

Inter Faculty Organization

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NOTES FROM THE PRESIDENT - NEW CONNECTIONS FOR A NEW YEAR

by [Don Larsson](#), IFO President

By the time you read this column, many of you will be on your holiday break or just returning from it, so it seems appropriate to take stock of where things stand for the IFO, MnSCU and higher education in Minnesota at this time.

The Challenges Become Clearer

When I took office as IFO President on July 1, 2010, I knew the immense challenges that we would all be facing in the next few years but not too many details—we did not even know then who the nominees for Governor would be. Now we know a few more things:

- We know that the political situation in St. Paul has flipped. The Republicans have taken both houses of the Legislature from the Democrats, but Democrat Mark Dayton will succeed Republican Tim Pawlenty. We do not know how they will all work together to address the state's problems, but we know that the Legislature will probably ratify Governor Pawlenty's most recent appointments to the MnSCU Board of Trustees.
- We know that the projected deficit for the next two years has grown from \$5.8 billion to \$6.2 billion. Campuses had been planning for a "worst-case scenario" of cuts of 15% to their operating budgets, but if nothing changes the actual cuts could run from 16% to 20%.
- We know that the administrations at Bemidji, Moorhead and (most recently) Southwest have all declared that they might have to resort to retrenchment of tenure-track and tenured faculty.

In short, we know that 2011 looks even more challenging than it did six months ago, and we know more certainly than ever that the IFO cannot face these challenges alone. We will need to work with others in local and system administrations, in both political parties, in the other state bargaining units, and in our campus and local communities to find allies and solutions for these challenges.

Connecting for the Future

One of my goals as your President has been to affirm the IFO's ongoing connections and to establish new connections with administration, state government, students and other bargaining units. With the support of the local Faculty Associations; the IFO office staff (especially Pat Arseneault, Connie Howard, and Russ Stanton); Academic Affairs Coordinator Donna Brauer; and the many of you who serve on local and state-level committees, the IFO has been making its voice heard and its concerns known. On the state level, the IFO has been busy this year

- connecting with incoming legislators in both parties and with Governor-Elect Dayton
- connecting with our colleagues who teach in the two-year MnSCU colleges and are represented by the Minnesota State College Faculty (MSCF) union
- connecting with the leaders of the two student associations
- connecting with business and non-profit groups in Minnesota with strong interest in the MnSCU system and its graduates

All of these connections are tentative and tenuous, and they will need to be nurtured and monitored by all involved. As IFO faculty members, we will need to find the right balances between our own backgrounds and interests and the needs of the faculty as a whole under the contract. That is not an easy task, but it is essential. Before any other connections the IFO makes with others, IFO members must connect with each other. Become part of the connection—Talk to your Faculty Association leaders; volunteer for local, IFO and MnSCU committees; and **make your voices heard**.

Connecting at the Top: The Chancellor Search

As you know, the MnSCU Board of Trustees has been searching for a new system Chancellor to replace Dr. James McCormick, who will be retiring this summer. The Chancellor Search Advisory Committee (in which I participated) has reviewed applications, interviewed candidates, and sent recommended names for finalist candidates to the MnSCU Board of Trustees. Who the named finalists will be, and which will get named (probably by March) as incoming Chancellor are now in the Trustees' hands. I am restricted in what I can say about the search, except that I believe that the IFO can work with any of the recommended candidates. I will only hope that I am proved right in that belief.

Macro-Connections

If you've followed the higher education and economic news at all, you know that Minnesota's and MnSCU's problems are not at all unique. This year, the IFO is joining in nation-wide conversations on the rapid and radical changes and challenges taking place in higher education across the country. Early this Fall, Negotiator Jeff Umland attended a continental conference in Quebec on "contingent" (fixed-term and adjunct) faculty. In January, we will send representatives to a meeting in Los Angeles of faculty unions discussing a "National Plan for Higher Education." In April, we will also send representatives to Hunter College in New York City for the annual conference on "Moving the Academy forward through Collective Bargaining" hosted by the National Center for the Study of Collective Bargaining in Higher Education and the Professions. That same week in April, I will be in Chicago at the annual conference on accreditation held by the Higher Learning Commission, where I will host an open roundtable to discuss shared governance and collective bargaining. We know that we have a lot to learn from our colleagues around the nation, but we think we have some useful perspectives of our own to offer as well. It may be too soon to tell, but we may finally be seeing a movement toward bringing faculty voices into the nationwide discussions and debates on higher education. The IFO wants your voices to be heard in those discussions too.

Connecting to a New Year

The words "Happy Holidays" or "Happy New Year" sound dry and lifeless to me when I think of those of you who are now facing the loss of your jobs by May. I want you to know that I will continue to think of you over these next few weeks and on into the new year. More than ever, all of us need to work for each other's good. The IFO and I will continue to do what we can to preserve faculty positions and protect your rights and benefits. For the rest of us who may find ourselves challenged to change, to "do more with less," know that the IFO will also

continue to do its best to make sure that our voices are heard, our rights are protected, and our place at the table is assured. With that, I will wish you all a Hopeful New Year.

MARK DAYTON ELECTED GOVERNOR - INHERITS A HUGE BUDGET SHORTFALL

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

The good news for DFLer Mark Dayton was that on December 8th Republican Tom Emmer gracefully conceded defeat, clearing the way for Dayton to be certified as the winner of the Governor's race (by a margin of just 9080 votes, or 4/10 of 1%). Emmer's announcement averted a drawn out legal battle and the possibility that Governor Tim Pawlenty would continue in office until a successor was certified.

The bad news for Dayton is that he will inherit a projected state budget deficit of \$6.2 billion (an additional \$1.2 billion if inflation is included). Not only does he inherit a huge deficit, but the state's "rainy day" fund has been spent and billions of dollars worth of one-time federal stimulus funding runs out at the end of this biennium.

Adding to Dayton's challenges is the fact that for the first time in 38 years Republicans will control both the House and Senate. These new Republican majorities have already announced their strong opposition to Dayton's campaign proposal to raise taxes on individuals earning over \$130,000 and joint filers earning more than \$150,000, to at least partially solve the budget deficit. Without new tax revenue, the 16% budget shortfall will have to be made up through program cuts alone. This will make it impossible for Dayton to carry out another campaign proposal—to not cut either K-12 or higher education spending.

Since the Minnesota Constitution requires a balanced budget—the radically different methods of balancing the budget will have to be solved somehow. A prolonged, bloody battle over the budget is almost certain.

The budget battle, and whether or not taxes are raised, are of great consequence to MnSCU and IFO members. In a recent response to an Office of Management and Budget request of all agencies to estimate the effect of a 15% cut in their appropriation level, Chancellor McCormick wrote:

"If the system were asked to absorb an appropriation reduction of such severity, it is a probably that we would apply a combination of all or most of the following tools:

- Staff reductions of almost 1,000 full-time equivalents (FTEs), more than 15 percent of total staff FTE; or
- Faculty reductions of 880 FTE, almost 10 percent of total faculty FTE. The impact would be a reduction of 9,200 course sections; reduction of 166,500 credit registrations; and decrease in student full-year equivalent enrollment of more than 16,100; or
- If the budget reduction were resolved with tuition revenue alone, the result would be a cumulative increase of 12 percent from current levels. The average annual tuitions increase for a resident undergraduate full-time equivalent student in 2012-2013 would be approximately \$580 over current levels; or
- The equivalent of closing two large universities and five of the largest colleges, or closing at least ten of the smallest colleges within the system, which are principally located in greater Minnesota."

The Chancellors letter was written before the November forecast that showed the projected deficit had grown to 16%.

GOOD NEWS - HEALTH INSURANCE RATE INCREASE CANCELLED

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

Because of savings from cost containment programs, the 6.7% increase in health insurance rates scheduled to go into effect next year has been cancelled. The rates for 2011 will remain the same as the rates in 2010. For members with dependent coverage, this will mean the approximately \$105 increase in their dependent coverage

rates will not occur. Faculty with employee only coverage were not directly affected by the proposed rate increase because the employer pays 100% of the employee premium under the IFO contract.

In addition to the amounts saved by individuals in the state health plan, the state agencies, including MnSCU, will be saving about \$30 million in health care costs, which will help them in coping with budget cuts that are almost certain to come next year as Governor-Elect Dayton and the new legislature tries to balance the budget and eliminate the states \$6.2 billion projected deficit.

In addition to having no increase in health premiums next year, all participants in the state employee health insurance plan will receive a \$125 contribution to their Health Reimbursement Account (HRA) for 2011. For faculty covered by the IFO contract, this will be in addition to the \$800 HRA contribution that they receive under the IFO contract.

IFO ADOPTS GOALS FOR 2011 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

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

At its December meeting, the IFO Board adopted 35 goals and positions for the 2011 legislative session. The goals were developed by the IFO Government Relations Committee, with help from the Statewide Budget Review Committee and IFO's Equity Advocate, Pat Arseneault. The goals will guide the lobbying efforts of IFO during the upcoming session.

Because of the budget shortfall facing the state, many of this year's goals deal with ways to raise revenue and control spending. Also of high priority are goals to achieve equal benefits for domestic partners. Finally, in response to a growing movement nationally to attack public employee benefits, particularly defined benefit pension plans, the IFO adopted numerous goals to protect collectively bargained benefits and retirement plans.

IFO 2011 Legislative Goals and Positions

Bonding

1. Support re-passage of the MnSCU bonding projects that were vetoed last session.

Funding

2. Support state funding for MnSCU at the base level set by the 2010 higher education bill.
3. Support continuation of the separate line item for the Office of the Chancellor and Shared Services Division, to contain the growth of the MnSCU central office. If there are cuts in the appropriation to MnSCU, the line item appropriation for the Office of the Chancellor and Shared Services Division should be reduced by at least the same percentage as the appropriations distributed to the campuses to support instruction, with no charge backs to the campuses.
4. During this time of budget shortfalls, encourage the legislature to focus funding on the core mission of MnSCU, which is instruction, and oppose new initiatives and special funding.
5. Seek funding for enrollment increases at MnSCU that have occurred since the funding formula was repealed.
6. Advocate that the state budget shortfall be resolved through revenue increases first, then by cutbacks and accounting shifts.
7. Support expansion of casino gambling at places like the Minneapolis airport to raise revenue.
8. Support an increase in the income tax rates for individuals earning more than \$130,000 per year, and joint filers earning more than \$150,000 per year, to reduce the state budget shortfall and address the structural

deficiency in the state budget.

9. Support expansion of the taxes on alcohol and tobacco.
10. Support extension of the sales tax to non-governmental services.
11. Require customized training to be self supporting.
12. The IFO supports revenue increases to maintain the strong public services necessary to a high quality of life for all Minnesotans. We believe revenue should be raised based on ability to pay, and not add further to the burdens to low income and working families.
13. Require on-line education delivered to non-resident/non-reciprocity students to be at least fully funded by tuition. Take the position that expansion of on-line education should be driven by student demand, not by politically set targets.
14. Oppose legislative caps on tuition.
15. Support increases in financial aid to offset the tuition increases for low income students. Oppose raising the tuition recognition cap for financial aid purposes.

Retirement

16. Support allowing TRA buybacks to the beginning of the fiscal year for new faculty members."
17. Support raising the \$46,000 postretirement earnings limitation for participants in the Annuitant Employment Program to reflect inflation since the time the limit was set (or get rid of the dollar limitation in statute)."
18. Make TRA the default for new faculty members who have previous defined benefit service credit with one of the Minnesota public defined benefit pension plans. Maintain IRAP as the default for other new faculty".
19. Oppose legislative efforts to convert defined benefit plans into defined contribution plans.
20. Expand opportunities for employees in IRAP to voluntarily buy back into TRA, provided that such a buy back is at full actuarial cost so that it does not hurt the funding of the TRA system.

Collective Bargaining and Compensation

21. If IFO has settled its contract in time for consideration during the upcoming legislative session, support ratification of the contract.
22. Oppose any legislative efforts to limit sabbaticals or tenure.
23. Oppose any legislative pay freeze.
24. Oppose any legislative changes to collectively bargained agreements.
25. Oppose any changes to collective bargaining rights under PELRA
26. Oppose creation of new performance pay plans.

Human Rights and Equity

27. Support the right of children of undocumented immigrants to attend Minnesota public colleges and universities at in-state tuition rates, provided they attended a Minnesota school for at least two years and graduated from a Minnesota high school.

28. Oppose legislation that would seek to amend the Minnesota Constitution to prohibit the marriage of same sex couples and / or prohibit legal recognition of domestic partnerships.
29. Support legislation that would require the state of Minnesota to recognize and honor marriages of same sex couples legally performed and recognized in other states.
30. Support legislation that would allow same sex marriages to be performed in Minnesota.
31. Support legislation requiring the state to provide health insurance coverage for same and opposite sex domestic partners of state employees and their dependents.
32. Support legislation requiring the state to provide long term care coverage, pension and retirement benefits to employees and their same and opposite sex domestic partners and their dependents, consistent with coverage and benefits provided to employees and their spouses and dependents.

Other

33. Support a system of electing MnSCU Trustees that is similar to the method used to select U of M regents.
34. Oppose legislation related to credit transfer (such as common course numbering), and take the position that issues as complex as transfer policies should be handled internally, in a non-political atmosphere.
35. The IFO supports amending the Veteran's Preference Statute to extend the protections of the Veteran's Preference in cases of layoff or termination to K-12 teachers and faculty serving in the MnSCU and U of M systems.

Federal

36. Oppose raising the Social Security age of full retirement, or the age for Medicare eligibility. Support raising the cap on income subject to FICA contributions.

ACADEMIC AFFAIRS COORDINATOR REPORT

by [Donna Brauer](#), *IFO Academic Affairs Coordinator*

In September the Chancellor announced that 41 positions would be eliminated from his office by 7/1/11, resulting in a \$4.5 million reduction in operating costs. Most of these reductions have occurred in the IT, Academic & Student Affairs, and Finance divisions.

As a result priorities have changed and some "initiatives" scaled back.

The highest priority is the Students First initiative. Most resources are being directed toward completing this project before Chancellor retires. The initiative consists of four related, student-focused services:

1. *Single Search* (links to campus web sites that enable a potential student to find all programs related to a specific discipline or occupation offered throughout the system, e.g. chemistry, theater, social work, from the MnSCU portal);
2. *Single Registration* (links to campus registrars that enable a student to register for courses at multiple institutions);
3. *Single Payment* (allows students to pay tuition and fees electronically in one payment regardless of the number of institutions the student is "attending" each semester)
4. *Graduation Planner* (allows a student to develop a detailed plan of courses at one or more institutions to meet the requirements for a degree from a particular institution).

The original timeline for Students First to be fully implemented was July 2011. The IT division has already stated that the Single Payment module will not be ready by then.

Parts of the other modules are being tested: During the first week of November the “Course Equivalency Search” tool (part of Single Registration) became active on all campuses. This program allows a student to search for “equivalent courses” being offered during a given semester by other (than the student’s home campus) institutions; it is accessed through the e-services link on your registrar’s web site. The Graduation Planner is currently being pilot tested at Mankato. I have not heard any reports, favorable or unfavorable, about either the Equivalency Search tool or the Grad Planner.

The SMART Transfer Plan is a two year timeline for posting all course outlines on institutional web sites, evaluating equivalencies of courses across institutions, and coding this info into DARS. Mn Transfer Curriculum courses are to be uploaded first as the information about these courses is necessary for the Course Equivalency Search tool and the Graduation Planner to be useful. The major problem is that many courses have been approved without articulated learning outcomes and/or course descriptions are outdated. Revising, reviewing and approving such courses will require considerable faculty time.

In addition, intellectual property issues have arisen because some campuses have required a syllabus for course approval and the disposition of those syllabi is unknown. Syllabi that are in electronic form are especially vulnerable to violation of copyright law. (See MnSCU Policy 3.26).

In addition, if you are asked to develop or “redesign” a course and offered a stipend, an MOA is necessary. Please contact your [FA president](#) or IFO General Counsel, [Connie Howard](#), *before* you begin such a project.

Under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) all courses offered by an institution must be completely accessible to students. This requirement can be especially difficult to meet if a course is partially or totally on-line. Accessibility has become a major issue nationally because of recent lawsuits (Cal State, Arizona State, Penn State) under the ADA. Thus, faculty must be provided resources for making their courses accessible (e.g. closed captioning, text-to-audio). Next semester MnSCU will consider the most efficient ways to make such resources available to campuses and/or faculty.

MnSCU’s contract with D2L expires in summer 2012 necessitating an RFP for a new instructional management system (IMS). Proposals were submitted in September, however, the process of reviewing and evaluating them was “paused” due to the state’s economic situation. The Vice Chancellors are developing financial parameters within which the selection of the next IMS will be made. One of the factors being considered in setting the parameters is the “cost” of faculty time to learn a new system. A decision is not likely before spring.

LAST CHANCE TO BUY OVER-THE-COUNTER DRUGS ON A PRE-TAX BASIS

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

Starting January 1, 2011, faculty will no longer be able to buy Over-the-Counter (OTC) drugs and be reimbursed for them on a pre-tax basis through their Health Reimbursement Account (HRA) and/or their Medical Dental Expense Account (MDEA). If you want to purchase OTC drugs (aspirin, Nyquil, etc.) on a pre-tax basis you should buy the drugs before December 31st and submit the claims for reimbursement to Eide Bailley before February 28th.

Faculty will still be able to be reimbursed on a pre-tax basis for doctor prescribed medications, medical supplies (band aids, test strips, etc.), medical services, dental services, and eyewear.

CONTACT US

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