

Inter Faculty Organization

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NOTES FROM THE PRESIDENT

by [Roderick Henry](#), IFO President

IFO Contract Ratified by 93% of Membership

I wish to thank the IFO Negotiating Team for their hard work creating the tentative settlement proposal that was recently [ratified by our membership](#). The many hours of discussion and analysis as well as the many "frank but meaningful conversations" spent on negotiations may not be apparent when a proposal is a fairly simple one, but that was certainly the case here. I thank those in MnSCU who were receptive to and supportive of the proposal. I also thank the members who voted for ratification, but also the members who voted against - it isn't easy making a two-year economic commitment in such economically troubled times. Attending meetings on several of our campuses, I heard the praise, concerns and criticism and want all members to know that this organization is working for them. Having been a fixed-term, non-tenure track, probationary, and tenured faculty member, I want our members to know that one of our goals in reaching an early settlement was to try to prevent massive losses of faculty in those positions (as well as adjunct and community faculty). We are doing our part to help stabilize our institutions in difficult times and are leading efforts to fix our state's budget problems. We have received a lot of positive press (Google "IFO Salary Freeze") and have, in my opinion, generated a lot of goodwill by proposing and ratifying this contract.

Minnesota's Budget Situation

As I write this, many in the state are breathing a sigh of relief due to the fact that our state's budget shortfall has not gotten significantly worse. Note that I wrote "not gotten significantly worse" rather than "dramatically improved." The initial computation of the effects of federal economic stimulus legislation and current business conditions means that this state still has a gap of over four billion dollars to bridge, and that will mean cuts of one kind or another. Thus "not gotten worse" means that only five swords are pointed at us rather than seven. The last articles I've read that attempted to predict the end of this recession or depression, gave the end of this year as a best-case scenario for a bottom being reached,

which means continued layoffs and lost revenue for the state. Given the dimensions of the structural problem and the lack of any more quick-fix funds, a dramatic reduction in state government, increase in revenues (also known as taxes, fees, and tuition) will have to occur. It is March and, with luck, the story will be nearing conclusion in May.

Budget Cutting on the University Campuses

Every campus is involved in various budget-reduction or realignment processes. IFO central and local faculty associations and staff have been working to reduce the impact of what will still in all probability be a reduction on our institutions and our faculty in particular. As expected, retrenchment is being contemplated or is underway on several campuses as well as reductions in fixed-term, adjunct, and community faculty positions. There are indications that entire programs may be cut. Non-contractual reassigned time, overloads, extra duty days and other adjustments are also being considered. Some campuses appear to be more engaged than others, but I urge you to participate in the activities taking place on your campus.

In the course of budget-reduction discussions, a number of ideas have come up that basically would have IFO faculty giving up contractually-assigned duty days (a.k.a. the Governor's Salary Savings Initiative), dramatically increasing teaching workloads, teaching overloads beyond the contractual limits or changing assignments without departmental input. The quick answer to whether or not we should do these types of givebacks is "no." At this point, it is unclear whether doing those sorts of things would help resolve budgetary problems or simply allow decision makers to keep doing the same things that have gotten our system and our state into its current mess. The IFO has taken dramatic steps to help stabilize our campus budgets; it is time for other bargaining units, administrators, and the Minnesota Legislature and Governor to do their part. We have done our part, acting responsibly in tough times - and we expect everyone else in our system and our state to do the same.

What's Next?

Our Tentative Settlement now goes to the MnSCU Board of Trustees for approval before it goes to the Legislature for review. After review, it will be incorporated into legislation which must pass the Legislature and the Governor before it will be finalized.

THE BUDGET SHORTFALL REALLY \$6.4 BILLION/ FEDERAL STIMULUS MONEY HELPS

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

When the State of Minnesota released its budget forecast on March 3rd, there was some good news in the short term. Even though the state's revenue collections continue to free fall, the Governor's unallotments in December (which cost MnSCU institutions \$20 million) plus a huge influx in federal stimulus money, is going to leave the state \$236 million in the black at the end of this fiscal year (June 30, 2009). That means we dodged a second round of unallotments yet this year.

For the next biennium (FY 2010-11) state revenues are expected to plunge another \$1.166 billion below what was projected just last November, leaving the state with an approximately \$6.4 billion state revenue shortfall. However, thanks to a \$1.359 billion infusion of one-time federal stimulus money, and the carry forward from this year, the shortfall for next biennium is projected to be around \$4.6 billion. This is still a staggering shortfall—the largest in the state's history.

The really bad news from the budget forecast is in the longer term—in the FY 2012-13 biennium. Because the federal stimulus money is only “one-time” money, when it drops off at the end of next biennium it leaves a big budget gap in the following biennium. The budget shortfall projected for the 2012-13 biennium is projected to be \$5.1 billion. The state has a long-term structural budget shortfall that can only

be fixed by deeper cuts and/or revenue increases (taxes, tuition, and fees).

In the next week, the governor plans to release major changes to the education and health/human services sections of his budget. At the same time, the DFL controlled legislature will put forth specifics on its budget proposals. This is when the rubber hits the road — expect pain all around. Even if the state eliminated all state agencies besides higher education, they wouldn't save enough money to balance the budget. There will have to be further cuts in aid to local government, cuts to higher education, and even cuts to K-12 education (which makes up 40% of the general fund expenditures).

The Senate DFL released a broad outline of its budget proposals last week. It calls for a balance of budget cuts (a 7% cut to nearly every area of the budget) and tax increases of nearly \$2 billion targeted mainly at the wealthiest Minnesotans. The Senate plan includes cuts in aid to K-12 education to balance the budget. The “good” news in the DFL plan is that the cuts to higher education are “only” \$212 million, compared to \$312 million in the governor's budget plan.

The House DFL is expected to release its budget plan this week. House Speaker Margaret Kelliher has indicated that the cuts will be more targeted—not across the board.

Even though most legislators have been timid talking about it, there is now talk of raising taxes. There has been a proposal floated by Senator Ann Rest last week to raise the income tax on high income (\$250,000 or more) Minnesotans, and to extend the sales tax to clothing and some services in exchange for eliminating the corporate tax. Rep. Tom Rukavina is more blunt about the issue, saying “Anyone who thinks we can get out of this mess without raising taxes is just plain crazy.”

The budget battle is now on. The only thing we know for sure is there will be deep budget cuts—including higher education. How deep depends mainly on how much the governor and legislators are willing to raise revenue.

IFO PUSHING NUMEROUS BILLS AT THE LEGISLATURE

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

The IFO has been working with many legislators in recent weeks to introduce legislation to accomplish [IFO goals](#). Here are some of the measures we have drafted and arranged to be introduced:

- **HF 1219 (Rep. Phyllis Kahn)/SF 1153 (Sen. Sandra Pappas).** Provides that state employees that are in domestic partnerships be eligible for the same health care benefits as married state employees.
- **HF 1527 (Rep. Phyllis Kahn)/SF 1266 (Sen. Sandra Pappas).** Gives MnSCU the authority to offer targeted early separation incentives to MnSCU employees. The incentive may include cash, contributions to the post-retirement Health Care Savings Plan, or both.
- **HF 1528 (Rep. Phyllis Kahn)/SF 1267 (Sen. Mary Olson).** Allows MnSCU faculty the opportunity to switch from IRAP to TRA pension coverage upon reaching tenure.
- **HF 1115 (Rep. Kathy Brynaert)/SF 972 (Sen. Sharon Erickson Ropes).** Allows a waiver process to the 120 semester credit limitation for baccalaureate programs for emerging and innovative programs.
- **HF 1654 (Rep. Gene Pelowski)/SF 1465 (Sen. Kathy Sheran).** Amends the Minnesota Data Practices Act to allow faculty members to electronically store personal notes, and the notes will not be considered government data as long as they are password protected. It also eliminates the requirement that the notes be destroyed at the end of the academic year.

- **HF 1671 (Rep. Lyndon Carlson)/SF 1466 (Sen. David Tomassoni).** Requires the employer to deduct dues and fair share fees from both unions when a person is employed in two different bargaining units. Reduces the time that outside contractors can be employed by MnSCU from two consecutive quarters to one semester. Defines the year for determining whether a person teaches enough to be covered by the bargaining unit to include the entire year—including summer sessions.

SENATOR LANGSETH PUSHES BONDING BILL THAT WILL HELP MNSCU

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

Sen. Keith Langseth, DFL-Moorhead, is authoring an off-year bonding bill that will provide over \$90 million for the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities, including \$50 million in repair and replacement (HEAPR) funding, and the five MnSCU vetoed projects from 2008. One of those projects is a \$5.7 million smart classroom center at Metropolitan State University.

The bill has passed out of committee and will soon reach the Senate floor. In the House, a companion bill authored by Rep. Alice Hausman is not as far along, but it is also on a fast track. Legislators are pushing for early passage of the bonding bill to take advantage of federal stimulus money and create jobs as soon as possible. The bonding money will create jobs while also allowing MnSCU and the U of M to catch up on some much needed repairs and upgrades to higher education facilities.

A copy of the bonding bill can be found [here](#). Passage of a bonding bill for HEAPR projects was is one of IFO's goals for this session.

THE BENEFITS OF PARTNER BENEFITS

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

Employers everywhere recognize the benefit of offering good benefits to their employees. Extending employee benefits to domestic partners is not just a matter of fairness, it is proving to be a matter of staying competitive in an aggressive market. More and more, successful companies have come to realize that offering employee partner benefits provides an inexpensive recruitment opportunity to attract and retain superior employees.

According to the Human Rights Campaign's most recent figures, the majority of Fortune 500 companies provide domestic partner benefits to their employees. It is telling that the higher a company is ranked by *Fortune* magazine, the more likely it is to offer partner benefits. While 57% of the employers in the Fortune 500 largest U.S. publicly-traded businesses for the 2008 rankings provide domestic partner benefits to employees, the percentage of companies offering partner benefits dramatically increases to 83% of businesses who are ranked in the top 100 by *Fortune* magazine.

While the pay off to extending benefits to partners can be large, the cost associated with the extension of benefits appears to be negligible. According to a 2005 Hewitt Associates study cited by the Human Rights Campaign, 64% of employers who extended benefits to domestic partners experienced a total financial impact of less than 1 percent of total benefits cost.

The nation's top colleges and universities also understand the attraction of offering partner benefits. Fifty-seven percent of the 130 top colleges and universities as ranked by *U.S. News and World Report* magazine in August 2007, offer domestic partner benefits.

Closer to home, Minnesota employers are adding partner benefits as an option in ever increasing numbers. In 2000, ninety-some companies in Minnesota offered domestic partner benefits to employees. By August 2008, OutFront Minnesota and the Workplace Alliance indicate that over 290 Minnesota employers offer domestic partner benefits. The list of enlightened Minnesota employers includes seven private universities

(Augsburg College, Carleton College, Gustavus Adolphus College, Hamline University, Macalester College, St. Olaf College, William Mitchell College of Law) and the University of Minnesota.

In these lean economic times, it will likely be more difficult to maintain a competitive edge in recruitment and retention of the best faculty. It would seem prudent to take lessons from the nation's most successful employers and look to partner benefits as a marketing strategy to attract and retain a robust pool of qualified faculty. The IFO is helping to move in this direction by supporting pending legislative bills HF 1219 and SF 1153 which provide the same health care benefits to state employees in domestic partnerships as provided to married state employees.

IFO MULTICULTURAL ISSUES COMMITTEE TO HOST ANTI-RACISM WORKSHOP

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

On Friday, April 17, 2009, the IFO Multicultural Issues Committee (MIC) will sponsor a workshop on Understanding and Dismantling Racism at St. Cloud State University. 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 17 workshop in order to provide a broader opportunity for faculty to understand systemic racism and explore the implications of racism for individuals, institutions and the community, as well as an opportunity to learn how to initiate a process of systemic change and institutional transformation.

In working on solutions to systemic racism, the IFO needs to work from a common definition and understanding of racism. Racism is not just individual race prejudice, bias or bigotry. It is more than individual attitudes and actions. The "Understanding and Dismantling Racism" workshop will provide a framework for individuals to explore anti-racism and to enhance their capacity to participate in multicultural collaborations that combat systemic racism. Workshop activities provide a context for institutional accountability to oppressed communities and offer participants the opportunity to become allies in the struggle for racial justice.

Facilitators for the April 17 event are Debra Leigh, an organizer for the SCSU campus and James Addington, a training and organizational development consultant with the Minnesota Collaborative Anti-Racism Initiative.

The Understanding and Dismantling Racism Workshop is from 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. in the Atwood Student Center at St. Cloud State University. There is no fee for attending the workshop and lunch will be provided for participants. There are spaces available for faculty from each campus to attend, in addition to the members of the IFO Board. Please contact your [Multicultural Issues Committee](#) representative if you are interested in attending the workshop. For more details, you may contact [Pat Arseneault](#).

NELLIE STONE JOHNSON SCHOLARSHIP DINNER

The Nellie Stone Johnson Scholarship Program has offered financial support for more than 20 years to minority students who have a union connection. The program has provided well over \$150,000 in scholarships to more than 100 students. On Thursday, March 26, 2009, the 22nd Annual Nellie Stone Johnson Scholarship Dinner will be held at the Prom Center in Oakdale, Minnesota. The evening honors the students who have received scholarships for the 2008-2009 academic year. A social hour and silent auction will kick-off the evening at 5:30 p.m. The dinner and program will follow at 6:30 p.m. The Inter Faculty Organization has purchased a table of eight tickets for this dinner and has seven tickets still available. If you would like to attend this event, please contact Cindy Finch via email (finch@ifo.org) or phone (651-227-8442 x10 or 800-325-9644 x10).

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 address is 165 Western Avenue North, Suite 8, Saint Paul, MN 55102, or you can reach us by phone at 800/325-9644 or 651/227-8442. You can send us an email by clicking [HERE](#).