

Inter Faculty Organization

BEMIDJI - MANKATO - METROPOLITAN - MOORHEAD - SOUTHWEST - ST. CLOUD - WINONA

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FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

by [Nancy Black](#), *IFO State President*

Colleagues:

As we head into the second month of the new academic year, things are moving at a furious pace at the IFO.

Last week the IFO Negotiations Team met with MnSCU negotiators and exchanged opening proposals on economic issues. In doing so they transitioned from interest based bargaining over language to positional bargaining over language and money. Although we are far apart on many issues, the talks were constructive, and progress is being made. One hopeful sign is that for the first time in several rounds of negotiations, MnSCU's opener included a pay increase, albeit quite small, for faculty. See the article below by IFO Chief Negotiator Brent Jeffers.

One of the biggest barriers that we face in this round of contract negotiations is the Republican-controlled legislature. The process for contract ratification is that after MnSCU and IFO reach a tentative settlement, the agreement must be ratified by the IFO membership, be approved by the MnSCU Board of Trustees, and finally sent to the legislature for approval. This last step may be the most difficult, depending on which political party controls the legislature. Unfortunately, public employee compensation has become highly politicized. This was driven home dramatically on August 30th when the Legislative Subcommittee on Employee Relations voted 6-4 along direct party lines to reject the agreements that had been negotiated by AFSCME and MAPE. I attended one of the meetings of the legislative panel, and I was shocked by the callousness and lack of any respect of some of the majority legislators toward public employees. If Republicans control the legislature next session, we have our work cut out for us. See Russ Stanton's article below regarding the political implications of the vote on the AFSCME and MAPE contracts.

On September 6th and 7th, the IFO Government Relations Committee (GRC) held its first meeting of the year. Congratulations to Matt Filner of Metropolitan State and Karen Branden of Moorhead who were elected co-chairs of the GRC for the coming year. The committee met with a representative of the state university student association (MSUSA) and representatives from Minnesotans United for All Families to discuss strategies for defeating the proposed constitutional amendments on voter photo ID, and on restricting marriage to one man and one woman. The GRC recommended and the IFO Board approved spending \$18,000 to partner with OutFront Minnesota to hire campus organizers to defeat the amendments. This is part of the \$25,000 set aside by the 2012 Delegate Assembly for this purpose. The GRC is also distributing signs, stickers, and buttons on campuses that urge voters to "VOTE NO" on the marriage amendment.

In addition, the IFO Political Action Committee (the political arm of IFO), voted to endorse DFL'er Ben Lein of Moorhead for the Minnesota House, and DFL'er Jack Krage of Winona for the Minnesota Senate. The committee voted to not endorse in the race between Republican King Banaian, a faculty member at St. Cloud State University and Zach Dorholt, his democratic opponent in St Cloud.

The IFO Executive Committee held its first Meet and Confer with Chancellor Rosenstone on September 7th. The Chancellor will be meeting with the IFO Board of Directors on Friday, September 21 to discuss our concerns and the strategy for the biennial budget request as well as other topics such as MnSCU's "Metro Plan." We were informed that Doug Knowlton, Vice Chancellor of Academic and Student Affairs, plans to have campus visits with faculty on how the forums on Extraordinary Education submitted to the Chancellor last year will be used. We look forward to these meetings and welcome close communication and consultation with the System Office and Chancellor Rosenstone.

Meanwhile, Russ Stanton has been conducting workshops on retirement issues on each of the campuses. The workshops are for new and newly-tenured faculty to help them choose between IRAP and TRA as their basic retirement plan, and for faculty nearing retirement to help them maximize their retirement-related benefits under the contract and state law. He also meets individually for a half an hour with any interested faculty member. Turnout has been especially heavy this year on most campuses, and additional days have been added at Mankato, Metro, St. Cloud, and Winona . If you are interested in meeting with Russ on a retirement matter, contact your local Faculty Association office to schedule an appointment.

We read about the student "swirl " in reference to students' multiple, simultaneous enrollments in colleges and universities. As I visit campuses, I think of a faculty "swirl" as we strive to meet the educational needs of more and more students in Minnesota with fewer resources. The creativity, innovation, and sheer determination of faculty to continue to provide high quality learning opportunities in the face of scarce resources and seeming lack of public respect are truly impressive. Thank you for all your hard work.

NEGOTIATIONS REPORT - IFO & MNSCU EXCHANGE OPENING PROPOSALS

by [Brent Jeffers](#), *Chair of the IFO Negotiating Team*

With 18 months of Interest Based Bargaining (IBB) behind us, the IFO and MnSCU negotiating teams transitioned into Positional Bargaining on Friday, September 14th. Both the parameters and the atmosphere are entirely different between Positional Bargaining and IBB. For example, early in the process of positional bargaining, each party establishes a position on key issues and commits to those positions as negotiations proceed. This method of bargaining is adversarial by nature but also necessary when the two parties have many opposing views as they relate to critical aspects involving terms and conditions of employment. As an illustration, the IFO positions regarding shared governance, GLBTA rights, and the cost of instruction are drastically different from the administration and due to legislative attacks targeting both public sector employees and higher education funding, it is paramount that we commit to our values while at the bargaining table. We are constantly reminded that the opposition's constituents include the Chancellor, the MnSCU Board of Trustees, and the Minnesota Legislature. We have a mature contract which means there is some language and faculty benefits that management or their constituents

would like to eliminate. Our extensive IBB process all but exhausted the bargaining issues of mutual interest and our desire to negotiate economics make it evident that positional bargaining is a more effective strategy for us to progress toward a settlement.

The MnSCU Opener included extensive language proposals and a modest 1.2% salary enhancement (in FY 13) plus a one-time lump-sum payment of \$800 dollars (FY12) that would not become a part of your base salary. Some low-lights of the MnSCU language proposals are the elimination of both “mandatory” sabbaticals which includes the one after a year of service following an initial award of tenure and the guaranteed sabbatical after 10 years of service. MnSCU believes the administrators should have the discretion to deny these extensive professional development efforts. The employer also proposed to eliminate the \$800 contribution in a Health Reimbursement Arrangement (HRA) account for adjuncts and community faculty. And furthermore, they proposed to fundamentally change our democratic process and thus faculty governance at the departmental level by giving more supervisory authority to chairs.

The IFO has firm positions on the value of professional development and sabbatical leaves, the fair and equitable treatment for all our members, and the importance of shared governance.

A successful round of negotiation can be measured against three variables; 1) what did we get; 2) what did they get; and, 3) what did we keep out of the contract. The first two variables are always reflected in the contractual history and communicated as part of the ratification process while the language we are able to avert generally remains obscured. The untold success of our bargaining history is the amount of proposed language our organization has kept out of the contract.

After an exchange of opening proposals on Friday, the parties proceeded with many constructive discussions, additional proposals, and counter proposals. The fact that their opener put money on the table is encouraging. In summation, it was a productive first session of positional bargaining. Our next negotiation session is scheduled for October 19-20.

REPUBLICAN LEGISLATORS REJECT AFSCME & MAPE CONTRACTS – BATTLE LINES DRAWN

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

On August 30th the Legislative Subcommittee on Employee Relations, which is empowered to implement state employee collective bargaining contracts between legislative sessions, voted down the contracts for the American Federation of State County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) and the Minnesota Association of Professional Employees (MAPE) on a strictly partisan vote--with the six Republicans voting against the contracts and the four Democrats supporting the contracts. Thus, the new agreements will not take effect, and AFSCME and MAPE revert back to their old contracts. Here is a link to the resolution rejecting the contracts:

<http://www.commissions.leg.state.mn.us/lcer/120830resolutionSER5adopted.pdf>

The only hope of reviving the agreements is if the next legislature overrides the panel’s decision. That is unlikely to happen if Republicans control the legislature again next year. House Speaker Kurt Zellers strongly hinted the legislature (if Republican controlled) will reject the contracts. Three of the Republican legislators on the Legislative Subcommittee on Employee Relations recently wrote an editorial in the Star Tribune criticizing the contracts and the Dayton administration for agreeing to the settlements.

The AFSCME and MAPE contracts provided step increases for about half of the employees covered, and a 2% increase across-the-board in the last six months of the two-year contracts. The unions had in turn agreed to higher deductibles and co-payments that saved about \$7.9 million in health care costs. The Republican majority on the panel were not satisfied with that—they wanted the employees to pick up 10% of the premium on the employee

health care (employees already pay 15% of dependent care). A 10% employee pick up of employee premium would cost each employee under the state health plan \$536 per year. The Republican legislators also want the step and lane system replaced by performance pay.

The implications for IFO's contract settlement are clear. After four years of flat salaries for the majority of our members, it appears our only hope of getting a contract settlement (unless we make some major concessions) is to get a DFL-controlled legislature next year. The reason is that public employee pay and benefits have become a partisan political issue. Also, the legislature has become extremely polarized in recent years, and very few legislators deviate from party line positions.

A change in control of the legislature is certainly feasible. It will only take the turning of four seats in the Senate and five seats in the House to shift control from the Republicans to the Democrats. Because of redistricting, all 201 legislative seats are up for election, and since many legislators ended up in the same district as another incumbent, at least 50 legislators will not be returning to St. Paul. Others incumbents are likely to be defeated in the general election on November 6th. Since some of the new Republicans elected two years ago were elected by very narrow margins (for example, Rep. Kelby Woodard was elected by 17 votes, and Rep. King Banaian was elected by 10 votes, etc.), the chances of Democrats regaining the seats in a more normal year are quite high.

Some of our university districts are ground zero in the battle for control of the legislature. In Bemidji, Republican State Senator John Carlson is facing off against DFL Senator Tom Saxhaug, and DFL Representative John Persell is facing off against Republican Representative Larry Howes. In Marshall, Republican Senator Gary Dahms is facing a stiff challenge from Wabasso School Superintendent and former DFL legislator Ted Suss. In St. Cloud, Republican freshmen Senator John Pederson and Representative King Banaian are fighting for re-election in DFL leaning districts. In Moorhead, DFL Representative Kent Eken is running for the seat of retiring DFL Senator Keith Langseth, but is facing stiff competition from Republican Phil Hanson. In Winona, freshman Republican Senator Jeremy Miller is facing off against DFL'er Jack Krage in DFL leaning district.

The stakes are high in this election. At stake are not only public employee compensation contracts, but whether Governor Dayton will have a legislature that works with him or against him on issues of tax reform, higher education funding, and health care.

TEXTBOOK AFFORDABILITY WORKGROUP – FIRST MEETING SEPTEMBER 14, 2012

by [Cindy Phillips](#) *IFO Academic Affairs Coordinator*

Initiated by Statewide student groups within MnSCU, the Minnesota Legislature backed creation of this effort to contain textbook costs for students. Evan Bibbee, IFO representative, from Mankato and I attended the first meeting and heard from the State University Student Association about their Textbook Survey Report (see link below).

http://www.msusa.org/vertical/sites/%7B8F60E86D-EE41-444E-926B-0493E70B13F9%7D/uploads/Textbook_Survey_Report.pdf

Not surprisingly, 94% of respondents indicated cost of course materials impacted their ability to afford college. **More surprising, perhaps, is that over half reported not buying the textbook for the course they were taking because of cost, and students also commented that they reviewed the price of textbooks before choosing which classes or sections to take.**

MnSCU has put together a rather extensive website and suggestions about "Textbook and Learning Resources Affordability" at <http://textbook.project.mnscu.edu> including a section aimed at faculty. While there is encouragement to "write your own," we note it does not deal with protection of your copyright, an important issue

for us.

The student representatives seemed very sensitive to respecting faculty choice of materials but concerned that we understand the financial impact and consider cost in our decision making. We as faculty need to be especially alert to the rising tide of electronic media which can provide many advantages but bring with them the possibility of pressure for uniform adoption to justify lower per use cost through site licenses and other volume purchasing. Please send any comments you have to me directly at phillips@ifo.org so that Evan Bibbee and I are aware of your concerns and can bring them to the next meeting of Textbook Affordability Workgroup.

MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

by [Donna Blake](#), IFO Controller

IFO MEMBER DUES & FAIRSHARE FEES

IFO member dues and fair share fees payroll deductions will start for most faculty on their 9/21/12 paycheck. If you don't have a union deduction taken from this paycheck, you should see one start in the near future. All members and non-members will see their union deduction listed on their paycheck stub as "union dues." We have discovered that many faculty who believed they were IFO members because of the "union dues" designator are in fact fair share. Please check with your local Faculty Association or me to verify your status.

Click [here](#) to see the FY13 member dues and fair share fees rate chart approved by the 2012 Delegate Assembly. Full-time and part-time faculty will have 16 total payments deducted. Adjunct and community faculty will have 3 total payments deducted.

If you do not see a union deduction taken in the next few paychecks, or if you have any questions about when your deductions will stop or start, or if you would like to check on the status of your membership, please contact me at blake@ifo.org.

If you would like to join the union, you can sign up for instant membership by using our convenient online membership application found [here](#).

IFO MEMBER ID CARDS

All IFO members should have received an IFO member ID card at some point in the past few years. If you did not receive a member ID card, please let me know. New members who have recently joined should allow 2-4 weeks processing time for their new member ID card to arrive. If you have had a name change and would like a new member ID card, or have misplaced your original member ID card and would like a replacement card, please contact me at blake@ifo.org.

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 mailing address is 490 Concordia Avenue, Suite 125, Saint Paul, MN 55103, or you can reach us by phone at 800/325-9644 or 651/227-8442. You can also send us an email by clicking [HERE](#).