

Inter Faculty Organization

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Faculty Update Newsletter

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NOTES FROM THE PRESIDENT

by [Nancy Black](#), IFO President

Dear Colleagues:

It has been a pleasure for me to visit six of the seven state university campuses so far this fall and meet with you about your accomplishments as well as your concerns. In addition, we have had our first IFO Board of Directors' meeting complete with training. There are seven scheduled IFO Board meetings this year. For a listing of your campus representatives, click [HERE](#). It is gratifying to see a wonderful mix of experienced directors along with enthusiastic new ones who are serving the faculty.

The most talked about topic among the faculty is the frustration with technology on the campuses, ranging from lack of both student and faculty e-mail to course delivery through D2L to telephone service. All faculty are painfully aware of the very serious basic infrastructure problems this system is continuing to experience, and we ask the key questions. For example, why is it that for the last three academic fall starts, faculty have had to deal with campus failure in D2L course delivery? It should come as no surprise that each fall there are demands on technological support. What is the problem? We have provided the Chancellor with many e-mails in which you describe specific problems that need attention for you to serve students. We are working through various committees with Alfred Essa, Associate Vice Chancellor and Deputy Chief Information Officer, who is attempting to have academics drive technology instead of the other way around. He has compared the collapse of the I-35 bridge with the infrastructure of MnSCU's technology. Our existing commitments for required application support and maintenance, and infrastructure support must be addressed before new initiatives are launched. I have heard that MnSCU institutions are in a race for keeping up with other educational institutions such as Capella University. I have to ask what is at the end of that "finish line" in terms of state universities' missions, the excellence in teaching for which we are known, and our ability to develop life-long learners to serve the state of Minnesota.

The IFO testified and was present during legislative hearings in which MnSCU received a 12.6 percent increase in appropriations this biennium. We heard the legislative intent of the House recommending \$30 million for technology, and the Senate recommendation of a total of \$10 million for that same purpose. We are very disappointed to see how the MnSCU Board carried out the legislative intent, and took it upon themselves to allocate \$62 million dollars over the biennium to technology. While we support funding for critical technology, we are extremely concerned both by the lavish amount and the purposes to which it will be put. Just recently we were provided with a document describing the establishment of MnSCU's Enterprise Governance and The Enterprise Investment Management Process. It indicated a relatively large portion of the IT pie to "New Initiatives." Funding for technology must be allocated to the infrastructure NOW. Putting new demands on a collapsing system through new initiatives and optional maintenance should come later after careful planning and faculty consultation.

The other extremely pressing issue is the 2007-2009 Contract Negotiations of course. The Negotiation Team is meeting three of the four weekends in October—thank your negotiations for their voluntary work for their Thursday evenings, all day Friday, and all day Saturday meetings on your behalf. As I discussed in the [August Update](#), in terms of total compensation, the state universities are well below both the average and the median (50th percentile) for all ranks, failing further and future behind our peer institutions nationally. For more information on state university salary competitiveness, click [here](#). Ask your President for his or her position on fair compensation for faculty and ask them if they are expressing their views to the Office of the Chancellor and Board of Trustees. The legislature has

allocated increases to MnSCU; if we do not see any movement in base salaries now, then when will we?

I am reminding you that this June 30, 2008, will be the end of my Presidential term of office at the IFO. It has been a challenging, demanding, and very satisfying learning experience for me. A Nominating Committee has been appointed by the IFO Board consisting of [Wayne Alexander](#) (Moorhead), [Elizabeth Dunn](#) (Bemidji), and [Don Larsson](#) (Mankato). Please contact the committee for additional information or to throw your hat in the ring. I welcome [inquiries](#) about the responsibilities and duties.

Finally, your Faculty Association presidents will be asking for representatives on Joint IFO MnSCU committees as well as IFO Standing Committees. 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.

OCTOBER 1st NOTIFICATION DEADLINE FOR RETIREMENT BENEFITS

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

Two Step Increase

The IFO/MnSCU Contract contains a provision that faculty who have at least 15 years of service, and who give notice of their intent to retire by October 1st, for a retirement to take place at the end of the academic year (actually before the beginning of the next academic year), shall be eligible for a two step increase in salary during their final year of employment. These two steps increase a member's salary by 4.85%, and also increase severance pay and early separation incentive (if eligible for it) by 4.85%. The purpose of the two step increase, which is worth around \$5,000 to \$7,000 to most retirees, is to give an incentive for early notice so the university can do a search to fill the position.

Early Separation Incentive

In addition, the IFO/MnSCU Contract contains an early separation incentive for faculty members who were hired prior to June 30, 1996, and have at least 15 years of service. The early separation incentive is a full year of salary for someone who retires at age 55, but the amount decreases 10% for each year a faculty member works beyond age 55—and disappears completely at age 65. In addition to the salary portion of the early separation incentive, an eligible retiring member receives a year of employer paid health premium. There is also a special early separation incentive for faculty who reach 15 years of service when they are older than age 55.

To be eligible to receive the final year two step increase and/or the early separation incentive, a faculty member must give their notice of intent to retire by October 1st for retirements effective at the end of the academic year, or January 15, 2008 for retirements effective at the end of fall semester 2008.

Phased Retirement and the Annuitant Employment Application

The IFO/MnSCU contract contains two forms of phased retirement that a faculty member can apply for at the end of his or her career. **In order to be eligible to participate in either of these phased retirement programs starting fall semester of next year, a faculty member must apply by October 1st of this year.**

To learn more about the final year two step increase, the early separation incentive, severance pay, post-retirement health care options, phased retirement, the Annuitant Employment Program, and other retirement benefits, you can attend an IFO sponsored workshop conducted by Russ Stanton, IFO Director of Government Relations. Workshops have been or will be conducted on all campuses during the month of September. Upcoming workshops and individual retirement meetings include:

1. Bemidji State University—September 17th and 18th
2. Winona State University and Rochester—September 19th and 20th
3. Metropolitan State University—September 21st
4. St. Cloud State University—September 25th
5. Mankato State University—September 26th

Contact your [local faculty association president](#) of faculty association office to find out more details or to schedule an individual appointment with Russ Stanton. The workshops are free of charge and IFO does not sell or endorse any retirement products or services.

The workshop materials for these retirement workshops can be accessed by clicking [HERE](#).

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](#)