

Inter Faculty Organization

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PRESIDENT'S COMMENTS

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

Dear Colleagues:

Welcome to a new academic year, and a special welcome to new faculty joining our ranks! I want to invite you to join and get involved in the IFO. This is your organization that is dedicated to improving faculty welfare and the state universities, and controlled by the faculty.

There were a number of important developments over the summer:

First, the legislative special session finally ended, but only after one of the ugliest stalemates and the first shutdown in the state's history. Since we got our bills through during the regular session, we were relatively unaffected by the government shutdown. However, the old saying, "No person's life, liberty, or property is safe while the legislature is in session," certainly held true this summer. Until a budget agreement was achieved we couldn't be sure that they wouldn't come back and take back some of our appropriation to balance the budget. This made it hard to move ahead in negotiating a new contract for 2005-2007.

Despite the chaos, we made significant gains at the legislature this year. Please see Russ Stanton's [session summary article](#) below.

Second, negotiations are well underway. Now that the state budget and tuition rates are set, serious negotiations on the 2005-07 contract can take place. We have had an exchange of proposals on language items already, and it appears this will be a very tough round of negotiations. MnSCU is proposing to eliminate the early separation incentive in the contract, to make the career steps subject to employer review, and to move toward performance pay. And of course, we have to fight these proposals. We are pushing for more competitive salaries and reduced workloads. A union is only as strong as the support and commitment of its members; we need to stick together through this round of negotiations and not allow one group of faculty members to be pitted against another.

Third, during the summer progress was made on negotiating the health plan for state employees. The sixteen State employee unions (including IFO) form a coalition to bargain with the state over health benefits. The two sides met for three days of intensive negotiations in mid-July. During the negotiations, the state backed off its initial proposals to require a 5% employee contribution on the employee portion of health insurance premiums and some of its proposed increases in deductibles and co-pays. However, a final settlement was not achieved at coalition bargaining, and remaining items were referred to the individual union bargaining tables. In late July, AFSCME, the state's largest union, reached a tentative agreement. Historically, the AFSCME agreement sets the health insurance plan and the rest of the unions tend to adopt the health plan into their contract. The plan will basically have the same premium amounts, deductibles, co-pays, and out-of-pockets as it does this year. There will be an increase in the employee premium for dependent coverage, that increase will be only 3 cents per month in 2006, and \$10.37 per month in 2007. A \$5.00 dental premium is offset by an increase from 50% to 60% dental insurance payment on restorative services. You can view a more detailed summary of health changes by clicking [HERE](#).

I want to announce a few services the IFO will provide our members within the near future:

- During orientation for new faculty, Russ Stanton will be putting on sessions to help new faculty members choose between IRAP and TRA as their basic pension plan. This is a very complicated decision that can mean thousands of dollars to a faculty member in the short term—hundreds of thousands over a career—and once the decision is made, it is irrevocable. I would encourage all new faculty to attend, and Russ will help you wade through that complicated decision.
- During September, Russ will be visiting all the campuses and putting on workshops for faculty nearing retirement to show them how to wring the most out of their contractual and statutory benefits. He will cover benefits such as the early separation benefit, severance pay, post retirement health care, phased retirement, and the two-step bump for retirees. If you are thinking about retiring in the next five years or so, I would encourage you to attend one of these workshops and set up an individual meeting with Russ. It's free and it will help you understand your options—often times it can save you a considerable amount of money. I strongly encourage you to take advantage of this member service.
- Finally, during the last round of bargaining, the IFO negotiated a \$500 per year employer contribution to the Health Reimbursement Account (\$600 last year). In October, our staff will be explaining the program and how it can be coordinated with the Flexible Savings Accounts for maximum advantage to the faculty member. There is also [information on HRAs](#) on the IFO web page.

Our plate is full, and we are headed into a very busy year. I look forward to working with you and for you in the year ahead.

SUMMARY OF THE 2005 LEGISLATIVE SESSION(S)—HOW DID WE DO?

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

On July 13, 2005, the legislature finally adjourned *sine die* and went home, ending a rancorous legislative session and special session that resulted in the first state government shutdown in history. So, how did we do this session? Not too bad, actually. The following is a summary of progress on IFO legislative goals.

Funding: 8.6% Appropriation Increase For the MnSCU Institutions

We began the legislative session with the state projecting budget deficit of about \$1.4 billion and with the governor and Republican legislators promising “no new taxes”. It looked like we were headed for another round of budget cuts. IFO's legislative goals were to avoid further cuts, to fund enrollment

growth at state universities, and to raise taxes instead of cutting programs. As the legislative session progressed, our circumstances improved. The governor and legislators of both political parties agreed that higher education had been hit awfully hard last biennium, and they produced budget proposals that improved higher education funding. The higher education funding bill was one of the few major bills lawmakers could agree upon during the regular session. In the end, the legislature appropriated \$1,202,888,000 to MnSCU for the next two years—a \$107.5 million (8.6%) increase over last biennium.

Of the MnSCU funding increase, \$72 million is to cover enrollment growth, \$12 million is to improve the competitiveness of MnSCU salaries, \$10 million is to create “Centers of Excellence”, and \$13.5 million is to support new initiatives as MnSCU sees fit.

Revenue Increases

The IFO supported revenue (tax) increases to relieve the chronic budget shortfalls that have plagued the state since the cuts in tax rates early in the decade. In the end, the legislature raised, and the governor signed, revenue raising measures such as a 75 cent per pack “health impact fee” and tens of millions in new revenues from “increased tax compliance” by corporations. This new revenue was not only crucial to solving the budget shortfall this year—it will provide more money for state operations (including higher education funding) in future bienniums.

IFO Contract Ratified

In the final hours of the last day of the regular legislative session, the legislature passed the State Department’s funding bill. An important feature of the bill was a provision ratifying the IFO contract for the 2003-2005 period. Had the ratification not occurred by the end of the regular session, the contract would have been void and faculty would have reverted to their 2002 pay levels. This was a real nail-biter, because the state department’s bill was almost voted down because of provisions unrelated to our contract ratification.

Bonding Bill Brings \$213.6 Million to MnSCU

In 2004, the legislature had failed to agree on a capital improvement (bonding) bill to maintain and improve the physical infrastructure of the state. One of IFO’s highest goals was to pass a major bonding bill in 2005. The legislature passed a bonding bill early in the regular session. MnSCU was the biggest recipient under the bill—receiving \$213.6 million. Bemidji, Mankato, Moorhead, St. Cloud and Winona universities received major building renovation appropriations, and all MnSCU institutions will share in the \$41.5 million pot for Higher Education Asset Preservation and Repair (HEAPR).

State Universities Authorized to Offer Applied Doctorates

A measure pushed by the IFO to allow state universities to offer applied doctoral degrees was passed as part of the higher education bill. Applied doctorates were allowed in the areas of education, business, psychology, physical therapy, audiology, and nursing.

Alternative Teacher Licensure Bill Defeated

A bill by Rep. Sonja Erickson that would have allowed a person to become a licensed teacher without going through a postsecondary teacher preparation program did not pass. The bill allowed someone with a bachelor’s degree to receive a license after 200 clock hours of instruction and a year of (lightly) supervised teaching. IFO opposed this bill because it would have weakened the standards for obtaining a teaching license at the same time the state is requiring higher standards for college and university teacher preparation.

Bachmann Bill on “Free Speech for Faculty and Student Bill of Rights” Dies

Senator Michelle Bachmann, one of the legislatures most conservative and outspoken members, introduced a bill she called the “Free Speech for Faculty and Student Bill of Rights”. The bill is similar to legislation introduced in many states and at the national level, and is being promoted by conservative

professor David Horowitz and a group called the Students for Academic Freedom. This group is promoting the legislation because of what it calls a “liberal bias” in faculty hiring, teaching, and in the speakers allowed on campus. While most of Bachmann’s bill sounds very good (promoting pluralism, etc.) it contains some scary provisions such as requiring “professional societies” to “maintain a posture of organizational neutrality with respect to methods, facts, and theories”, and requires a grievance process for persons who feel the policies have been violated. IFO and AAUP opposed the legislation. The bill was not heard because the Senate Higher Education Chair, Sandy Pappas, said she had not heard of any problems in Minnesota.

Bachmann “Marriage Amendment” Dies

A bill by Senator Michelle Bachmann for a constitutional amendment limiting marriage, “or its equivalent” to one man and one woman did not pass. Minnesota already has laws prohibiting gay marriage, and opponents argued that the constitutional amendment was both unnecessary and politically motivated. Some argued the term “marriage or its equivalent” was vague and could be interpreted as outlawing any domestic partner benefits, including bereavement leave and sick leave to care for a domestic partner (currently in the IFO contract). In the end, the Bachmann bill was blocked by the Senate.

It will probably be back next year.

Legislative Disappointments

Not everything went our way.

- The Rochester University Center board was created and given a \$3.2 million appropriation.
- The legislation that would have allowed the children of undocumented aliens who attended and graduated from Minnesota high schools to attend public higher education institutions at resident rates did not pass. Even though the bill had strong bipartisan support in the higher education conference committee, the committee removed the measure because Governor Pawlenty threatened to veto the entire higher education bill if it was included.
- The legislature failed to pass a major pension improvement bill. In the final minutes of the special session some legislators tried to revive and pass a pension bill, but the only measures that passed were relatively minor, non-controversial measures.

Given the state’s budget problems and the partisan wrangling that dominated the 2005 legislative sessions, IFO and higher education in general, fared quite well. We got more money, some policy improvements, and killed legislation contrary to our interests. What’s more, nearly all of our bills passed during the regular session, thus sparing our members from the effects of the government shutdown.

NEGOTIATIONS UPDATE

by [Rod Henry](#), Lead Negotiator, Bemidji State University

It has been an interesting and irritating time since I last reported to you on negotiations in May. The summary is that there has been some smoke but not a lot of fire...despite the IFO Negotiating Team's best efforts to get things moving.

Our sessions in the middle of May and during the month of June and into the beginning of July were framed by statements from MnSCU that they "really wanted to get this contract done" while simultaneously declining to put forth any proposals that they felt were economic in nature due to THEIR perception of the impact of such proposals on various political groups. What this meant was that items such as across-the-board increases in salary, changes in compensation for graduate theses, large classes, overload, summer school, etc. were also not subjects for discussion. Topics of joint task forces such as salary competitiveness and reductions in the teaching part of our workload were discussed in MnSCU Board meetings but not brought up in proposals by the MnSCU negotiators - even though we

had proposals on each. We were able to reach some tentative agreements on technical clarifications and other issues, but no major agreements were reached on core issues.

The items that illustrated how things were going were proposals on teaching workload reduction and performance/incentive pay. Our membership has been seeking teaching workload reductions while the MnSCU Board wants incentive pay. This seemed a perfect opportunity to deal with issues that were economic without confronting MnSCU's reluctance to bargain on salaries, so we came up with a proposal that took MnSCU's language on incentives and ours on teaching workload reductions. The assumption on our part was that the exchange of proposals would lead to something mutually agreeable that would be ready to go when the state budget impasse ended, ...that was an incorrect assumption.

What we received as counters, several times, were offers in which faculty would (or could) carry normal workload credits into the summer and teach YEAR-ROUND in exchange for their language on incentive pay. This "offer" as well as some interesting accounting utilized by MnSCU (a claim that incentive pay would cost nothing!) led to some heated exchanges with the other side as well as a discussion between the IFO President and the Chancellor. The result was another MnSCU offer that was almost identical to the first, retaining the year-round work concept. My opinion is that the other side either has little knowledge of or appreciation for the research, service, and other non-teaching roles performed by our faculty or, contrary to public pronouncements, has no interest in obtaining their oft-stated goal of some form of incentive pay. It should be noted that if you believe that incentive pay is something that you find of interest, please review the experience of faculty in places such as California and Colorado to get an idea of how this may or may not work...and then compare those plans with the MnSCU proposals.

Another episode that illustrates what we are dealing with is the other side's unreadiness. At one point in the discussion of the perceived threat to MnSCU of a settlement with its faculty, we asked if the MnSCU team had a economic proposal ready-to-go...and were astonished to hear that "no, none was ready, but might be quickly prepared if they could get their finance people together." This is very different than the manner in which our team works...we've had proposals out or prepared - reasonable ones - since March.

We know our members would like a reasonably fast settlement of the contract and are prepared for that, while the MnSCU team...who knows?

At this point, then, we are in a scheduled lull in negotiations until September. We await the outcome of coalition health benefits bargaining for a better idea as to what range of compensation proposals to expect...but our Chancellor is on record as wanting the faculty to be at the 80th percentile nationally and we wonder if we will receive economic proposals that reflect that promise. Given developments to date, expect the need for action in the Fall - and thanks to all of you who have given us your support in the past.

ACTION UPDATE

by [Judy Kilborn](#), IFO Action Chair, St. Cloud State University

Thank you for participating in early action last spring by wearing Stop the Slide! buttons and displaying posters. Please be ready to pull these buttons and posters back out in the fall and to join in other actions that arise on your campuses. Negotiations on this contract are likely to be difficult, and serious issues are involved, including workload, compensation, "accountability," and incursions on faculty rights.

Now that the state legislature is out of gridlock, MnSCU is expected to bring forward an economic package in September, and negotiations will probably begin in earnest. Please be watching for action information that comes out on your campus, and when you're asked to take action, please do as much as you can. Based upon their negotiations and board actions to date, MnSCU doesn't seem to think that

the faculty are really concerned about the contract or to understand the nature of our profession. However, when we stick together and take simple actions, we can show that we're serious and really help the Negotiations team move contract talks forward.

Please contact your [local action chair](#) or [Judy Kilborn](#), State Action Chair, with additional ideas. Unified, positive, and highly visible actions early in the process should preclude the need for more dramatic actions later on.

STATEWIDE CAMPUS TRAINING

by [Cindy Phillips](#), IFO Vice President

The IFO will conduct a statewide training for campus representatives on Friday, September 30, and Saturday, October 1, 2005. While focusing on the mechanics of the grievance process, it will also look at the IFO's legal "duty to represent" and working within the framework of PELRA and the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act. The emphasis will be on what IFO representatives on the campuses need to know to do their job better and will provide an opportunity for campus representatives to visit with and learn from their colleagues on other campuses. Contact your campus [Faculty Association President](#) for more details.

ANNUAL REVIEWS OF FACULTY SALARIES COMPLETED THROUGH FY04

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

The joint MnSCU IFO Salary Review Committee (SRC) recently completed the FY04 Annual Review of the salaries of newly-hired faculty and faculty awarded terminal degrees for the 2003-2004 academic year. A list of [faculty included in the FY04 Annual Review](#) is posted on the IFO website. If you believe you should be included in the FY04 Annual Review and you are not on the list, please contact [Pat Arseneault](#). As part of this review process, faculty hired during the 2003-2004 academic year received a copy of their data in April from the Salary Review Committee. The SRC is in the process of making corrections for faculty who advised us of data errors. When the SRC meets again this fall, we will again review faculty whose data have been corrected.

MnSCU and campus administration are in the process of implementing equity step increases that resulted from the FY04 Annual Review. The SRC recommended step increases for 12 faculty members who were hired in FY04 (academic year 2003-04). Salary Equity step increases will be retroactive to the date of hire. The SRC also recommended step increases for 8 faculty members who completed a terminal degree between October 1, 2002 and October 1, 2003. Salary Equity step increases for terminal degrees awarded on or before October 1, 2003 will be retroactive to the beginning of the academic year 2003-2004.

Faculty who were recommended to receive a salary equity step increase should be notified of the increase within the next few weeks.

The Salary Review Committee will soon begin the FY05 Annual Review of faculty hired last year (2004-2005 academic year) and faculty awarded a terminal degree between October 1, 2003 and October 1, 2004.

For clarification or additional information, please contact Pat Arseneault.

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](#).