little or no added value.” ***Translation: even on purely administrative support functions, it appears the SO is questionably helpful.***

Not everything within the SO is redundant. I am certain that its 400-plus employees are responsible professionals committed to educational excellence, and clearly their services are valued differently by different campuses. But the Legislative Audit also points out that before MnSCU was created, the combined central administration of the technical colleges, community colleges, and the state universities was only 233 full-time employees, while in 2009, it was 417. Ironically, during the same period of time, the SO's spending on outside consultants increased by more than 100 percent – so much for the efficiency of a merged system. And now when the state of Minnesota is no longer willing to pay for the SO's marginal and sometimes non-existent benefits, the campuses should not be forced to walk the plank.

The SO should continue to do what it does well, but let's start by paring down its budget in academic affairs and information technology. Each campus already has its own governance systems for reviewing courses and academic programs and each has vastly different capacities and needs for information technology; there is no reason for the SO to be heavily involved in these areas in the first place, let alone building a technocratic bureaucracy with an insatiable appetite for tax dollars.

Imagine the insanity of protecting the SO budget while the campuses are dismantled. Eighty-nine million dollars is greater than the sum of the total annual base appropriations of Alexandria TC, Anoka Ramsey CC, Central Lakes CC, Dakota County TC, Fond du Lac Tribal CC, Inver Hills CC, MN State College Southeast TC, MN West CC, Pine TC, Riverland CC, and St. Cloud CC. With historic budget shortfalls projected for the next biennium (FY 2012/2013), whether the SO cuts back its spending, even a small amount could be a matter of survival for these campuses. Similarly, the annual budget of the SO is only slightly less than the total base appropriations for Winona State University, Minnesota State University - Moorhead, Bemidji State University, Metro State University, and Southwest Minnesota State University. Isn't it obvious that administration at the highest and most distant levels from the classroom should be cut before anyone begins cutting academic programs and local student support services?

Thankfully, campus staff, faculty, and students are working tirelessly to minimize irreversible harm to the campuses. With strong student demand and ongoing efforts to ensure that courses and local support systems are there for the students, we can overcome the budget crisis. But survival may depend on whether the legislature will lighten the load of the Marble Boat. In the mutinous parlance of Captain Jack Sparrow, it might be time to unhook t' barge matey!

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](#).