

# 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

Dear Colleagues:

#### **Campus Visits**

To date this fall I have visited six of the seven state university campuses and met with faculty, new and old, to talk about the upcoming year. I also met with many in your local administrations so that I may be better able to assist your local faculty associations should the need arise. The common start-up date resulted in many hours of driving, but the rewards of meeting with you made the effort worthwhile. We will soon be having our first IFO Board of Directors' meeting - one of six scheduled this year. For a listing of your campus representatives, click [HERE](#). It will be a pleasure to work with your representatives.

#### **Campus Training Assistance**

We held Campus Assistance Training for your local representatives on September 13 and 14. Our staff put in many hours to produce the sessions that generated a lot of discussion and interest. Topics ranged from recent contract changes to explanations of laws and procedures such as data privacy and complaint procedures. This will hopefully help local Faculty Association officers be as effective as possible as they deal with the ever-changing contract and concerns of our faculty and their publics. Thanks again to Connie, Pat, Tiffany, Donna, and Cindy for making this a success.

#### **Statewide Meet and Confer**

We held our first Statewide Meet and Confer with MnSCU on September the 12th. We discussed a number of issues including system-wide planning and the new Fleet Safety rules. Your feedback on the Fleet Safety proposals has helped us work with MnSCU to attempt to modify what was initially an extremely broad and potentially harmful policy, and we intend to continue to work on this issue. Faculty members have to carefully examine this policy and make sure that they will not run afoul of it, a situation that could be a very unpleasant one. The IFO reminds faculty that not complying with Board policies can result in a number of consequences including dismissal - it is best to take a preventive approach.

## Health Insurance News

The IFO has continued to meet with representatives of the State of Minnesota regarding health and insurance benefits. We received the usual mix of good and bad news. The good news was that Governor Pawlenty and the state Department of Finance and Employee Relations stated that we MAY be receiving up to \$250 in the form of an additional HRA contribution, to be given in the form of a debit card that will replace the old system of applying for HRA benefits. The important thing to note is that this is not confirmed yet, and details have to be worked out. Your representatives want to ensure that bargaining units that already have HRA benefits will not be penalized and that this will not have an adverse impact on how we might use our flexible spending accounts. The bad news is that this amount came from a surplus that was claimed to be the result of the new system of co-pays and pharmaceuticals resulting in lower claims...which could mean that, in tough economic times, people might be foregoing or delaying needed healthcare, the end result of which could be less-healthy employees and greater future expenses. Other good news was that the amount of increase in our premiums is estimated at 3.5% for the coming year... followed by the bad news of the usual last-minute drama of various healthcare networks being in or out of the system or changing their level. I believe that as mergers and consolidations continue in the healthcare field these negotiations will become more difficult.

## MnSCU Budget Request to the Legislature

The IFO also made suggestions to MnSCU regarding its budget proposal to its Board of Trustees and, ultimately, the state legislature. Although the process was different this year than the last time such a request was made, many of our recommendations, such as adjustments for inflation and additional funding above inflation to improve the salary competitiveness of state university faculty, made it into the Chancellor's budget recommendations. In addition to continuing progress in faculty salaries, we have continued to support many student tuition initiatives and have attempted to ensure that the central administrative offices will not be taking scarce resources away from the campuses. Click [HERE](#) for a copy of the Chancellor's recommendations to the Board. The next big test is whether the Board of Trustees will adopt the Chancellor's recommendations.

## Center for Teaching and Learning

I have also discussed some programs offered by the Center for Teaching and Learning that may be of interest to faculty. I encourage faculty to further explore CTL programs such as Discipline and Program Workshops, the ITeach conference, and STEM instructional development grants. More information on these can be found at <http://www.ctl.mnscu.edu/programs/dw/>, [http://www.ctl.mnscu.edu/facdev/user\\_event-list.php?eventtype=conference](http://www.ctl.mnscu.edu/facdev/user_event-list.php?eventtype=conference), and <http://stem.project.mnscu.edu/>.

## Important Notice: Deadline for Retirement Benefits and Phased Retirement Applications

October 15th is the deadline for giving your university notice of intent to retire at the end of this academic year. You must give notice in order to receive the final year two-step increase and the early separation incentive in the contract. Also, October 15th is the deadline for submitting a request to participate in either the phased retirement program or the annuitant employment program starting next fall. Information on your retirement benefits, as well as for letters for giving notice or applying for phased retirement, can be found on the [IFO web page](#).

In addition, during September and early October, Russ Stanton is putting on workshops for faculty members who are contemplating retirement within the next five years. He will also cover many statutory and contractual changes related to retirement that occurred over the last year. He will also meet in half-hour increments with individual faculty members to discuss their particular retirement concerns.

The workshops will cover contractual and statutory provisions relating to retirement including:

- **Final year two-step increase**
- **Early separation incentive**
- **Severance pay**

- **Retiree healthcare and the postretirement tax-free healthcare savings plan**
- **Career steps**
- **TRA: Annuitization options, acceleration options, postretirement cost of living adjustments**
- **Phased retirement and the Annuitant Employment Program**
- **Tax sheltering options, including the new Roth TSA**
- **Healthcare Reimbursement Arrangements (HRAs) and how they relate to retirement**

At the workshop Russ will distribute retirement preparation checklists, information on notification dates, form letters for giving retirement notification and applying for benefits, and a list of phone numbers, addresses, and internet locations of retirement planning resources.

The retirement workshops are free of charge. The IFO does not sell or endorse any products, or receive any fees or commissions related to any product. The purpose of these workshops is to help members maximize their retirement benefits.

The following is a list of dates that Russ Stanton will be on each campus. Click [HERE](#) to contact your local faculty association office for specific times and places, or to schedule an individual ½ hour meeting with Russ.

Bemidji—September 23 & 24

Mankato—September 2, 3, 4, 18 & 19

Metropolitan—September 8 & 15

Moorhead—September 10 & 11

St. Cloud—September 9 & 22 and October 1 & 2

Southwest—September 29 & 30

Winona/Rochester—September 16 & 17

### **We Need Your Participation!**

Finally, your Faculty Association presidents will be asking for representatives on [Joint IFO MnSCU committees](#) as well as [IFO Standing Committees and local committees](#) dealing with the new nine-month appointments language and others that need your input and support. If you expect your union to stand up for your views, please be a part of that effort and volunteer. We are only as strong as you make us.

## **IMPORTANT NOTICE MEMBERSHIP DUES AND FAIR SHARE FEES**

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

On the September 12, 2008, pay date, almost all full-time faculty were scheduled to begin membership dues and fair share fees deductions. Due to a software malfunction at the Minnesota Department of Finance and Employee Relations (formerly DOER), our deductions were not taken. To be fair, we should emphasize that this was not a MnSCU mistake. Rather than taking a double deduction to catch up, we will be extending the last deduction by one pay period. For almost all full-time faculty, deductions will begin on the September 26, 2008, pay date and end on the April 24, 2009, pay date. For almost all adjunct and community faculty teaching during the fall semester, please note that deductions are scheduled to begin on the October 10, 2008, pay date. Part-time faculty deductions are scheduled based on the length of the teaching assignment.

Also, you should see a change in the way your dues or fair share fees deductions are reported on your pay stub. As we understand it, if you are a member of the union, your dues withholding will read "Labor Union." If you are *not* a member of the union with fair share fees being withdrawn, your withholding will read "Union Fr Shr." We still encounter faculty who think because money is being withheld that they must be members. That isn't true - you must fill out a [membership application](#) to become a member of the union.

If you have any questions, please feel free to either contact your local [Faculty Association President](#) or [Cindy Finch](#), IFO Membership Coordinator.

## 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](#).