

Inter Faculty Organization

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

Faculty Update Newsletter

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NOTES FROM THE PRESIDENT

by [Nancy Black](#), IFO President

Dear Colleagues:

This is an extremely busy time of year for the IFO.

On February 27th and 28th members of the IFO Executive Committee, Government Relations Committee and Academic Affairs Committee participated in the annual IFO Lobby Days at the Capitol. Faculty members met with the leadership of the House and Senate, key members of the higher education and finance committees, and campus area legislators. These meetings were very well attended by legislators, and faculty effectively advocated IFO legislative goals.

On February 28th Governor Pawlenty announced that the state has a \$935 million budget shortfall. A week later he presented a plan to balance the budget. As he did the last time the state had budget problems, the Governor again targeted the higher education sector to bear the brunt of the budget cuts. He proposed a \$26.6 million (about 4%) permanent cut to the MnSCU system. We are fighting vigorously to make sure the cuts are not as large as the Governor proposed. We are in a coalition with students and other MnSCU faculty unions. If there are cuts to the system, we are advocating that the cuts be absorbed at the central office—not the campuses.

In early March, Representative Bob Eastlund proposed a bill mandating a common course numbering system within MnSCU. The bill was heard three days after it was introduced. We had to scramble to build opposition to the bill. At the moment, it appears the bill is bottled up—but we can't be sure until the higher education bills are out of committee. This bill would be an administrative nightmare—I can't imagine how

MnSCU could handle the mammoth task of determining the equivalency of over 49,000 courses offered in the system. My thanks to faculty members, particularly at Mankato, Bemidji, and Metro, who mounted a rapid response letter-writing campaign to members of the House Higher Education and Workforce Development Committee. Representative Kathy Brynaert told the committee she heard from half the faculty at Mankato. Campus area legislators, such as Representative Frank Moe, Representative Kathy Brynaert, Representative Kim Norton, Representative Andy Welti, and Representative Larry Haws fought vigorously to kill this unnecessary and damaging legislation.

On March 15th the Legislative Subcommittee on Employee Relations heard and recommended approval of the IFO Bargaining Agreement for 2007-2009. They also approved the MnSCU administrators' plan. On March 17th, the House Finance Committee amended the IFO contract ratification into a large contract ratification bill covering all state employees. The contract ratification bill was then sent to the full House for passage.

On March 19th the MnSCU Board of Trustees met and unanimously approved the IFO contract for 2007-2009. Shortly thereafter the House of Representatives took up the contract ratification bill and passed it by a 128-1 vote. The bill will be taken up in the Senate next week, after the legislators return from Easter break, and then sent to the Governor for his signature. Passage of the contract ratification bill will bring to a conclusion the hard work of many, many faculty and staff over the last two years.

Next week the IFO Board will meet, followed by the IFO Delegate Assembly. At the Delegate Assembly the delegates will adopt an IFO budget for the next two years and pass resolutions which will be used to guide the organization in future negotiations and lobbying at the legislature.

On April 8th elections will be held for a new IFO president. So far, Professor Rod Henry of Bemidji State University is running unopposed. [See the article below](#). During the election for IFO president, the faculty will also be voting on some amendments to the IFO Constitution. Click [here](#) to read or download a copy of the constitution along with the amendments being proposed by the Constitution Committee.

I hope to see many of you at the Delegate Assembly next week!

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE - BIG DECISIONS IN THE NEAR FUTURE

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

The legislature adjourned today for Easter break—they will be back next Tuesday. Today was the day that all policy bills had to be out of the committee of origin. By the end of next week all committees are supposed to have passed the major finance bills. Here is where things stand on the major issues we are tracking:

IFO Contract Ratification Moving Ahead

The biggest issue for most members is the ratification of the IFO contract. Last Friday the Legislative Subcommittee on Employee Relations recommended approval of the IFO contract. On Monday, the IFO contract was amended into a general contract ratification bill that includes 13 public employee contracts and compensation plans, and the bill was sent to the House floor. On March 19th the MnSCU Board of Trustees approved the contract. Within an hour of the Trustees vote, the House of Representatives voted to approve the contract ratification bill by a vote of 128-1. The contract ratification bill is now in the Senate Finance Committee. The latest plan is to hold it there pending the outcome of the vote by the membership on the Minnesota State College Faculty contract. If that vote passes, the Legislative Subcommittee on Employee Relations will vote on it the next day, and it will be included in the Senate bill. The bill will then be sent to the Senate floor as soon as possible for final passage, and finally it will go to the governor for his signature. So far there has been almost no resistance to the contract, and legislators are rushing to get the bill through as fast as possible so the employee contracts don't become entangled in the ugly debate over budget cutting which is sure to occur in the weeks ahead. Once the contract ratification bill is signed by the

governor, faculty members can start receiving their pay increases and back pay.

For a comparison of the settlements of state bargaining units, click [here](#).

Budget Balancing—Higher Education Targeted Again

The February 28th state budget forecast showed the state with a projected budget shortfall of \$935 million by the end of this biennium (June 30, 2009). The forecast also showed a budget shortfall of about one billion dollars for the next biennium—two billion dollars if a conservative inflation increase is taken into account.

Two weeks ago Governor Pawlenty put forth his budget balancing plan. He called for spending cuts of \$341 million this biennium and \$534 million next biennium; using \$250 million of the state's \$650 million rainy day fund; and closing some corporate tax loopholes—which raises about \$157 million in new revenue. He also called for \$62 million on new spending initiatives and cutting some taxes by \$88 million this biennium and \$221 million next biennium. Most of the proposed tax cut is from a 1/8 percent cut in the sales tax, which widens the budget shortfall by \$77 million this biennium and \$178 million next biennium.

The worst news is that the Governor again targets higher education for a disproportionately large budget cut. He proposed a \$54 million cut to higher education this biennium and a \$108 million base cut to higher education for the next biennium. Even though higher education makes up only 9.1% of total state spending, the cuts to higher education make up 16% of total cuts this biennium and 20% of the cuts proposed for next biennium. For MnSCU, the governor proposed a permanent \$26.6 million per year (about 4%) budget cut.

The MnSCU Board of Trustees reacted to the Governor's proposal by delaying the adoption of the FY 2009 MnSCU budget until after the legislature is scheduled to adjourn on May 19th. This means the tuition buy-downs they were planning for next fiscal year are now on hold, pending what happens to the MnSCU budget.

The legislature is not likely to go along with Governor Pawlenty's proposed cuts to higher education. Next week they will pass budget bills that reveal their budget strategy. Expect the legislature to balance the budget by placing a greater emphasis on cutting special tax breaks for corporations and by going after administrative costs. Still it is hard to see how the legislature can avoid at least some program cuts.

The IFO opposes cutting the sales tax, supports closing corporate loopholes, and advocates that any cuts that are made be spread more equitably across all segments of the state budget. IFO is advocating that any cuts to the MnSCU system be specifically directed toward the central office administration, and by cutting back on some of their new technology initiatives. IFO supports holding campus level budgets harmless. This year, MnSCU increased central office technology expenditures by 115%--but appropriations to campuses via the allocation formula increased only 3.5%.

Bonding Bill Near Completion

Both the House and Senate have passed bonding bills for state buildings and infrastructure. Governor Pawlenty recommended a \$128 million bonding bill for MnSCU projects. The House passed a bill that includes \$281 million for MnSCU, and the Senate passed a bill that provides \$271 million. For a link to a project-by-project comparison of the House/Senate/Governor positions, click [here](#).

The bonding bills are now stalled in conference committee, where there are three-way negotiations occurring between the House, Senate and Governor's Office. They are not far apart. The main sticking point is that because of the budget shortfall, the Governor wants to cap the total bonding bill at \$825 million—legislators would like to go about \$100 million above that. In a contest like this the Governor has

the upper hand—he can line-item veto any project or veto the whole bill.

Early in the session Governor Pawlenty had proposed using \$416 million of the bonding bill to pay for roads or bridges. However, the legislature overrode the Governor's veto of the \$6.6 billion transportation funding bill, which included a gas tax and some sales tax increases. Passage of that bill meant that the \$416 million in the bonding bill for transportation projects could be used for other projects—such as higher education projects. That is why the House and Senate bills were able to fund many more higher education projects than what the governor had already proposed.

The bonding bill should be completed any day now.

ROD HENRY FOR IFO PRESIDENT 2008-2010

Dear Colleagues,

My name is Rod Henry, Business Administration Department at Bemidji State University, and I am running for Inter Faculty Organization President. I am the only candidate who was put forward for the office of statewide president for the 2008-2010 term, and I am seeking your vote as well as your support. I hope to be your President during the next two years, years that promise to be critical ones for higher education.



I wish that I could say that the problems of the recent past are behind us, and that our profession and institutions do not face a number of challenges or threats to be able to provide the highest quality education to students, but I can't. As state university faculty in Minnesota we know that it is often a struggle to work effectively and live well.

The fact is that our state is in yet another fiscal crisis caused by the adoption of a set of beliefs about funding public institutions and the purpose of a university education. These are ideas that seem to have run out of steam nationally, but are still causing turmoil locally. Many in our state, including our governor, feel that the solution to this crisis is a short-term reduction in MnSCU's budget at the same time that MnSCU feels the need to skim millions off the top for trendy and vaguely planned technology initiatives.

This creates a situation in which universities are forced to juggle, neglect or eliminate faculty positions so as to avoid or blunt major financial problems. Our local administrations may be put in the role of lobbying against or for the delay of pay increases that will make us nationally competitive once again. We see the strains caused by tuition increases on our students as they are forced to work longer hours and are less able to study. Changes in funding allocations to our universities, combined with the declining state share of the cost of higher education have put pressure on institutions and individuals to produce and emphasize programs that appear to produce more immediate profits.

As an IFO representative of the State Health Coalition, I know structural problems in our health care system, combined with an aging workforce, continue to raise the cost of this key benefit for those who are not denied it altogether for ideological reasons. Increasing costs lead to stopgap measures such as our new pharmacy benefits management program and the reduction of treatment options. Retirement planning has become more complex as the potential losses caused by missteps or miscalculations have increased.

We are still dealing with the effects of our merger into MnSCU years ago especially in terms of academic programs and policies. It should be apparent by now that MnSCU's primary focus is tilted towards the two-year schools. A number of the members of the MnSCU Board of Trustees seem to be unaware of the differences between college and university faculty or the value – and not just in the monetary sense of the word – that we bring to our students, our disciplines, and this state. MnSCU central office initiatives and procedures dealing with things such as course transfer, technology, the ability of campuses to have more individualized work environments, and whatever is trendy have made our efforts more difficult and

inefficient. The shining example is a newly-hired MnSCU consultant – one of an apparent army of MnSCU consultants – is being paid over \$40,000 largely to administer a \$30,000 merit pay award.

These are just some of the problems, challenges, or opportunities (call them what you will) that we face. These are the same issues that many of the past IFO Presidents have faced and that I would like to continue to address.

I have worked with many of you or you have seen my presentations as Chief Negotiator on topics like compensation and teaching workload reductions. Many of you may also recall my role, years ago, as the IFO co-chair of the first Salary Equity Committee in 1992. In the course of those statewide projects as well as my work with the Bemidji State University Faculty Association as President, Grievance Officer, and Treasurer, I have worked with my colleagues to find the best solutions to very difficult situations. I have had to make or been part of making tough decisions that have affected faculty and their families on an individual, university, and statewide level.

What I have learned in the process is that the best results arise when our faculty are working together to deal with the challenges and opportunities we face; that when we act as a Union, many good things can happen. Recent improvements in our system's funding and our contract settlements came about not through some spontaneous recognition by those in charge that there were needed changes, but instead through the hard work of faculty, faculty associations, IFO committees, IFO staff, and IFO leaders. Remember that united we bargain, divided we beg. These are gains that we will have to work together to retain and improve upon as we continue to face a changing environment.

After reviewing my biography and meeting me as I travel around the state or attend the upcoming Delegate Assembly, I hope that you will vote for me on April 8. I look forward to serving you.

Sincerely,

[Roderick Henry](#)

Professor, Business Administration
Bemidji State University

IFO SEEKING ONE PART-TIME ACADEMIC AFFAIRS COORDINATOR

*REASSIGNED TIME OR COMPENSATION FOR THOSE ON LEAVE AVAILABLE
TRAVEL EXPENSES REIMBURSED*

Last March the IFO Board of Directors revised the Academic Affairs Coordinator's position. At this time we are seeking one faculty member to coordinate academic affairs on a part-time basis for the coming academic year (fall 2008 through spring 2010). Please see the description below for complete information.

Please contact your [Faculty Association President](#) or [Nancy Black](#), IFO president, for further information. **Send letters of interest to Donna Blake ([mailto:blake@ifo.org?subject=AAC Applicant](mailto:blake@ifo.org?subject=AAC%20Applicant))**. Review of applications begins April 21, 2008; position is open until filled. The Executive Committee will recommend selections at the April Board Meeting or request an extension for an e-mail vote.

Position Title: *Academic Affairs Coordinator*

Term of Position:

The position shall end on the last duty day of the 2009-10 academic year (two-year term). A summer stipend may be offered for the summer of 2008 and 2009.

Major Responsibilities:

1. Convene and co-chair meetings of the IFO Academic Affairs Committee (AAC). Keep the AAC informed about various MnSCU initiatives. Seek input from the AAC on IFO positions on academic issues. Work with the Government Relations Committee to advance legislative goals related to academic issues.
2. Under the direction of the President, serve as the IFO representative with respect to academic matters within MnSCU. Attend and report on IFO and MnSCU meetings dealing with academic matters. The two coordinators shall establish a master calendar of meetings and propose coverage.
3. Keep the President, Executive Committee, Board of Directors, Negotiating Team, and membership informed about academic matters involving the campuses, MnSCU and other state and national organizations. The coordinators shall meet with and give reports to the President, IFO Board of Directors, and Executive Committee on an established basis. Make recommendations to all of the above as appropriate. Shall attend statewide meet and confers.
4. Oversee Academic Affairs office and files at the IFO office. Includes responsibility for:
 - keeping records about and communication with IFO members of MnSCU committees to assure they are attending meetings and informed of IFO perspectives.
 - directing and providing information to IFO Website Coordinator on all committees including meeting agendas and notes for posting on the IFO website.
 - assuring records for all committees are organized and maintained at the IFO office.
5. The Academic Affairs Coordinators shall meet with the IFO President who will determine how the responsibilities will be shared between the two coordinators.

Compensation:

Academic Affairs Coordinators will be reassigned twelve (12) credits per year from their home institution. If on leave from home institution, the AAC will be compensated at regular duty day rate times 60 duty days. (By law may have to be paid as wages – withholding as required.) In addition, possible compensation of \$1,000 for the summer (for serving after July 1). Reimbursement of travel expenses as per IFO policy. No additional benefits.

Expertise:

Academic Affairs Coordinators should have experience/expertise in at least one of the following areas: technology; P-16 education issues; and, academic policies.

Knowledge of or willingness to learn the IFO MnSCU Contract is required.

Seeking Letters of Interest Indicating:

- interest in position;
- union experience;
- expertise relevant to position; and,
- whether reassigned time or duty day compensation is preferred.

ELECTION ANNOUNCEMENT TUESDAY, APRIL 8TH

The election for IFO President and the vote for amendments to the [IFO Constitution](#) will take place on your campus on Tuesday, April 8th. Contact your [faculty association](#) for more details.

GUEST EDITORIAL: THE DONNER PARTY REDUX

by [Darrell Downs](#), Ph.D, Winona State University

When the state's economy is healthy, it makes sense for the state to explore innovative technologies in higher education. But as we all know, some technologies are conveniences that we can't always afford. When the economy is bad—like today—it's wiser to aim resources on the essentials. If the judgment of the leaders of the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MnSCU) is cloudy on that point, it must be suffering from “techno-fever.” Like the Donner Party's hastily planned rush to California, it looks like MnSCU Central is headed for disaster. The difference between the Donner Party and MnSCU is that the latter can change directions before it's too late.

The state's budget deficit is real, and state agencies will have to make adjustments. In better times, just last year, MnSCU received a 12 percent increase in its legislative appropriation. To the credit of the legislature, it made a serious effort to mitigate the disastrous effect of ten years of campus underfunding, ten years of double-digit tuition increases, and over ten years of growth in the central bureaucracy of MnSCU. Little did the students, faculty, campus staff, and even some legislators know that MnSCU would retain nearly half of this increase (\$62.8 million) and fence it for technology spending. The campuses actually might benefit directly from a small share of this money, but approximately \$50 million was simply added to the so-called “enterprise technology” biennial budget which effectively doubled the current technology budget entirely controlled by the higher education bureaucracy in St. Paul.

What is “enterprise technology” you ask? It is promoted as an investment in technology and staff to provide an efficient, stable, and reliable response to the changing face of higher education. Cynics might simply refer to it as a bureaucratic cushion created by the central office to buffer itself from financial shortfalls in state funding. On the MnSCU website, there are impenetrably obtuse PowerPoint presentations on the subject, yet they continually beg the question—what is enterprise technology again? Or more pointedly, what was so wrong (or what was so right) with the technology last year that justified a doubling of technology spending today? I'll admit I'm no technophile, but how can we in good conscience ask our students to pay a penny more in tuition or even consider campus cutbacks while MnSCU bureaucracy is conducting technology experiments?

The solution is simple: send the instructional technology funds slated for MnSCU central to the campuses with no strings attached. The legislature did not appropriate money to MnSCU with technology strings attached, and there is no logical reason that MnSCU central bureaucracy or the MnSCU Board of Trustees should be allowed to trump the intent of the legislature, students, faculty, campus staff, and taxpayers in general. Campuses might apply some of these funds toward technology while others will have other priorities, but one thing is clear: the money will be aimed to the campuses where the system's students are enrolled and engaged in learning. As we face a budget crisis in Minnesota today, this plan seems the only logical alternative.

Unfortunately, this logic might not prevail. Rest assured, MnSCU central administration will insist that “enterprise technology” is a necessity, a matter of inalienable infrastructure that only Luddites would question. Baloney! Drag out your finest china and sharpen your teeth because the Donner Party is about to be replayed on the campuses. MnSCU central will have to be reminded that now is the time to change directions. Meanwhile, the campuses would be well advised to appear strong—there is already someone gnawing on your ankles.

*Darrell Downs, Ph.D.
Professor & Chairperson
Department of Political Science and Public Administration
Winona State University*

2008 DELEGATE ASSEMBLY REMINDER

by [Cindy Finch](#), IFO Membership Coordinator & Administrative Assistant

The IFO Delegate Assembly will meet on March 28-29, 2008 in Roseville at the [Radisson hotel](#). As the

supreme governing body of the Inter Faculty Organization, the [206 delegates](#) will set IFO policies, negotiations strategies, dues and budgets for the succeeding two fiscal years as well as deliberate over resolutions dealing with legislative goals. Delegates attending the assembly are contractually released from duty for Friday, March 28. **Some campuses are still in need of delegates!** Advise your Faculty Association President if you wish to become a delegate, by submitting this [registration form](#). The tentative agenda can be found on the registration form.

Any faculty member may propose a [new resolution](#) for consideration at the Delegate Assembly, provided it is signed by the proposer and a seconder, each of whom must be an IFO member. Such resolutions are to be submitted to your campus [Faculty Association](#) (electronic format is *greatly* appreciated). *Please check with your local [Faculty Association](#) for their resolution submission deadline.* Resolutions not submitted through this process may be introduced from the floor at the Delegate Assembly, but only with a majority of delegates voting to consider it and it will require a two-thirds majority to pass. Continuing Resolutions are available for viewing on our [website](#) (this large PDF file may take several minutes to load on your computer).

Please contact your [Faculty Association President](#) or Cindy Finch if you have questions at finch@ifo.org or 800/325-9644 or 651/227-8442 x10.

NELLIE STONE JOHNSON SCHOLARSHIP DINNER

On Thursday, March 27, 2008 the Nellie Stone Johnson Steering Committee will host a fundraising dinner at the Prom Center in Oakdale, Minnesota. The IFO purchased one table at the event and we have eight tickets available. If you or someone you know is interested in attending this event on behalf of the IFO, please contact [Donna Blake](#) as soon as possible.

COLLEGE BOARD SEEKING PROFESSORS TO DEVELOP CLEP EXAMS

The College Board Higher Education Services Director, Janet Swandol, is seeking professors from Minnesota who might be willing to serve on test development committees for their American Literature and business exams (Principles of Management, Marketing, Business Law, Financial Accounting, and Information Systems and Computer Applications). If you are a faculty member in one of these disciplines, please send your letter of interest along with your qualifications to: Janet F. Swandol, Associate Director CLEP, Higher Education Services, The College Board, 1545 Raymond Diehl Road, Suite 250, Tallahassee, FL 32308, phone 850-521-4919, fax 850-521-4921.

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](#).