

Inter Faculty Organization

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NOTES FROM THE PRESIDENT

by [Nancy Black](#), IFO President

Best wishes to you all during the holiday season!

IFO Office Hours

The IFO offices will be closed December 25, 2006, through January 2, 2007. If you have a matter of urgency during this time, please call our main number at 800/325-9644 or 651/227-8442. An emergency contact number will be recorded on our phone messaging system.

Preparing for the New Legislature

We have hopes that it will be a very Happy New Year for higher education issues and for us at the legislature this session. This past election, led by Russ Stanton our Government Relations Committee and other IFO faculty put considerable efforts toward the election of legislators who have shown support for our higher education concerns. Again, thanks to the IFO volunteers who went door knocking, organized forums, stuffed envelopes, and did your part to ensure that the IFO voice was heard by our elected officials. During the month of December, members of the IFO Government Relations Committee and I are attending numerous legislative fundraisers, reminding legislators of our goals as the next legislative session approaches. See the article on our legislative goals [below](#).

Applied Doctoral Programs

One to the topics being addressed by the [IFO/MnSCU Graduate Council](#) concerns the development of the Applied Doctoral Program; this initiative gained legislative support at the last session. Currently, we are aware of six proposals which are in varying stages of development. These include an Ed.D. in Counselor Education and Supervision (Minnesota State University, Mankato), an Ed.D. in Higher Education Administration (St. Cloud State University), and a consortium among Winona State University, Metropolitan State University, Minnesota State University Moorhead, and the Minnesota State University, Mankato for the Doctorate in Nursing Practice (DNP). Faculty efforts to make quality applied doctoral programs a reality for the State of Minnesota are moving ahead. At this time, however, the Office of the Chancellor has identified "internal reallocation" at individual institutions as the source of funding. It is difficult to have an outstanding program when critical resources are uncertain.

MnSCU's Friends Action Network (FAN)

Recently MnSCU started a Friends Action Network (FAN) to encourage faculty, students, alumni, and community members to sign petitions and write to legislators in support of MnSCU's legislative budget request and legislative agenda. While I think it is good that MnSCU is developing community and alumni support for higher education funding, I am concerned that MnSCU not try to usurp the voice of the faculty on legislative matters. IFO is the official voice of the state university faculty and has its own network for communicating with legislators. We are more than willing to lend our support to most of MnSCU's budget request, but we don't think MnSCU is asking for enough money, and there are some portions of the request that appear to link money to pay-for-performance. Faculty are, of course, free to sign petitions and communicate anything they want to legislators, but I would urge faculty to know exactly what is in the MnSCU request before they sign petitions or write letters. IFO will continue to provide legislative updates to the faculty and encourage faculty members to communicate with legislators on faculty developed goals.

Early Separation Incentive Letter of Understanding (LOU)

This week IFO and MnSCU finally resolved a long standing contract interpretation dispute over who is eligible for the Early Separation Incentive (ESI) in the IFO contract. The contract ([Article 16 D](#)) says faculty members hired after June 30, 1996 are not eligible for the incentive. A "gray area" developed regarding faculty who were originally hired prior to June 30, 1996, but had a gap in employment due to the end of a fixed term position or retrenchment and were rehired after June 30, 1996. IFO maintained they were eligible for the incentive, while MnSCU said they were not. We finally reached a Letter of Understanding which clears up this matter and makes many of the affected faculty members eligible for the incentive. I want to thank Pat Arseneault, our Acting Director of Labor Relations, and Russ Stanton, Director of Government Relations, for their patience and hard work in resolving this matter. If you think you are a person who may be affected by this LOU, contact [Pat Arseneault](#) or [Russ Stanton](#) about the possibility of your eligibility for the early separation incentive.

IFO ADOPTS 2007 LEGISLATIVE GOALS

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

On December 1st, the *IFO Board* adopted [legislative goals](#) for the 2007 legislative session. The goals were developed by the [IFO Government Relations Committee](#) and the [IFO Academic Affairs Committee](#).

The main focus of the goals is the funding request to the legislature for MnSCU operations for fiscal years 2008 and 2009 (which start July 1, 2007). In November, the MnSCU Trustees approved a request for a budget "increase" of \$275 million for the coming biennium (click [here](#) for a copy). Of the \$275 million increase being requested by MnSCU, \$177 million would come from state appropriations and \$73 million would come from increasing student tuition by 4% per year. The remaining \$25 million is a phony increase—it is just a recycling of MnSCU's base funding.

The IFO supports the \$275 million spending increase requested by MnSCU, but believes the entire amount should be paid through state appropriations—not through tuition increases or reallocation of the current funding base.

The biggest item within the MnSCU budget request is \$140 million for an inflation adjustment of 3.5% in each of the next two years. This is IFO's highest priority. Even though the state higher education funding formula law provides for inflation adjustments, the state has not provided appropriations to cover inflation in the last four years. During that time, inflation (as measured by the CPI) was approximately 12%. Because the state did not cover the inflationary increases, much of the cost of inflation was shifted on to

students in the form higher tuition. Tuition at state universities increased 53.8% in the last four years. MnSCU is proposing the students pay \$73 million of the inflation increase, that \$10 million come from internal reallocation (phony money), and that only \$57 million come from state appropriations. By contrast, IFO (and the student organizations) are taking the position that the state, which is sitting on a large budget surplus, should pick up the entire cost of inflation this time—*it's their turn*. This would provide for inflationary adjustments for compensation and other costs without raising student tuition.

In addition to funding for inflation, the IFO supported goals of \$26 million to improve the competitiveness of faculty salaries and \$15 million to fully implement salary equity adjustments. Also, the IFO is supporting \$94 million for a list of initiatives including upgrading IT systems, expanding program offerings, and promoting student access.

Beyond budget issues, IFO will be advocating a long list of policy changes in the areas of academic affairs, collective bargaining, funding policy, human rights, and retirement. For a complete list of IFO goals for the 2007 session, click [here](#).

NEGOTIATIONS REPORT

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

Since the November *Update*, the Team has been involved in discussions with the IFO Board of Directors regarding Letters of Understanding and a Memorandum of Agreement. These have dealt with retirement, promotion, and other benefit issues, and the details of these will be sent out to faculty if and when they have been fully executed with MnSCU.

Members of the Team have also been working on political and other action plans. President Black, Russ Stanton, Director of Government Relations, some faculty and I had the opportunity to attend several meetings with legislators - our state senators and representatives - and start discussions with them regarding issues that will have an impact on our upcoming round of negotiations. The IFO has adopted [legislative goals](#) which, if put into law, will give us the opportunity to make significant progress in competitive base pay and salary equity. As usual, our goals are always subject to the legislative process, but I personally feel that we have a good shot at avoiding some negative initiatives in MnSCU's legislation, getting some things we have wanted for a while, and continuing our innovative pedagogy for excellence in student learning. More opportunities for meeting with legislators are coming up in the next three weeks, and the IFO should be able to have a presence at them.

Lastly, the health care benefits group will be meeting early in January - we hope to have more to report on those issues in January.

D2L UPGRADE TO VERSION 8

by [Debra Japp](#) (IFO Academic Affairs Coordinator, SCSU) and [Rhonda Ficek](#) (Appointed Representative from MSU Moorhead)

On December 6, 2006, members of the [MnSCU Instructional Management System \(IMS\) Advisory Council](#) met in an informal meeting to discuss the proposed D2L version 8 upgrade (v8) and to make a recommendation to the full IMS Council as to when this upgrade should occur. Three dates were proposed for the upgrade: June 2007, August 2007, and December 2007. Each of these dates have advantages and disadvantages. The consensus was to upgrade in June 2007 for several reasons. There is less disruption during the summer sessions, and faculty will have more time to prepare during the summer months. Finally, the longer the delay the more costly and difficult the upgrade becomes due to the size of the database.

What will change for faculty and students in the new version? According to Michael Condon, IMS System

Administrator (Office of the Chancellor), there will be little change to the user interface. This means that faculty and students should not need extensive training on the new version. There are several new features in v8, including a blogging tool, internal e-mail, and for system administrators, a new reporting warehouse. Improvements have been made in the quiz and survey tools, and copying materials from one course to another should be more flexible. Of course revising a syllabus with more tools means more than a simple "add-on" for faculty; it often means many hours of work to ensure quality and effectiveness for the students.

The upgrade should not result in significant down time. The MnSCU staff has experience with performing upgrades and maintenance releases. Over the past two years, downtime has decreased from 48 hours to the present 12 hours.

There will be several opportunities this spring for faculty to explore and learn about v8. Workshops and sessions about v8 will be available during the Realizing Student Potential/iTeach Conference on March 1-3, 2007 (Minneapolis Community and Technical College), and at the Fourth Annual Desire2Learn Users Conference, FUSION 2007, in Duluth, MN, July 8-11, 2007. In addition, faculty can request an account on the D2L Community site at <http://community.desire2learn.com>. There are news items and documentation about the v8 features on this site. And on MnSCU's projected timeline, approximately two months prior to the upgrade, D2L v8 will be available on the QA environment and faculty can use this area to explore the new version. We also hope that during spring semester there will be an opportunity for a group of interested faculty to pilot their courses via D2L's hosted environment. This may allow them to preview the product and the new tools and report to the campuses about their experiences.

The first official meeting of the IMS Advisory Council: D2L Version 8 Upgrade is January 26, 2007. The IFO is seeking additional volunteers to serve on this council. Please contact your [Faculty Association President](#) if you are interested in being involved in decisions that will be affecting all faculty.

IFO MASTER CALENDAR

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

In an effort to better coordinate and communicate with our membership, we have a link on our website's main page that provides information on all meetings and events taking place within the system (IFO, MnSCU, State of Minnesota, etc.) of which the noted IFO officers and staff participate. We are trying to keep our [Master Calendar](#) as current as possible and appreciate all of the information we receive from our committee members. This information is available to you and should be helpful in staying abreast of all the issues that may impact your campus.

If you have suggestions on how the union can improve in this area, please feel free to send me an [email](#).

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](#).