

# Inter Faculty Organization

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

## Faculty Update Newsletter

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### NOTES FROM THE PRESIDENT: BE INFORMED, STAY INFORMED

by [Don Larsson](#), IFO President

We are now just two weeks away from Election Day in Minnesota, and this year's election promises to be one of the most crucial in this state's history. I know that you probably heard statements like that four years ago—and four (and eight and sixteen) before that—but this time it may be true. Nearly everyone remarks that the analysis of the state's problems and the solutions offered by Mark Dayton and Tom Emmer show the starkest contrast Minnesota has seen in recent memory (while Independent candidate Tom Horner tries to position himself in the middle).

See Russ Stanton's column below for more on the election, but one of the foremost questions that state university faculty members should be asking is, "Which candidate is going to be best (or, if you prefer, least harmful) for the future of four-year and graduate education in Minnesota? Some perspective comes from the candidates themselves. You can find videos and transcripts of their debate at the University of Minnesota on [The Uptake's website](#).

More to the point, the two MnSCU student organizations have posted video interviews about higher education in Minnesota with each of the three candidates. We should all be proud of our students for taking this initiative in such a professional manner. You can watch the interviews [here](#).

#### No Easy Fixes

No matter who wins the race for Governor and no matter how elections for the Legislature and other state offices turn out, we can be sure that the problems confronting us now will not go away. Even before the Great Recession

hit, the clouds were gathering. MnSCU and several of our universities are seeing new surges of enrollments this year—but much of the surge is coming from transfer students. High school graduation populations—and potential new freshman students—will be declining through most of the coming decade. Population shifts and changes in demographic patterns will require new kinds of resources as financial resources are becoming scarcer. More of the state’s money will be committed to health care and payments to a population whose average age is increasing as the Baby Boom generation gets set for retirement. This is the “new normal” that State Economist Tom Stinson and State Demographer Tom Gillaspay have been warning about for a couple of years now. You can find a quick tour of their analysis, based on the November 2009 official economic forecast [here](#).

### **The Cost**

We have already seen where this “new normal” is taking us: 80 full-time faculty positions at Mankato will have disappeared by the end of this academic year. St. Cloud will lose another 80. Bemidji has just started its own planning process that is likely to involve retrenchment of probationary and tenured faculty. Southwest’s administration is creating new seniority rosters that could set the stage for further layoffs—and there could be more to come. Even the Office of the Chancellor is taking some actual hits through layoffs of more than 40 positions this year, on top of twenty or so layoffs last year—and our campuses and faculty may actually miss some of those individuals and the services they offered.

### **What Has Been Done?**

Repeatedly at the state universities of the MnSCU system, the Faculty Associations and the IFO have demonstrated that the faculty want to be and have to be involved in campus planning. As professors and professionals, we have the day-to-day to knowledge of our students and our classes that can help to point directions for each of our individual universities—and to know what devils may lurk in the details of any grand plan. Faculty discussions in planning and the IFO’s support of early separation incentives have helped to shrink the number of actual retrenchments at Mankato to about one-third of what was originally announced. We hope that we can see some rollback of retrenchments at St. Cloud this year as well, even if the total number of full-time positions will still be lost at both institutions.

But the IFO and the Faculty Associations also have been active in making certain that expedience will not trump the contract. When the contract is ignored or bypassed, we will be there to remind everyone that the contract is our rulebook and that no one can unilaterally change the rules just because they might seem inconvenient. Planning and changes are playing out in different ways and on different schedules at each university, so we need your continued reports and questions to know what is happening and how. Now, more than ever, we need to be aware that what happens in one department can affect all the others, and what happens at one university sends a message to all the others. As unique as each of our campuses are, we need to remember that we are all in this together.

I’ll have more to say in the near future about where we can go from here, but for now, **GO OUT AND VOTE!**

**PLEASE VOTE NOVEMBER 2ND -- IT MATTERS!!**

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

On November 2nd, general elections will be held. In Minnesota, the Governor’s office and all 201 legislative seats are up for election. These are very important elections, and the outcomes will have a big impact on higher education constituencies.

### **Why Vote?**

Minnesota state universities receive about 43% of their operating funds from state appropriations passed by the governor and legislature. In addition, the legislature and governor appropriate money for higher education buildings and facilities, and money for student financial aid. The actions of the state legislature and governor have a profound impact on faculty salaries, pensions, health care coverage, layoffs, class sizes, and student tuition.

Minnesota has a history of very close statewide elections. Just two years ago, Senator Al Franken won by just 312 votes after an extensive recount. This year, there is an especially close three-way race for Governor between **Mark**

**Dayton** (Democratic-Farmer-Labor, or DFL), **Tom Emmer** (Republican), and **Tom Horner** (Independence Party). Several polls have shown Dayton and Emmer at a statistical tie, with Horner in a distant third place. Even though Minnesota is a fairly liberal state, the DFL has not elected a governor in 24 years. This is because on several occasions progressive third party candidates have siphoned off enough votes from the DFL candidates to cause the election of the Republican candidate. The pattern may be repeating itself this year, with Horner's support growing in the polls as Election Day nears.

The gubernatorial candidates have very different positions on how to erase the state's \$5.2 billion projected deficit, which in turn affects their positions on higher education funding.

- **Emmer** is proposing no new taxes, and tax cuts to businesses. That means deeper cuts to state spending. Emmer has proposed a \$412 million cut to the funding base higher education. This will inevitably lead to deep cuts to programs (and layoffs) and/or sharp increases in tuition to fill the funding gap.
- **Dayton** is proposing to increase income taxes on high income Minnesotans to make up a large part of the state budget deficit. This means that the cuts to state programs would not have to be as deep. Dayton does not propose any cuts to the higher education base budgets, and he supports a bonding bill to fund the higher education building projects that were vetoed by Governor Pawlenty last session.
- **Horner** is proposing expanding the sales tax to clothing and some services and lowering the sales tax rate. His plan would raise enough revenue to partially close the state budget gap, but there would still have to be significant cuts to state programs. However, Horner does not propose cutting higher education funding. He also supports a bonding bill to fund the bonding projects vetoed by Governor Pawlenty. In addition, he has talked about some sort of research funding for the state colleges and universities.

Aside from the budget issues, one of the IFO's top legislative priorities has been equal benefits for domestic partners. Since many employee benefits are based on marital status, the most comprehensive way to achieve equal benefits would be gender neutral marriage laws. Dayton and Horner support gender neutral marriage laws. Emmer opposes such laws and voted against equal domestic partner benefits as a legislator.

For more information on the higher education positions of the gubernatorial candidates see the article in [last month's IFO Update](#). You can also see individual video interviews with each of the gubernatorial candidates produced by MnSCU at the MnSCU [web page](#).

The DFL currently holds both the Minnesota House and Senate by substantial margins. With Tea Party movement energized by numerous primary victories, the Republicans in Minnesota are going into the elections with substantial momentum. Most observers expect big Republican gains in the legislature—possibly (but not likely) even regaining control.

### **When to Vote**

November 2nd, 2010. The polls open at 7:00 a. m. and close at 8:00 p.m.

### **Where to Vote**

If you don't know your voting poll, use the "Poll Finder" on the Secretary of State's web page <http://pollfinder.sos.state.mn.us/>. You simply type in your address and it will tell you where to vote.

### **Who May Vote**

You must be a U.S. citizen, at least 18 years of age, and a resident of Minnesota for at least 20 days to vote. You don't have to be pre-registered—you can register at the polls on Election Day. You will need ***only one*** of the following to verify your residence:

- Minnesota driver's license, learner's permit, identification card, or receipt for one, with your current address
- Tribal ID\*\*
- If the Minnesota license, Tribal ID or MN State ID has a former address, you may bring a recent utility bill\* to use with your license

- “Notice of Late Registration” postcard
- U.S. passport with utility bill\*
- U.S. military photo ID card with utility bill\*
- Prior registration listed on roster at former address in precinct
- Oath of a registered voter in precinct ("vouching")
- If you are a student, you can use...
  - Student ID, registration, or fee statement with your current address
  - Post Secondary Student photo ID with utility bill\*
  - Post Secondary Student ID if you are on a student housing list on file at the polling place
- Someone who is registered in the precinct where you live who will vouch for your residence

\*Note: The utility bill must have your name, current address, and be due within 30 days of the election. Utility bills may be for electric, gas, water, solid waste, sewer, telephone, cell phone or cable TV.

The funding we get for higher education next year depends on who you elect this fall—*please vote, and urge your students to vote!*

## INSURANCE OPEN ENROLLMENT BEGINS NOVEMBER 1ST

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

Open enrollment for the State Employee Group Insurance Program (SEGIP) for the 2011 calendar year will begin November 1, 2010. This year the open enrollment period will extend to November 30th. You are strongly encouraged to enroll early in the enrollment period, just in case you need to gather additional information, such as Social Security numbers of dependents. You will not be able to make changes after the November 30th deadline. Changes to coverages will be effective for the plan year which starts January 1, 2011.

During open enrollment, you may make changes to your health and long term disability (LTD) coverages. You make the changes online, at [www.state.mn.us/employee](http://www.state.mn.us/employee). You will need your employee ID and password to login. Your ID number will be on the address label of the SEGIP newsletter that will be mailed to you on October 18th—do not discard the newsletter until you have completed your desired enrollment changes.

If you want to participate in the flexible spending plan, called the Medical Dental Expense Account (MDEA), you must re-enroll every year (see below for changes to reimbursable items under the MDEA).

At the Minnesota Management and Budget website ([www.mmb.state.mn.us](http://www.mmb.state.mn.us)) you can find a wide range of information to assist you during open enrollment, including a dependent eligibility chart, links to carriers, a directory of clinics and their cost levels, and objective information on the quality and value of clinics in the plan. You are strongly encouraged to check the cost level of your clinic to see if there will be a change in its cost level in the coming year.

As in past years, participants can take the voluntary JourneyWell health assessment and receive a \$5 reduction in the office fee during the coming year for both themselves and their dependents.

There have been several important changes to the health coverages this year:

- **Dependent Coverage to Age 26.** As a result of the health care reform laws passed by Congress last March, the SEGIP plan must now cover dependents on health plans up to age 26. The definition of dependent has been broadened significantly to include biological, adopted (or placed for adoption), step and foster children. The dependent will not have to be a student or rely on his or her parent for principle financial support to be covered. Married dependents under the age of 26 who are not eligible for other employer provided insurance may also be covered. ***Coverage is not automatic—participants must enroll dependents under age 26 during the open enrollment period for them to be covered. For more information on this, call SEGIP at 651-355-0100.*** Dependents are not covered under the dental plan until age 26.

- **Additional \$125 HRA.** All employees and retirees covered under the SEGIP plan will get an additional \$125 Health Reimbursement Arrangement (HRA) allocation in 2011. For faculty, this \$125 HRA is in addition to the \$800 HRA that insurance eligible faculty receive each year under the IFO contract. Participants can use their “Benny Cards” or send in receipts to Eide Bailly for reimbursement. If you misplaced your Benny Card, two new cards can be obtained for \$10 (charged to your account) by contacting Eide Bailly.
- **Over-the-Counter (OTC) Drugs No Longer Covered.** Starting January 1, 2011, OTC drugs, with the exception of insulin, will no longer be reimbursable under the MDEA or HRA unless prescribed by a doctor. Prescription drugs and non-drug medical supplies (bandages, test strips, etc.) will still be eligible for reimbursement. If you want to buy OTC medications on a pre-tax basis using your HRA or MDEA funds, do so by December 31st. OTC drugs prescribed by a doctor will not be reimbursable using the Benny Card—participants will have to mail in receipts. Since MDEA is a “use-it-or-lose-it” account, participants who have been using the MDEA for OTC drugs should consider lowering their MDEA deductions for the coming years.
- **Health Insurance Rates Will Increase.** Health insurances rates will increase 6.7% next year. The employer pays 100% of the employee premium, so employees with single coverage will not see any increase in the amount they pay for health insurance. However, employees pay 15% of the dependent premium, and the amount paid by the employee will increase by 6.7%. The State Dental Plan rates will increase 2.8%, but the HealthPartners dental rates will decrease .5%.

Wring the most out of your healthcare plans.

- You can save money through lower deductibles, co pays, and out-of-pocket expenses by moving to a lower cost level clinic.
- You can also compare the quality and value of clinics by checking their MN HealthScores at [www.mnhealthscores.org](http://www.mnhealthscores.org).
- You can save money on prescriptions by using generic drugs.
- You can save \$5 on office visits for both you and your covered dependents by taking the JourneyWell health assessment during open enrollment and agree to be contacted by JourneyWell coach.
- Finally, you can save tax dollars by enrolling in the MDEA to pay for regularly occurring health care expenses on a pre-tax basis.

For more information, attend one of the open enrollment informational meetings near you. You can find a list of the meetings at the MMB web page at <http://www.doer.state.mn.us/meetings-oe>

## FIC ACCEPTING APPLICATIONS FOR FEMINIST ISSUES GRANT

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

The IFO Feminist Issues Committee (FIC) announces the 2011-2012 Feminist Issues Grant of up to \$3,000. The Grant is designed to promote research, projects, or creative works that contribute to the advancement of women in the IFO and Minnesota State Colleges and Universities. Past recipients’ projects include a survey on the tenure and promotion process, a lecture series on women’s health issues, and research on whether women in academics are affected professionally by their personal status.

The grant period extends from March 2011 to March 2012. The one-year \$3,000 grant is made possible by funding from the Inter Faculty Organization through the statewide Feminist Issues Committee (FIC). A final written report will be due at the 2012 Delegate Assembly.

To apply for the Grant, submit your proposal by [email](#) (in Word or PDF format) no later than February 1, 2011. The successful grant applicant will be notified by March 1, 2011. For more information, please see the [2011-2012](#)

[FI Grant Announcement and Outline on the IFO webpage](#), or contact your local campus [Feminist Issues Committee representative](#).

## BALANCE IN YOUR HRA ACCOUNT AS OF DECEMBER 31 DETERMINES WHETHER YOUR 2011 CONTRIBUTION WILL GO INTO YOUR HRA OR A HEALTH CARE SAVINGS PLAN

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

One of the benefits the IFO negotiates on behalf of faculty is an annual contribution of \$800 to a Health Reimbursement Arrangement (HRA) account for paying current medical expenses with pre-tax dollars. (For information on changes in reimbursable medical expenses, see [Russ Stanton's Health Reimbursement Arrangement \(HRA\) newsletter](#).) The balance that you have remaining in your HRA account as of December 31, 2010, will determine whether your new \$800 contribution will be deposited in your HRA account or in a Health Care Savings Plan.

The dollar amount that triggers the employer's new contribution for 2011 to be deposited into a Health Care Savings Plan instead of your HRA Account is \$700. Faculty who have a balance of less than \$700 in their existing HRA accounts as of December 31, 2010, will have the employer's 2011 contribution of \$800 added to their HRA account at the beginning of the 2011 calendar year.

**If you have \$700 or more in your HRA account as of December 31, 2010, the employer's contribution for 2011 will go into a Health Care Savings Plan instead of your HRA account.** You will still be able to use any monies remaining in your HRA account to pay for medical expenses incurred in 2011.

Money deposited in a tax-free Health Care Savings Plan is invested and is for your use on medical expenditures once you separate from employment.

## PROHIBITED/PERMITTED POLITICAL ACTIVITIES

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

As elections approach, political passions often run high. Inevitably, before each election I receive requests from members regarding allowable political activities on campus.

**In laypersons language, a faculty member may advocate for a political candidate or party so long as they:**

- **do not do so during class or office hours,**
- **do not use state property or supplies (including university e-mail) to raise money for or advocate the election of a candidate, and**
- **do not use their authority to coerce support for a candidate or political party.**

Minnesota Statutes 43A.32 (below) prohibits soliciting or receiving funds for political purposes during "hours of employment". Even the Attorney General's office, when I contacted them several years ago, recognized that it is difficult to determine what constitutes "hours of employment" for a faculty member. I would just use common sense and not solicit money during class or during posted office hours. In fact, I would not raise money from campus at all. Secondly, the statute prohibits using your official authority for political influence--I think everyone can appreciate the importance of this. While I would strongly encourage faculty to urge students to vote, I would strongly discourage faculty members from advocating partisan positions before a class.

### **43A.32 Political activities.**

*Subdivision 1. Prohibition. No employee shall, directly or indirectly, during hours of employment solicit or receive funds for political purposes, or use official authority or influence to compel an employee in the classified service to*

*apply for membership in or become a member of any political organization, to pay or promise to pay any assessment, subscription, or contribution or to take part in any political activity.*

Minnesota Statutes 43A.38 (below) prohibits the use of state supplies, equipment, or property for private interests. Exceptions are made for electronic communications (phone, e-mail) where the incremental cost to the state is insignificant. (IFO was behind passage of Subd. 4 (b) below so we could use e-mail for union business and to lobby legislators. However, I think it would be an inappropriate interpretation of the intent of the law to say it allows for political solicitations over the campus e-mail network).

***43A.38 Code of ethics for employees in the executive branch.***

***Subd. 4. Use of state property.*** (a) *An employee shall not use or allow the use of state time, supplies or state-owned or leased property and equipment for the employee's private interests or any other use not in the interest of the state, except as provided by law.*

(b) *An employee may use state time, property, or equipment to communicate electronically with other persons including, but not limited to, elected officials, the employer, or an exclusive bargaining representative under chapter 179A, provided this use, including the value of the time spent, results in no incremental cost to the state or results in an incremental cost that is so small as to make accounting for it unreasonable or administratively impracticable.*

M. S. 211B.09 again prohibits the use of official authority for political influence:

***211B.09 Prohibited public employee activities.***

*An employee or official of the state or of a political subdivision may not use official authority or influence to compel a person to apply for membership in or become a member of a political organization, to pay or promise to pay a political contribution, or to take part in political activity. A political subdivision may not impose or enforce additional limitations on the political activities of its employees.*

I hope this helps. Give me a call or an e-mail if you have questions—1-800-325-9644, extension #14, or [Stanton@ifo.org](mailto:Stanton@ifo.org).

## CANDIDATE SOUGHT FOR THE TRA BOARD OF TRUSTEES

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

There are two openings coming up on the Teachers Retirement Association Board of Trustees. The terms of Board members Mary Broderick and Richard Gendreau will expire on June 30, 2011. Gendreau is a retired IFO member from Bemidji State University. IFO members who are active (not retired) can vote for and run for these active member representative positions.

The TRA Board meets seven times per year and oversees the administration of the TRA Board.

Applications to run for the TRA Board must be received by the TRA Board by December 15, 2020. Application forms can be obtained from the TRA office at 651-296-2409, or 800-657-3669.

In February of 2011, TRA members will receive election information, and voting for the open trustee positions

ends March 31, 2011.

IFO would like to urge interested members to seek election to the TRA Board. It is important that we have higher education representation on the Board. For more information on the election, contact the TRA office, or contact Russ Stanton at the IFO office at 1-800-325-9644, extension #14.

## 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](#).