

Inter Faculty Organization

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

Faculty Update Newsletter

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NOTES FROM THE PRESIDENT

by [Roderick Henry](#), IFO President

Winter has come and gone, and spring, as the poet said, was not too far behind.

Each winter in Minnesota has its own dynamic, its own rules, whether it be the slow-but- steady descent into the subzero dominion or the rocket ride to frostbite. Each spring begins the same way, with the grungy melted and re-melted snow crust finally vanishing back into the air from which it came, revealing as it does so that which it has kept hidden from our eyes, tires, and snow machine tracks. Lost coins, newly-minted potholes, the remnants of deer and the debris of parties are all scattered along the road.

It's been a long winter with some interesting spring revelations.

Never, ever, in my wildest dreams did I think that I would set some sort of speed record - but the IFO has done just that.

At one of the numerous meetings Russ Stanton, our lobbyist, and I sat in over at the Legislature, the attendees were told that our tentative agreement was the first ever to be concluded before the end of the Legislative sessions. In fact, our agreement was settled so early that it is currently making its way through the Legislature in a bill that contains left-over settlements from the last round of state employee contract negotiations.

It isn't over yet - the bill with the contracts in it has to pass through the Legislature and make it across Governor's desk...and the session isn't over yet. Health care bargaining is still continuing and we may not know the outcome until June.

There are several wild cards in the mix.

The international economic crisis is still not resolved - the stock market gyrates wildly and the economic tea-leaves are still settling. It is unclear what the impact of Federal and State actions will be...legislation

will have a lot to do with it. If the economy stays in a depressed state, expect more problems at the state and federal level - problems which will surely have an impact on our universities. We also do not know the final enrollment picture - have many students switched to more affordable universities, have displaced workers gone back to universities or community colleges? Time will tell.

And, as I write this, the Red River is preparing to crest again. Let me take this opportunity to thank all of those who have helped in the crises - administrators, faculty, support staff, maintenance workers...the list is a long one of those who have gone above and beyond to accommodate the students and families affected by this situation. [Below is information on how you can help provide relief.](#)

So, here's to spring in Minnesota...the sweeper machine passes by, the volunteer groups pick up the trash, nature takes care of most of the rest. Thousands of orange cones signal construction, which, this year, may provide more jobs to people and businesses whose incomes will hopefully help us out of our current economic troubles, so that we can spend more time dealing with education and less time trying to wring more money out the legislature.

P.S. Thanks to the Bemidji Men's Hockey Team for one heck of a run!

END OF SESSION IN SIGHT UPDATE ON LEGISLATIVE GOALS

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

The legislature has begun its shutdown process, and is scheduled to adjourn on May 18th. All bills had to be out of policy committees by April 7th, and all of the major spending bills have to be out of the finance divisions by the end of this week. The action will then move to the House and Senate floor where they will process the bills and send them to House/Senate conference committees to iron-out differences between the House and Senate versions.

The following is where we currently stand on IFO issues:

The Budget

The State of Minnesota is facing a \$6.4 billion budget shortfall. Last January, to address the shortfall, Governor Pawlenty proposed a \$146 million base cut to the MnSCU system. However, last month the federal government passed a major economic stimulus bill that had a strong focus on protecting higher education. Since the passage of the federal legislation, Governor Pawlenty revised his budget recommendations. Under his revised plan, the Governor proposed deeper base cuts to MnSCU, but proposed backfilling the cuts to MnSCU with federal stimulus money.

- **The Governor's Proposal**

MnSCU's current base appropriation is around \$662 million for FY2009. The Governor's revised plan would increase the MnSCU appropriation to \$665 million in FY2010 (\$65 million of this is one-time federal stimulus money), and \$665 million in FY2011 (again, this includes \$65 million in one-time federal stimulus money). The problem with the Governor's plan is in the following two years when the federal money runs out—the MnSCU appropriation base would then drop to just \$608 million each year.

- **The Senate Bill**

The Senate Higher Education Bill passed out of Finance Committee this morning. Under the Senate Plan, the MnSCU appropriation for FY2010 would be \$675.4 million (including \$60 million in one-time stimulus money). The appropriation for FY2011 would be \$644 million

(with no one-time federal money). The MnSCU base would then drop down to \$627.8 million each year in FY2012 and 2013.

- **The House Bill**

The House Higher Education Committee passed its bill out of committee today. The bill would appropriate \$665.8 million each year in FY2010 and FY2011 for MnSCU. This would include \$65.2 million each year in federal stimulus money. This is the same funding level proposed by the governor. Where the House bill differs greatly from the governor's proposal is in the funding base for 2012 and 2013; the governor proposes \$608 million for each of those years, whereas the House proposes \$654.5 million for each year.

The House bill clamps down on MnSCU central office funding and prioritizes campus funding for instruction. It creates a separate line item for central office funding and then shrinks that amount. It says allocations to the campuses cannot be less than this biennium. It cuts funding for central office technology and eliminates funding for central office initiatives such as awards for excellence, salary competitiveness (IPSEL grants), technology initiatives outside the allocation model, and Board and Chancellor's initiatives.

The bill also changes the process for selecting the MnSCU Board of Trustees. Instead of having the Governor appoint trustees, the bill would have the legislature elect the trustees in the same way they elect the U of M Regents.

IFO Contract Ratification

On March 18th the MnSCU Trustees approved the IFO contract for FY 2010-11.

On March 23rd, the Legislative Subcommittee on Employee Relations met and approved the IFO contract. The only criticisms of the IFO contract came from Sen. Gen Olson (R-Minnetrisa) and Rep. Steve Drazkowski (R-Wabasha). Drazkowski, whose district borders Winona, criticized what he called extremely generous benefits in the IFO contract—pointing specifically to the University Professor language in the contract. In the end, however, Drazkowski was the only vote against the contract.

On March 25th, the Senate Government Operations Committee heard the contract ratification bill that ratifies several state labor contracts and personnel plans left over from last biennium. The IFO contract for the 2010-11 biennium was amended into the bill and the bill passed without opposition.

On April 1st the House Government Operations Committee heard the House version of the contract ratification bill, and added the IFO contract to the bill. Rep. Steve Gottwalt, (R-St. Cloud) spoke against the ratification of the IFO contract, but the contract passed easily on a voice vote, with what looked like only a handful of Republican legislators voting against the bill.

On April 7th the House State Department Division of the Finance Committee passed the contract ratification bill on what appeared to be a party line vote.

On April 15th the Senate State Department Division passed the contract ratification bill. The vote was again along party lines, but the controversy was mainly over some rather large increases for the pension fund directors—not the IFO contract.

The bills should reach the House and Senate floors next week. I'm sure there will be some Republican opposition, but I expect easy passage in the House and Senate. From all indications, the Governor is supportive of everything in the bill.

Bonding Bill Passes House/Senate—In Conference Committee

On March 16th the Senate passed a special off-year bonding bill authored by Senator Keith Langseth (DFL-Glyndon). The MnSCU system receives \$90.28 million under the bill; \$50 million in repair and replacement projects, and \$40 million for the five vetoed projects from 2008. One of those projects is a

\$5.7 million appropriation for the smart classroom center at Metropolitan State University.

Rep. Alice Hausman is carrying the bonding bill in the House. The bill passed the House last week. The House bill only has \$30 million for MnSCU repair and replacement projects, and only \$4.98 million for the Metropolitan State smart classroom center.

The bill is now in a joint House/Senate conference committee to resolve differences.

Normally bonding bills are not passed in odd numbered years. However, legislators are eager to get building projects going as soon as possible to stimulate the economy and create jobs.

60/120 Credit Limitation Bill Heard in the Senate

On March 19th the Senate Higher Education Committee heard a bill that Sen. Sharon Erickson Ropes (DFL-Winona) introduced at the IFO's request. The bill would allow an additional waiver process to the MnSCU policy limiting the maximum number of credits required to receive a baccalaureate degree to 120 credits. The additional waiver process would be for new emerging and innovative programs, and programs of special merit or need. A companion bill has been introduced in the House by Rep. Kathy Brynaert (DFL-Mankato).

The Senate Higher Education Bill that was released last week went even further—it completely repealed the law that requires the MnSCU policy that limits the maximum number of credits required to receive either an associate or baccalaureate degree.

The House Higher Education Bill includes language granting a waiver process for new emerging and innovative programs.

IRAP to TRA Transfer

The Legislative Commission on Pensions and Retirement passed the Omnibus Pension Bill on March 31st. Included in the bill is legislation introduced at our request by Rep. Phyllis Kahn (DFL-Minneapolis) and Sen. Mary Olson (DFL-Bemidji) that would allow faculty members in IRAP a second opportunity to switch to TRA coverage when they reach tenured status. They would have up to one year following tenure to buy back TRA coverage for their years under IRAP, and the buy back would be at full actuarial cost.

MnSCU Early Retirement

Also included in the Omnibus Pension Bill is an IFO proposal, authored by Rep. Kahn and Sen. Sandra Pappas, that allows MnSCU to design and offer early separation incentives to MnSCU employees. The incentives can vary by employee categories, but could include cash incentives, contributions to the Health Care Savings Plan, or combinations of the two. The president of a college or university can designate the departments, programs or positions eligible for the incentive. Acceptance of the incentive must be voluntary on the part of an employee.

TRA Funding/Benefits Improvement

A third item of interest that is included in the Omnibus Pension Bill is a TRA pension reform proposal that would increase TRA both employer and employee contributions from the current 5.5% of salary to 7.5% of salary. The increases would start in 2011 and be phased in over four years. The purpose of the increased contributions is to shore up the funding of TRA, which has been severely battered by slides in investment values, and also to improve benefits for employees hired after 1989. The benefit improvements would be to lower the age of full retirement from age 66 to age 65 (the same as pre-1989 hires); to allow full retirement at age 62 with 30 years of service; and to increase the annual service credit for all TRA members from 1.9% to 2.1% for future years of service. The IFO Board supports the TRA reform proposals.

MnSCU Audit

One of IFO's legislative goals is to seek an outside audit of the MnSCU central office. We have communicated our concerns to legislators and there have been many questions raised by legislators about

the central office expansion. In response to legislative concerns, Chancellor McCormick sent a letter to the Legislative Audit Committee and asked them to do an audit. IFO President Rod Henry also sent a letter to the Audit Commission, supporting the MnSCU audit and suggesting specific items to be audited. The Audit Commission is now in the process of winnowing down the number of audits suggested to them and will soon announce a list of audit projects for the coming year. So far, the MnSCU audit has been near the top of the list of potential audit projects.

Domestic Partner Benefits

IFO has arranged for the introduction of legislation to extend health care benefits to both same and opposite sex domestic partners on the same basis as the benefits are offered to married couples. In the House, the bill, HF 1219, is authored by Rep. Phyllis Kahn and 34 other co-authors. The bill was heard in the House Health Care and Human Services Committee two weeks ago and passed by a near unanimous voice vote. I testified on behalf of the IFO. There was also testimony from an MSCF representative and a MAPE member. The bill was passed today by the State Departments Division of Finance and rolled into the Omnibus State Departments Appropriations Bill that finances state government agencies.

Two weeks ago, the Senate Government Operations Committee heard the domestic partner health benefits bill, authored by Senator Sandra Pappas. Pat Arseneault, IFO Director of Grievances and Equity, testified for the IFO. The Minnesota State College Faculty and a representative of MAPE also testified for the bill. The Minnesota Family Council testified against the bill. The bill passed on a voice vote—it looked like a 7-5 vote. The bill is now in the Senate State Government Finance Committee. This looks like our toughest hurdle yet—it looks like the votes line up 4-4, and we need a majority to pass.

MNSCU UNIVERSITIES BRACE FOR BUDGET CUTS

by [Connie Howard](#), IFO General Counsel

As the current budget crisis has unfolded over the past six months, the Inter Faculty Organization (IFO) represented faculty who have been bracing for the worst as university administrations have begun planning to deal with unprecedented budget cuts. Early settlement of the IFO's 2009 – 2011 contract with Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MnSCU) and the prospect of millions of dollars of temporary federal stimulus money have improved prospects. However, all of the MnSCU universities are scrambling to take steps to cut costs to deal with anticipated budget short falls.

So far only the administration at Minnesota State University Moorhead (MSU Moorhead) has announced that it anticipates retrenching probationary and tenured faculty. To encourage voluntary separations to reduce the need for lay offs, MSU Moorhead has entered into a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the IFO extending the deadline for applying for unreduced Early Separation Incentive (ESI) and Early Notice of Retirement (ENR) benefits. The Faculty Associations at Bemidji State University (BSU) and Winona State University (WSU) are negotiating with their universities to offer similar incentives.

Minnesota State University Moorhead

MSU Moorhead has been hit by the triple blows of declining enrollments, state budget crisis and devastating flooding. According to MSU Moorhead FA President Cindy Phillips, the university is facing up to a \$9.2 million decline in revenue for the 2009 – 2010 fiscal year. Of that figure, \$4.2 million is a structural deficit resulting from the university's failure to revise staffing levels as enrollments have declined. In addition, MSU Moorhead faces a \$4 to \$5 million shortfall as a result of the state budget crisis.

MSU Moorhead President Edna Szymanski first announced that the university was contemplating retrenchment – defined by the IFO/MnSCU contract as lay offs of probationary or tenured faculty – at the first university meet and confer in 2009. Since that announcement, the university has been evaluating and implementing a variety of cost cutting steps.

The administration has frozen searches on 11 vacant faculty positions and has made non-faculty staffing

cuts. As noted above, the IFO and the university negotiated an MOA to encourage voluntary separations by extending the deadlines for faculty to apply for ESI and ENR benefits. The deadline for faculty to give notice of their intent to take advantage of the incentives is April 30, 2009. The number of faculty who choose to leave to get the benefits offered by the MOA will impact how many faculty will be retrenched.

Dr. Phillips says she anticipates that final decisions regarding faculty lay offs at MSU Moorhead will be announced at a meet and confer scheduled for May 7, 2009. Meanwhile, President Szymanski has asked deans to prepare recommendations for 5%, 10% and 15% budget cut scenarios. In addition, faculty have been working jointly with the administration to prioritize academic programs. Input from faculty and other interested parties will be evaluated by the Vice President for Academic Affairs and the University Budget Committee. However, the President will make the final decisions regarding budget cuts.

St. Cloud State University

St. Cloud State University (SCSU) is bracing for a revenue shortfall of between \$5 and \$11 million for the 2009 – 2010 fiscal year. In preparation for a worst case scenario, President Earl Potter has asked each of his vice presidents to identify budget cuts equal to 7.5% (\$11 million) of their budgets. However, President Potter has suggested that actual cuts are more likely to total between \$5 and \$6 million. The university does **not** plan to reduce its budget for adjunct faculty or for extra duty days. A number of cost cutting steps are being implemented that will affect faculty directly, including:

- Freezing searches to fill 74 of 125 faculty positions currently vacant. Only 51 out of 125 requested searches are proceeding -- 35 for probationary and 16 for fixed term positions.
- Eliminating 33 FTE of non-contractual reassigned time assignments. Faculty who lose reassigned time for other purposes will be assigned to teach additional classes to help backfill the 74 vacant positions, leaving over 40 positions unfilled.
- Covering some of the over 40 vacant faculty positions by increasing average class sizes.

According to SCSU Faculty Association President John Palmer, the overwhelming majority of the budget reductions on the SCSU campus will be borne by faculty. Dr. Palmer says he anticipates “no retrenchment or ESI, just more work for the same pay.”

Minnesota State University Mankato

As of mid-March, Minnesota State University Mankato (MSU Mankato) was projecting a worst case budget deficit for the next biennium of \$8.83 million. According to MSU Mankato Faculty Association President Don Larsson, all colleges have been asked to plan for budget cuts of up to 10%, but have been told that when cuts are made they will be targeted rather than made across-the-board.

Twenty-two (22) staff layoffs have been announced and a number of staff vacancies are going unfilled. MSU Mankato President Richard Davenport has announced significant administrative reorganizations. The Division of Student Affairs is being eliminated, along with the positions of Vice President for Student Affairs and two Assistant VP positions, among others. Faculty, students and staff have put forward about a dozen reorganization models for consideration. Dr. Larsson will be on a leadership group that will consider these models and make a recommendation by the summer. The Dean of Extended Learning has stepped down, and oversight of that office—which includes extended campus, the new satellite campus at 7700 France Avenue in Edina, and components of online learning—will be the responsibility of the Vice President for Strategic Partnerships Bob Hoffman. Several staff positions in the College of Extended Learning are among the recent cuts.

Following the settlement of the IFO/MnSCU collective bargaining agreement, President Davenport retracted plans to cut \$900,000 earmarked to fund graduate assistants. However, Dr. Larsson reports that adjunct and fixed term vacancies are being cut in many departments and many probationary vacancies are being left unfilled or are being staffed temporarily through fixed term searches. No programs have been

slated for program closures, but the FA anticipates that next year we will see some announcements department reorganizations and/or program cuts.

Winona State University

WSU anticipates a \$4.2 million shortfall over the next academic year. According to WSU Faculty Association President Bruce Svingen, the administration has announced that it does not anticipate laying off any probationary or tenured faculty. However, WSU does intend to save between \$770,000 and \$1 million during the 2009 – 2010 year by eliminating some faculty and staff positions and leaving others vacant temporarily. WSU cost cutting plans include:

- Eliminating one (1) faculty position in the Education Department.
- Leaving vacant one (1) faculty position in Foreign Languages.
- Cutting 10.6 FTE of non-contractual reassigned time.
- Limiting the number of sections of multi-section courses to maximize the seat count per section.

WSU is exploring the possibility of entering into an MOA to extend the deadline for applying for ESI and ENR benefits for faculty in designated departments.

Dr. Svingen reports that after an initial attempt to persuade WSU faculty to take voluntary furloughs, the administration has backed off that idea. Instead, faculty are being encouraged to contribute to a voluntary fund. However, Dr. Svingen noted, the university has offered no guarantee that any money contributed will be used to save jobs, only that it will go towards deficit reduction.

Southwest Minnesota State University

According to Southwest Minnesota State University (SMSU) Faculty Association President Jan Loft, thus far the administration on her campus has avoided uttering the “R” word (Retrenchment). However, the administration has proposed drastic steps to address the projected \$2.6 million deficit for the 2009 – 2010 year. Those measures affecting faculty directly include:

- Leaving vacant two (2) new faculty positions that had been approved, but whose funding was eliminated by the 2008 – 2009 unallotment.
- Not renewing four (4) fixed term/adjunct positions.
- Not renewing three (3) assistant coach positions.
- Significantly reducing non-contractual reassigned time and extra duty days, in most cases by 50%.

In addition, the administration plans to make significant cuts involving staff outside the IFO bargaining unit, including not filling 21 staff vacancies, 21 lay-offs or position eliminations, and 2 reductions in position time. Dr. Lofts says, “Our administration is to the point where they say they are truly sorry. They hate this too, but no one has come up with a way to reduce the budget without hurting people.” More information will be forthcoming after a meeting scheduled the afternoon of April 15.

Bemidji State University

Bemidji State University (BSU) anticipates \$2 million deficits in each of the next two years. BSU President Jon Quistgaard has told faculty that he anticipates \$1 million of the shortfall for the 2009 – 2010 year will come from the budget administered by the BSU Vice President for Academic Affairs. Most IFO faculty salaries are paid from that budget. According to BSU Faculty Association President Christopher Brown, the administration has been decidedly short on details as to how the budget cuts will be accomplished. Mr. Brown reports that BSU has postponed making budget decisions for next year in hopes that federal stimulus funds will be available to offset the worst of the budget crisis.

Mr. Brown says that so far the administration has frozen searches for seven (7) probationary positions. In addition, faculty have been told to expect that non-contractual reassigned time will be cut, except for reassigned time dedicated to four (4) key areas (i.e. Higher Learning Commission accrediting efforts, Liberal Education curriculum, the Center for Professional Development and Assessment) In addition, the BSU FA is negotiating with the administration to extend the deadline for faculty to apply for unreduced ESI and ENR benefits to encourage voluntary departures.

Metropolitan State University

Metropolitan State University's (MSU) budget reserves and expanding enrollment have insulated faculty at the university from the worst of the financial woes plaguing the other MnSCU universities. Continued enrollment growth and a possible small tuition increase will be part of budget planning for 2010 that is still in process with an all university budget meeting scheduled for April 21.

MSU, MOORHEAD FLOOD UPDATE HOW YOU CAN HELP

by [Cindy Phillips](#), *Faculty Association President Minnesota State University, Moorhead*

In Moorhead, a popular t-shirt reads "United We Sand Fargo Moorhead 2009."

As most of you know we have already had an all-time record crest (at least of records kept by white folks) this year and are waiting for crest #2 due this weekend. We were told that #2 was to be even higher which pretty much took the breath away. Current projections are now lower but still significant...an amount we would have been worried about in any other year. Rain and the duration of the high water are our main threats right now.

At MSU Moorhead, we were closed for the two weeks of school after spring break. The Faculty Association worked closely with our new campus President to restore five (5) class days to the semester and still have graduation as scheduled. The campus has had no water damage as such. However the city sewer system was compromised and that is what finally forced us to empty the dorms. The campus has served as sand bag central, providing housing and meals for emergency workers and the city evacuation call center.

Most of the western half of Moorhead was evacuated, including many faculty who had to leave their homes. In addition, we have many faculty who live in evacuated areas of Fargo or in inundated rural areas. Some have been able to stay dry, but others have been flooded. The anticipated river crest may endanger these same folks again and some others as there is tremendous cross country water movement outside of the river channels.

The Faculty Association has established a fund within the MSU Moorhead Foundation to help faculty who have incurred loss. Donations may be made out to *MSU Moorhead Faculty Flood Fund* and sent to the Faculty Association at Box 37, MSU Moorhead, Moorhead, MN 56563.

To hear and see more, I recommend the wonderful video history of these days at:

<http://www.youtube.com/user/leehoedl>

BENNY CARD IS POPULAR BUT THERE ARE PROBLEMS

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

Following several complaints from faculty members regarding the "Benny Card" for paying for health care expenses from the Health Reimbursement Arrangement (HRA) and the voluntary Medical Dental Expense Account (MDEA), I sent out a brief letter to the campuses asking faculty members how they liked the Benny Card and if they were having any problems with it. Within a week I received 173 responses from

five (5) campuses. Since then I have received many more.

Of the initial 173 responses, 72.5% liked the Benny Card—in fact most of the responses were very positive about how easy it is to use.

However, a significant minority of faculty members, 27.5%, had concerns or negative opinions about the card because after they used it, they received a demand from Eide Bailly (the manager of the HRA and MDEA programs) to produce a receipt to verify the purchase was for legitimate items. Often times the faculty member did not keep the receipt, and even if they had a receipt it was more bother and expense finding the receipt and sending it in than if they used the old system of saving up their receipts and sending them in all at once.

There was also a number of problems that the card was not accepted by certain stores.

In addition, a few faculty members did not want the card because they thought it was a credit card and using it would affect their credit.

I brought these and other faculty concerns to the State Health Care Coalition—a coalition of state employee unions that negotiates state health insurance benefits. The Coalition set up a committee that met with Eide Bailly and state officials to discuss the problems.

Eide Bailly said they are aware of the problems with the Benny Card and are working to correct them. The biggest problem seems to be that some pharmacies have not set up an automated system for electronically verifying the purchase is for a legitimate purpose—and this triggers a follow-up request for a receipt if anything deviates from the norm. This problem should be reduced significantly in the future because, starting July 1, 2009, all pharmacies will have to have the automated verification system software in order to accept the Benny Card.

Some stores did not set up all their cash registers to properly read the cards or had not properly trained employees on how to process claims using the card. Eide Bailly is working to correct these problems.

Even after July 1st, people using the Benny Card to pay for eyewear are likely to get a follow-up request for a receipt. This is because some of the small stores and providers have not purchased the automated verification software.

The most important advice I can give people is to always keep your receipts. This is especially true if you use the card for eyewear—you will probably have to send it in. Also, hang on to your card even if you have used up your account—the card is good for five (5) years and can be used when there are deposits into your account in the future.

If you don't like the Benny Card, you don't have to use it—you can simply save up your receipts and send them in for reimbursement the way you have in the past. You can use both systems if you want. **If you want to check your balances, go to: www.Mybenny.com** . You should find an itemized record of your payments from your account, including payments via both the Benny Card and by mail.

The Benny Card is not a credit card, it is a debit card, and using it will not affect your credit. **Your dependents on your policy can use your Benny Card,** even if it has your name on the front, as long as they sign the back of the card. If you need additional cards, call Eide Bailly at the number below and order them—they cost \$10 for two additional cards.

If you have questions or run into problems using your Benny Card, call Eide Bailly directly at 1-800-300-1672. You can also find information at the Eide Bailly web page at: www.eidebaillybenefits.com

My final advice is to be patient. The Benny Card system is a huge nationwide network that was developed very quickly. It has a lot of potential, but it still has a lot of glitches. If you are having

problems we would like to know about them, and let Eide Bailly know—we would like to make this system work well for our members.

IFO 990 POLICIES UPDATE

by [Connie Howard](#), IFO General Counsel

On April 3, 2009, in response to new tax reporting regulations, the IFO Board of Directors took steps to increase transparency and ensure the integrity of union governance by adopting a [conflict of interest policy](#) and a [whistle blower policy](#), and by strengthening the IFO's operating procedures regarding [oversight of local FA financial affairs](#).

Under the new conflict of interest policy, beginning this fall, individuals holding designated positions of authority within the IFO and local Faculty Associations will be required to file annual conflict of interest disclosure statements, and to update their disclosures if any additional conflicts arise. The reporting requirements will allow the IFO to identify potential conflicts of interest and to ensure that officers and employees in key positions do not take part in union decision making in cases where their personal interests may impair their independence or loyalty to the union.

The Board also adopted a whistle blower policy to provide a mechanism for reporting and investigating suspected misuse of IFO or FA assets while protecting whistle blowers from retaliation. Under the policy, reports of suspected improprieties may be made to the IFO President, Vice President, Treasurer or Controller or to any FA president. The policy permits anonymous written reports. However, particularly in the case of anonymous reports, whistle blowers should provide as much information as possible to facilitate investigation of suspected wrong doing.

Finally, the IFO Board strengthened oversight over local Faculty Associations by requiring increased monitoring and reporting by the IFO Controller to the IFO President and Executive Committee concerning FA financial affairs. In addition, the IFO Operating Procedures were amended to require periodic review of FA constitutions to make sure there are no conflicts between such constitutions and the IFO Constitution, the IFO Operating Procedures and the IFO/MnSCU and the IFO/IFOSA collective bargaining agreements.

CONTACT US

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