

Inter Faculty Organization

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NOTES FROM THE PRESIDENT

by [Nancy J. Black](#), IFO President

Dear Colleagues:

No good deed goes unpunished.

Last week, the Office of the Chancellor (OIC) at the Minnesota State College and Universities (MnSCU) took a giant step backward in meeting the healthcare needs of the citizens in the state of Minnesota.

The Inter Faculty Organization and the Minnesota State College Faculty that represent faculty at the 25 community and technical colleges have received letters from MnSCU's Labor Relations Department informing them that they will not be eligible for tuition waivers to enroll in the recently developed Doctorate in Nursing Practice or in any other proposed applied doctorate program offered within MnSCU. *State University Faculty are stunned that the tuition reimbursement benefit, which was negotiated for and is guaranteed by contract, is being denied.* The IFO has filed a grievance to protect faculty rights.

In 2005, state universities were granted the ability to offer applied doctoral programs. MnSCU assured legislators that they could and would develop high-quality programs and that they could do it without any additional appropriation. State university faculty rose to this challenge, and have been working diligently over the past two years to develop new applied doctoral programs in critical need areas such as nursing, as well as in counseling and higher education.

In particular, the Doctorate in Nursing Practice (DNP) was developed by state university faculty to address concerns expressed by the governor and legislators over the severe shortage in highly trained clinical nurses in Minnesota. Little did we imagine that the Chancellor intended to take funds from the very faculty who worked to develop the programs.

Policy makers and educators frequently say, "Examine the data." Here it is: the maximum enrollment in the first year of this DNP program is set at 28 students; the estimated tuition is \$650/per credit. The total 36 credit program costs would be \$23,400 for one DNP degree.

Even if we assume the unlikely proposition that all candidates are MnSCU bargaining unit members, the cost to educate 28 DNP students would only be \$655,200 - a pittance in comparison to the MnSCU budget of \$1.3 billion.

IFO faculty are bewildered why the Chancellor's Office would impede the pipeline to training nurses when the cost is so low relative to other MnSCU initiatives that have less of a chance of making an immediate impact. At a time when practicing RNs can earn higher wages than similarly qualified college and university state faculty, we cannot comprehend what would prompt this action. This approach will likely result in an even greater shortage of nursing faculty, and ultimately, of practicing nurses.

Even more discouraging, the Chancellor's refusal to honor current and long-standing commitments shows a lack of respect for the very faculty that he expects to fulfill his promises to the citizens of Minnesota.

On a similar note, Governor Pawlenty continues to ignore the critical concerns of citizens. The [governor vetoed](#) the Omnibus Higher Education Funding Act on May 9, 2007. Among other reasons, he states,

"I do not agree with the changes this bill makes to designate specific 'union' and 'business' positions on the Board of Trustees for the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities. The current provisions allow for wide diversity on the Board. To further engage interest groups in these important board appointments would encourage more parochial advocacy and may hinder the Board's ability to be collaborative and flexible."

Again, let's look at the data. Of the 15 members of the current MnSCU Board of Trustees at least two thirds were appointed by the governor himself, and the majority of these appointees did not go through the established application and interview process of the Trustee Candidate Advisory Council.

Diversity certainly is not represented on his MnSCU Board of Trustees. The Board consists of 11 men and 4 women, and there is one person of color on the Board that professes to have as one of its strategic goals "access and opportunity." While the Board is filled with experienced business executives and three students, there is no representative of labor.

Respectful but hard-hitting public discussion is a healthy sign of a true democracy. The political reality is that the governor calls many of the shots for this Board, and they pull the trigger.

My thanks to all of you for your support and for your service to students and citizens. Best wishes for a very enjoyable summer.

LEGISLATURE PASSES HIGHER EDUCATION BILL - GOVERNOR VETOES

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

On May 7th the House/Senate conference committee on the Omnibus Higher Education Appropriations bill finished its work on a compromise bill. On May 8th the House passed the compromise bill by a vote of 86-45. The Senate passed the compromise by a vote of 44-21. On May 9th the Governor vetoed the bill in its entirety.

The major features in the bill that are of interest to the IFO are:

- The bill appropriates \$660,914,000 to MnSCU in FY 2008 (starting July 1, 2007), and \$694,228,000 in FY 2009. This is a biennial total of \$1,355,142,000 which is \$150,754,000 (12.52%) more than last biennium.
- Rather than set specific line items for MnSCU, the bill appropriates the money to MnSCU as one lump sum. In other words, there are no discrete amounts that are fenced for specific purposes. The lump sum appropriation is to be used for operation and maintenance of the system, technology, and access initiatives for underserved students. This gives MnSCU broader discretion on how much can be used for each purpose, but also means that none of the money is fenced off the bargaining table. Rep. Rukavina stated

that the appropriation is enough to cover at least a 3% compensation inflation increase. He and Senator Pappas also said that the priority for technology spending should be to support faculty and aid student on-line learning.

- The bill re-appropriates the \$12 million in MnSCU's base from last biennium that they used for IPESL grants, and says that on a going forward basis the money should be used for competitive compensation to attract and retain quality faculty. In committee discussions on this item, Sen. Pappas made it clear that the legislature never intended this to be performance pay, but rather pay to make MnSCU more competitive in the marketplace so they could attract and retain quality faculty. MnSCU opposed this change, but it passed anyhow.
- The legislature did not fund the MnSCU requests for management innovations (which was just performance pay in disguise), STEM, health initiatives, or the Bioscience Center of Excellence.
- The legislature only funded a \$4 million pilot for the Governor's ACHIEVE II program.
- The legislature removed the DREAM Act legislation from the bill because the Governor said he would veto the bill if the DREAM Act was included. Instead, the bill eliminates the non-resident tuition rates at six Minnesota two year institutions.
- The final bill requires MnSCU to set the maximum number of credits a program may require for a student to graduate with a baccalaureate degree at 120 credits, but it allows MnSCU to grant waivers to meet professional accreditation standards or industry standards. The policy will not take effect until January 1, 2009, so there will be a chance to modify this requirement next session if MnSCU institutions find the policy too onerous.
- A watered down version of the student textbook legislation was included in the bill, and the legislature appropriated \$500,000 in one-time money for a pilot textbook rental program.

In the Senate, all the DFL senators voted for the higher education bill except Sen. Patricia Torres-Ray (who I understand was upset over the dropping of the DREAM Act from the bill). All the Republican senators voted against the higher education bill except for Sen. Dennis Frederickson (who represents SMSU) and Sen. David Senjem (who represents Rochester). All campus area senators voted for the bill. In the House, all but two DFL Representatives voted for the bill. All but four Republicans voted against the bill. All campus area legislators voted for the bill except for Rep. Morrie Lanning (R-Moorhead), Rep. Marty Seifert (R-Marshall), and Rep. Gottwalt (R-St. Cloud).

Governor Pawlenty had threatened to veto the Higher Education Bill. Legislators made several changes in the bill, such as removing the DREAM Act, to appease the Governor, but the Governor vetoed the bill anyhow. The DFL does not have a large enough majority to over-ride a veto by themselves, and Republican cross-over votes are unlikely. Therefore, the DFL will have to accept the Governor's terms or try to win public support to put pressure on the governor to compromise.

Governor Pawlenty's Vetoes Hit Higher Education

In the last week, Governor Pawlenty has vetoed most of the major budget bills passed by the legislature. Among the bills vetoed are the Bonding Bill, the Omnibus State Departments Appropriations bills, the Health and Human Services Bill, and the Economic Development Bill. Yesterday he vetoed the Omnibus Higher Education Appropriations Bill (for a copy of the veto message, click [HERE](#)).

The veto of the bonding bill killed \$30 million for repair and upkeep on MnSCU buildings, plus \$2 million for land acquisition at Bemidji State University, \$1.8 million for land acquisition at Fond du Lac, and \$10 million for the St. Cloud Hockey Center.

The veto of the State Department Appropriations Bill killed what remained of legislation aimed at providing domestic partner benefits to public employees.

The veto of the higher education bill leaves the U of M, MnSCU, and OHE with no appropriations for the next two years.

With the exception of the Bonding Bill, the budget bills must pass to keep the state running after June 30th. The legislative session automatically adjourns at midnight on May 21st. If the budget bills do not pass by then, the Governor will have to call a special session. If agreement is not reached by July 1st, some areas of state government (including MnSCU) will have to start shutting down.

I expect a showdown between the legislature and Governor Pawlenty on tax and spending measures within the next two weeks, and a mega-budget bill to be assembled that incorporates all the vetoed budget bills in one big bill.

Health Care Bargaining Continues

Representatives of the 16 state employee unions met with the State on May 7th and 8th to negotiate a health care plan for state employees for the coming two years. While the negotiations are proceeding in a professional manner, not much was agreed upon. One of the sticking points is the unions think the State is overestimating the cost increases in the plan for the next few years. The union representatives will be meeting to analyze the State's numbers prior to the next meeting. In addition, the employees are skeptical of the savings that result from the assessments and coaching under the health plan.

A couple of tentative agreements were reached on some fairly non-controversial items, including a proposal by the IFO to raise the maximum monthly long term disability benefit from \$5000 to \$7000. The \$5000 cap is inadequate coverage for faculty at the top end of the scale.

Healthcare negotiations will continue on May 22nd.

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](#).