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NOTES FROM THE PRESIDENT

by [Nancy Black](#), IFO President

Dear Colleagues:

A Glimmer of Hope in Bargaining

This past month we started seeing real movement at the bargaining table. The IFO Negotiating Team let the MnSCU negotiators know they were willing to accept some of the MnSCU proposals that they said they needed for flexibility and productivity in return for significant gains in salary (our 2 step + 2 step + 5% proposal). MnSCU countered by offering 1 step + 1% across-the-board increase the first year, and 1 step in the second year for returning faculty with a mid-year 5% across-the-board increase. Unfortunately, the MnSCU proposal included some “poison pill” provisions including language on the doctoral tuition waiver and the appointments of faculty that we could simply not accept. Therefore, no agreement was reached. (See *Chief Negotiator Rod Henry's [report](#)* below.)

We were encouraged though, that MnSCU has made some significant movement on the amount of money they put forward. Bargaining requires trade-offs, and IFO has demonstrated its willingness to compromise on issues that MnSCU wants in return for improving the competitiveness of salaries across the board—it is just that MnSCU is not offering enough money for the concessions they want from us.

This is our time to make progress. MnSCU received a 12.7% increase in state appropriations this biennium—the biggest increase in memory. If we don't make progress this round, when will we catch up to our national peers? I urge you to support your [Negotiators](#) and your [Action](#) Teams. Wear a button [2 + 2 + 5%]; put up a poster; and respond to Action Alerts that will be coming out in the coming weeks.

MnSCU Board of Trustees Discuss Tuition Buy-down

This month's meeting of the MnSCU Board of Trustees included a great deal of discussion on tuition rates, compensation, and technology. Students, who have seen their tuition rates rise approximately an astounding 70% in the last six years, are now asking for a tuition increase that is less than the 4% originally budgeted by MnSCU. The MnSCU staff presented scenarios that showed tuition increases of 2% for all institutions or 2% for the colleges and 4% for the universities. The staff identified two pots of money that could be used to buy down tuition increases; the first was \$9 million in “initiative” funds held by the central office, and the second was \$6.4 million in one-time interest earnings on system funds. The MnSCU staff cautioned that faculty compensation settlements could affect the amount of money available for tuition buy-downs.

I testified that there was a 800 pound gorilla that everyone was ignoring—the \$62.5 million increase that MnSCU is setting aside for technology spending. Technology spending is projected to increase from \$20.5 million in FY 2007 to \$46.355 million in FY 2008 (this year)—that is a 115% increase in just one year! Still further technology increases are proposed for next year. As Representative Tom Rukavina, Chair of the House Higher Ed Committee, and Senator Sandra Pappas, Chair of the Senate Higher Education Committee, told the MnSCU Board, this is far more money for technology than the legislature ever intended to be spent. If MnSCU just partially reduced the size of the technology increase, plus used the interest earnings and initiative funds they have identified for re-allocation, there would be plenty of money to both buy down tuition rates and increase faculty salaries so they are competitive with peer institutions.

In the end, the Board of Trustees gave staff direction to develop a proposal to set tuition increases at 3% for state university students and 2% for college students—with the money for the buy-down coming out of central office funds rather than campus budgets.

The MnSCU staff also presented preliminary findings on a cost study of on-line education. The conclusions: On-line course development costs are significantly higher than land-based course development costs. The cost of delivery of on-line courses is slightly higher than for land-based courses. Finally, there is little evidence to determine the effectiveness of on-line courses compared to land-based courses. Apparently, the costs of on-line courses does not include the tens of millions spent by the MnSCU central office on infrastructure and staffing to operate the system's on-line programs.

An unexpected bombshell during the on-line presentation was discussion by some Trustees and the Chancellor; rather than have each campus determining what kind of on-line programs and courses they want to offer, MnSCU should consolidate their on-line into one Virtual University. This will be a topic of further discussion at future meetings. The ultimate goal of MnSCU's obsession with technology spending is starting to become clearer.

One final item of interest at the Board of Trustees meeting was an announcement that MnSCU will go to the legislature to get permission to raise the salaries of MnSCU administrators. They claim their salaries are not competitive and they are having difficulty recruiting high quality people. Hmmm...sound familiar?

The staff and I wish you and your family a Happy Thanksgiving holiday!

NEGOTIATIONS REPORT

by [Rod Henry](#), IFO Chief Negotiator

By now most of you are aware that progress towards a tentative contract agreement has been made, but that the IFO and MnSCU teams are some distance apart. You also should be aware that the current MnSCU proposals would not make what the IFO team feels are the kind of improvements in salaries that will correct past problems in any significant way. In its last offer, MnSCU proposed a step each year of the biennium, plus a 1% percent across-the-board increase in the first year and a 5% across-the-board increase at mid-year during the second year of the biennium. Ignoring the fact that this proposal was tied to language that would strip an existing benefit - the ability of faculty to take doctoral-level courses at MnSCU universities - and profoundly change the way IFO faculty participate in the governance of universities, the MnSCU proposal is still inadequate. The reason for that is that it makes significant improvement to our salaries relative to other similar university faculties *only* if you ignore inflation.

MnSCU has stated that its inflation assumption for each of the next two years is 3.75% per year. I don't know how they arrived at that number, but using their inflation numbers, MnSCU university faculty would receive an increase that is less than inflation this year (3.39%). Because the across-the-board increase is implemented mid-year, state university faculty would only receive a .78% improvement above inflation over the 2008-2009 academic year. By the start of the 2009-2010 academic year state university faculty salaries would have increased by 3.28% more than inflation. In short, unless inflation miraculously ceases to have an effect upon other similar university faculties, we will have made only modest improvements relative to other faculty salaries. The long-term effects of this upon the quality of the system - of having to go out and hire faculty with salaries that are somewhere around average - should be apparent. Given the fact that many MnSCU proposals in the past have been built upon the premise that money is the ultimate motivator of faculty (merit pay, etc.), it is difficult to fathom why they seem to think that the influence of above-average salaries would not be a positive one for their universities.

Let me repeat a statement I have made earlier - MnSCU claims that they don't have the money to spend on faculty salaries are false. MnSCU has money in their funding base from the salary competitiveness appropriation last biennium that could be used to improve our salaries. MnSCU has tens of millions of dollars given to it by the legislature for inflation adjustments and improving salary competitiveness. MnSCU also has millions of dollars in discretionary spending at the universities.

We meet again with the MnSCU negotiators at the end of this month. We believe our task will be an easier one if our faculty are willing to put forth the minimal efforts required to support our work. John Palmer, State Action Chair, and the Action Committee have been working to help us get the type of salary and language improvements that will build a stronger future for our faculty and our institutions....and I believe that the difference between a decent and a good contract lies in your hands, in your willingness to support their work NOW.

IFO BOARD ADOPTS 2008 LEGISLATIVE GOALS

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

At its November meeting the IFO [Board of Directors](#) adopted goals for the 2008 legislative session. The goals were developed by the IFO [Government Relations Committee](#) and the [Academic Affairs Committee](#). The goals will be used by the IFO President, Director of Government Relations, and others to represent IFO's official position on matters that will come before the legislature. The following is a

list of the goals adopted by the Board thus far:

1. Support the [MnSCU bonding list](#), with HEAPR funding as our highest priority, and that MnSCU, not the campuses, pay the 1/3 debt service.
2. Support a line item limit on how much money can be spent by the central office at MnSCU and increasing the portion of the state appropriation that is allocated directly to the campuses.
3. Support legislation limiting the MnSCU appropriation for technology to \$20 million for the biennium.
4. Support the elimination of non-resident tuition rates, with the state making up the lost revenue, including the revenue lost by state universities that have already eliminated non-resident tuition rates.
5. Support a financial and performance audit, by the Office of Legislative Auditor, of MnSCU's on-line education programs and other technology initiatives, taking into account both direct and indirect costs, to determine their cost effectiveness.
6. Support legislation to allow faculty members on phased retirement to withdraw some or all of their supplement retirement savings during phased retirement.
7. Support legislation to require MnSCU to use due diligence to locate the owners of abandoned funds in the IRAP, Supplemental Retirement Plan and TSA plan. If after a due diligent search the owners can not be located, the funds shall be placed in abandoned account fund. If an owner is subsequently located, his/her account will be restored. MnSCU shall use interest earnings off of abandoned accounts to offset participant administrative fees.
8. Support legislation to allow faculty members a window of opportunity to switch from IRAP to TRA once they have reached tenure status.
9. To improve the professionalization of PK-12 teachers and to support initiatives such as STEM, oppose alternative teacher licensure programs that are not sponsored or co-sponsored by an accredited college or university teacher preparation program.
10. Increase funding toward teacher-professional development initiatives offered by accredited teacher-preparation institutions to help in-service teachers earn additional licensures, particularly in shortage areas.
11. Support 60/120 credit-limit for academic programs as long as MnSCU policy/procedure allows sufficient local campus control to create major programs of high academic quality and allows waivers where warranted.
12. Support legislation to reduce costs of textbooks to students while maintaining faculty control of course materials.
13. Continue to support efforts to provide loan forgiveness, scholarships and/or grant support for students who will graduate and practice in essential fields and to support students during mandatory unpaid public sector internships, including student teaching.

The Government Relations Committee plans to meet again in January to develop additional goals. If you have ideas you would like the Government Relations Committee to consider, send them to stanton@ifo.org.

IFO SPONSORS \$5000 FEMINIST ISSUES GRANT

by [Pat Arseneault](#), IFO Equity Advocate

The IFO is sponsoring a two-year **\$5000 Feminist Issues Grant** designed to promote research, projects, or creative works that contribute to the advancement of women in the IFO and MnSCU. Grant Applications are due on **February 4, 2008**. See the [Grant Application Announcement and Outline](#) for details on submitting an application.

The IFO Feminist Issues Committee will conduct a blind review of proposals based on the relevance of the project or activity to women and feminist issues in the IFO or MnSCU at large, the overall clarity and feasibility of proposal, and the plan for sharing the project or activity results with a significant portion of IFO members. Successful Grant recipient(s) will be notified by April 30, 2008.

Grant money will be provided directly to the recipient, payable shortly after May 1, 2008. The successful recipient may use the grant money for stipends, clerical help, travel, supplies, or other proposed project expenses. The grant period extends from May 2008 to March 2010.

Past recipients' projects include a *Survey* on faculty attitudes about the promotion and tenure process as it affects women faculty; a *Workshop* on educating faculty women about the union and the advantages of membership, a *Faculty Learning Community* on "Talking about Teaching and Feminist Issues" and a *Lecture Series* on women's health issues.

For more information on grant proposals or past grant projects, please contact [Patrice Arseneault](#) at the IFO or your [FIC campus representative](#).

GUEST EDITORIAL: THE OBLIGATION TO DISOBEY

by [Monte Bute](#), professor of Sociology and Social Science, Metropolitan State University

"Let us not speak falsely now, the hour is getting late."

- Bob Dylan

What I am about to say aloud has long been whispered by local administrators, faculty, staff, and students on every Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MnSCU) campus: The MnSCU central office and trustees are, like the emperor without clothes, an elephant in the room of public higher education.

I recently watched *The Lives of Others*, winner of last year's Oscar for best foreign film. The film depicts the smothering effect of an Eastern European communist regime known by the Orwellian misnomer of the "German Democratic Republic." Real power was exercised by a brutal politburo, whose interference with the lives of others was carried out by legions of apparatchiks, bureaucrats without conscience who justified their behavior with the tortured logic of a central committee.

Even in the mid-1980s, these despotic, dictatorial bureaucracies seemed immortal. Created in social laboratories, these hideous creatures seemed immune to death and immutable to reformation. Then suddenly within months, from Warsaw to Tirana, from Bratislava to Sofia, people rose up and threw off the yoke of centralized planning and bureaucratic handlers. Why? Because they came to realize that, despite tanks and secret police, despite torture and treachery, their servitude was voluntary. They were one with Frederick Douglass:

"My long crushed spirit rose, cowardice departed, bold defiance took its place; and I now resolved that, however long I might remain a slave in form, the day had passed forever when I could be a slave in fact."

Like those pre-1989 regimes in Eastern Europe, we have long been in denial about the true nature of the beast. However, this vast conspiracy of silence only allows the elephant to grow larger. The larger the elephant grows, the greater the piles of doo-doo left behind. There isn't a shovel big enough. The smell is becoming intolerable. How long can we pretend that MnSCU's doo-doo doesn't stink?

This collective denial is first penetrated by silence breakers. They are folks who will initially cause discomfort, particularly for those who benefit from ignoring the elephant. "Who is that rude person?" We need more rude folks who speak the truth.

The truth of the matter is that Governor Pawlenty has carried out a legal coup of the MnSCU Board of Trustees. The trustees now govern the 32 campuses by fiat and decrees. They treat faculty as if they are assembly line employees, useful for little else than mass producing a cut-rate product. If they could make us virtual, they would ... and they are trying. They seem to see little difference between a website and a university.

The central office staff of MnSCU—many of whom have never taught a university class, graded a paper, advised a student, or written a scholarly paper—spend far too many of their working hours as busybodies, bullying local campuses and faculties about matters of which they are woefully ignorant.

To add insult to injury, MnSCU is trying to pit students and faculty against each other, claiming that salary increases will lead to tuition increases for students. This would not be the case if trustees and staff were not busy feathering the MnSCU central office bed. We should not be surprised. It is how the elephant distracts us from its presence.

To be blunt, we in the IFO have been short-sighted in recent years. Every two years, we act as if the contract process is a war. Every two years, we win a partial victory and declare victory. Our opponents have been wiser: they realize the contract is only a battle, and they are willing to concede some crumbs if it distracts us from the larger crusade. In this larger campaign, they're kicking our butts. It's time to make "The Case Against the Elephant."

The stakes are high. We are fighting to preserve the integrity of state universities as we now know them. Additionally, we are fighting to save the autonomy of faculty and programs at Minnesota state universities. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, we are fighting to ensure that our students are treated as human beings, not as products being manufactured for employers.

What is to be done? Etienne de La Boétie, Montaigne's dearest friend, gave us the answer in 1548 when he wrote *Discourse on Voluntary Servitude*:

"I should like merely to understand how it happens that so many men, so many villages, so many cities, so many nations, sometimes suffer under a single tyrant who has no other power than the power they give him . . . But if not one thing is yielded to them, if, without any violence they are simply not obeyed, they become naked and undone and as nothing, just as, when the root receives no nourishment, the branch withers and dies."

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](#).