

# Inter Faculty Organization

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## *Faculty Update Newsletter*

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### FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

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

Dear Colleagues:

MOST FREQUENT QUESTION FROM FACULTY TO THE IFO?

Yes, it concerns our contract. In Minnesota's political and economic maelstrom, one thing is quite clear. The biggest obstacle to a new contract is the current Minnesota legislature. If we do not have a change in the control of the Minnesota legislature from Republican to Democrat, our prospects for a fair and equitable contract settlement are almost non-existent. One only needs to look at the voting records of the current legislators to state unequivocally that they do not support increasing or even maintaining the current level of funding for higher education. Such attitudes certainly do not bode well for state university employees. We have provided voting records of campus legislators on key issues for you in a link to this Update. Please see Russ Stanton's article that follows. For detailed information on the opening proposals for the contract, please see Chief Negotiator, Brent Jeffers' article.

At the last state Executive Committee meeting on October 12, Faculty Association Presidents were informed about progress with joint committee meetings with MnSCU that demonstrated shared governance, a value and responsibility we take quite seriously. On the same day as this meeting, a summit of campus representatives from Academic Affairs as well as the Academic & Student Support Technology Council was convened at the IFO offices.

A lively discussion on a draft version of a plan on how MnSCU colleges and universities might collaborate to increase educational undergraduate opportunities in the Twin Cities ensued with Vice Chancellor Douglas Knowlton. This initiative, “Increasing the Global Competitiveness of the Twin Cities Metro Area,” (informally known as “The Metro Plan”) proposes a new approach to provide increased baccalaureate education in the seven-county Metro area along with an ambitious schedule for its implementation. If you have not seen the plan that has been sent out to University presidents and F.A. presidents, I strongly encourage you to read it as it has serious implications for all seven state universities ([click here for a copy of the plan](#)). As Vice Chancellor Knowlton cautioned, this draft is long on background and rationale, but short on how it might be implemented. Your comments and ideas are always welcome, and I am requesting that you send them to your F.A. president and copy me.

One of the difficulties in our organization can sometimes be communication. The two issues that I have briefly addressed are ones that concern all state university faculty. I urge you to ask your colleagues if they have read this issue of the Update. We need all faculty informed of events that directly affect them. PLEASE inform yourself about election choices and remember to vote on Tuesday, November 6.

## THE NOVEMBER 6<sup>TH</sup> ELECTION IS CRUCIAL FOR IFO MEMBERS

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

The last two years have been brutal for higher education and public employees.

The legislature cut state appropriations to MnSCU institutions from \$605 million per year to \$545 million per year. The U of M was cut even deeper. MnSCU’s state funding for this year is less than it was in FY 1999—despite enrollment growth of nearly 50,000 full-time-equivalent students, and inflation of over 37% since 1999. We have lost programs and positions, class sizes have increased, and more and more classes are being taught by adjunct faculty. Students are paying higher tuition for education that has often been watered down because of unfunded inflation and enrollment growth. Many students are going deep in debt because an ever increasing share of the cost of higher education is being shifted off of taxpayers and on to students in the form of higher tuition.

Public employee pay, benefits and collective bargaining rights were under a coordinated attack in Wisconsin, Ohio, and many other states. Minnesota was no exception, where Republican legislators pushed legislation to freeze pay, shift the cost of pensions and health care from the state to state employees, stop career and promotional steps, and reduce severance pay. The threat of vetoes, and actual vetoes by Governor Mark Dayton, were what stopped these legislative measures.

But the pain is not over—unless you do something about it by voting November 6<sup>th</sup>. In the special session following the shutdown of state government last summer, the legislature “balanced” the state budget by shifting billions of school aid payments into the next biennium, and borrowing against future tobacco settlement funds—this will create another multi-billion budget shortfall at the start of the next biennium. The negotiated contracts of AFSCME and MAPE were recently voted down by a straight party line vote (Republicans opposing the agreements, Democrats supporting the agreements) of the Legislative Subcommittee on Employee Relations. It is obvious by the public statements of the opponents of the agreements and Republican leaders that they have no intention of passing agreements unless there are significant concessions by employees.

Let me be blunt: Your compensation and the quality of education you deliver are at stake in this election.

Let me be blunt again: There is a partisan divide on the funding of higher education; Republicans, with few exceptions, support lower taxes for businesses and high income individuals that result in cuts to the funding of higher education and Democrats support higher income taxes on high income individuals and more funding for higher education. And again, the votes to cut public employee compensation and undermine collective bargaining

rights were almost along straight party line issues. There is a difference between the political parties.

You can do something about this situation—you can turn out and vote on November 6<sup>th</sup>. And you can vote the legislators who have been underfunding higher education and attacking public employees out of office. We haven't had much luck changing their minds, but we can change the players. It's now your turn to vote!

The future does not have to be one of doom and gloom. We are only a handful of seats away from electing legislative majorities that will work with Governor Dayton instead of trying to undermine his every effort. With all legislative seats up for election, and with newly-drawn legislative districts, we know that there will be a huge turnover in the legislature. **Having a legislature that will make higher education a priority again, and that will treat public employees with respect and dignity, is easily within our grasp!**

**So vote November 6<sup>th</sup>.** Tell others—particularly students, to vote. **You don't have to be pre-registered in Minnesota—you can register at the polls on Election Day.** If you don't know where to vote you can enter your address into the “poll finder” at the Secretary of State's office, and it will tell you where to vote—here is a link: <http://pollfinder.sos.state.mn.us/>.

If you are trying to decide who to vote for, check out the IFO spreadsheet on the voting records of campus area legislators on key issues related to higher education ([click here](#)). You can also find a list of legislative candidates that have been endorsed by the IFO ([click here](#)).

It is really quite simple—the legislative outcomes we get next May depend on your vote on November 6<sup>th</sup>. **Vote!**

## NEGOTIATIONS REPORT – DETAILS ON MNSCU'S OPENING PROPOSAL

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

One of the interesting aspects about an opening proposal in positional bargaining is it reveals the opinions and desires of the parties. The MnSCU opener on September 14, 2012 expressed some contentious wants of the management team; some examples include:

- the administration's desire to appoint faculty on university and system-level committees
- eliminating the concept of a “duty” day
- eliminating health and dental benefits for adjunct and community faculty
- elimination of the “mandatory” sabbatical - all sabbatical leaves including the guaranteed sabbaticals would be at the discretion of the President (and non-grievable)
- the administration would like to empower department chairs with supervisory authority
- tenure for administrators

The IFO by statute is the exclusive representative of the faculty, and we will continue to choose who represents the faculty on committees. The concepts of a duty-day in which faculty responsibilities do not have to be performed on campus and compensation is only at a full duty-day rate are firm positions of the union. We are not interested in eliminating any benefits for our adjunct and community faculty; we are seeking to improve the benefits for these members of our bargaining unit. Sabbaticals are an essential part of our professional development and an honored tradition of the academy. Shared governance and the democratic process at the department level is an unwavering value of the faculty. And, if MnSCU wishes to tenure administrators, they can do it at the system office.

In addition, management proposed an externally funded fix-term position which will teach up to 18 credits a semester and 30 credits for the academic year. This proposal creates a new class of faculty in which an individual could be appointed a fixed-term contract year after year in perpetuity. MnSCU then added that these on-going fixed-term appointments could be designated as such regardless of the funding source; meaning externally designated but

internally funded (EDIF's).

On a more serious and timely note, the failure of the legislature to ratify the AFSME and MAPE contracts means the settlement agreement on the state health care plan between Minnesota Management and Budget (MMB) and the coalition bargaining team of state employee unions will not go into effect for calendar year 2013. The negotiated settlement included modest increases in co-pays and deductibles that would have offset employer paid premiums and help hold down the cost of health care. Absent of a ratified contract and maintaining a status quo (no change in co-pays and deductibles), the state will raise the employer paid health insurance premiums by 12.5%. For MnSCU, this estimated increase is between 2-3 million dollars that otherwise would have been on the table for negotiations.

It is important for faculty to understand the implications of the current legislative climate on our ability to negotiate an acceptable contract. The Republican chair of the subcommittee on employee relations, Mike Parry, recommended not to ratify the health care settlement and thus by partisan vote took money off the MnSCU bargaining table that could have gone for increases in faculty salaries. After 21 months of negotiations and nearly 18 months without a contract, the November 6<sup>th</sup> election may be the most influential factor in settling this contract and the 2013-2015 contract (which we are scheduled to begin negotiating after the start of the New Year). The MnSCU team and the IFO are always cognizant of what will and will not be ratified by the sitting legislature. Your vote can help us get the best possible contract.

## OPEN ENROLLMENT 2013

by [Donna Blake](#), *IFO Controller*

Open enrollment will be held from November 1st through November 14th. The open enrollment newsletter was mailed to faculty home addresses the week of October 11th. The open enrollment website is now available and can be found by clicking [here](#). The website includes a detailed open enrollment handbook with rates and links to the self-service and health assessment websites. Minnesota Management and Budget (MMB) will be conducting open enrollment meetings for employees and retirees. A list of these meetings can be found [here](#). It is highly recommended that you attend a meeting if possible. MMB will be adding up to four additional staff members in their call center for open enrollment, please click [here](#) for contact information.

The 2013 Health Plan Benefits Schedule and a list of what items are new and what items are open can be found [here](#). A few things to note are as follows:

**Medical** – Fairview Clinics has signed a contract with Preferred One for cost level one, so you will need to switch to this network if you want to use Fairview Clinics at cost level one. FYI, Fairview Clinics will be changing to a cost level three on the BlueCross/BlueShield and Health Partners networks. There will be a 12.5% increase in medical premiums for 2013.

**Dental** – there is a special dental open enrollment this year to give the approximate 3,000 dependents whose coverage was dropped from the Dependent Eligibility Verification Audit a chance to get added back on if they qualify as a dependent. The rumor is that dental will also be open again next year on its regular bi-annual schedule. There is no premium increase for dental for 2013.

**Basic Life Insurance** - the basic life insurance rate will increase slightly for 2013.

**Long-Term Disability** - There will be a slight decrease in the long-term disability rate for 2013.

**Medical Dental Expense Account (MDEA)** – this account will be capped at \$2,500 for 2013. However, both spouses can each have their own MDEA at \$2,500, but there cannot be any double dipping for the same expenses between the two accounts. The IRS has been cracking down on this and issuing penalties if they find evidence of it.

You must re-enroll in pretax accounts each year.

**Adding New Dependents** - if you are adding a new dependent during open enrollment, you will need their Social Security number and birth date. After open enrollment you will receive a letter from MMB asking for verification of any new dependents. Click [here](#) to find a new dependent eligibility verification authorization chart showing what documentation will be requested. You must provide the documentation within 30 days or the dependent will not be added to your coverage on January 1st. For dependents who are rejected, no COBRA coverage will be offered unlike the original Dependent Eligibility Verification Audit this past year. Please note that MMB will continue to request this documentation for new dependents going forward.

**Changing Dependent Information** - if you need to change your dependent information in the system, please contact the list of MMB (A to Z) contacts found [here](#). You cannot make changes to dependent information on the self-service website and re-adding the dependent again with the correct information will make it seem as if you have twice the number of dependents that you actually have.

**Changing Clinics** - please note that open enrollment is not the time to change clinics. If you want to change your clinic, please call the number on the back of your ID card. You can change clinics once a month, or up to 12 times per year. You can also change cost levels twice a year. Everybody in your family can have a different clinic at a different cost level, but please note that your family deductible will be calculated using the highest cost level of your family members.

**Confirmation Forms** - Instead of mailing out confirmation forms this year after open enrollment, MMB has programmed the self-service website to produce it after you submit your elections (see sample form [here](#)). Please print a copy of your confirmation form or save an electronic version of it and check it for accuracy. If you made a mistake, you can go back in and make changes as many times as you want up until the end of open enrollment. Please note that the electronic confirmation form will not be available to view after the open enrollment period, so please **save and/or print a copy of it before open enrollment ends**. Please note that if you enroll using a paper form you should keep a copy of your paper enrollment form and verify your selections on the self-service website after December 1, 2012.

**Four-Page Summary of Benefits** - this new document requirement will be provided in electronic format on MMB's website.

**Journeywell** - will be doing the health assessments and providing online programs and virtual coaching on certain health topics for 2013. Their website will be down from October 18th through October 31st to prepare for open enrollment and their new services. It will reopen on November 1st so faculty can submit their health assessments. Journeywell will be mailing all faculty a separate letter that will contain their user name and password. Please note that health assessment data will be kept confidential. Journeywell has added a new progress bar feature to the health assessment survey. After you take the survey, please make sure to answer the question "yes" about being contacted by a coach if you want to get your \$5.00 copay discount for you and your family members.

**Women's Preventative Services** – these have increased to comply with the new health care reform requirements for 2013. Please click [here](#) to see a listing of these services.

## IFO URGES "NO" VOTE ON VOTER ID

by [Matt Filner](#), *IFO Chair of Government Relations Committee*

In 2012, the Minnesota legislature passed a proposed constitutional amendment to require, among other things, that all voters show a government-issued photo ID with a current address before being allowed to vote. The proposed constitutional amendment will be on the ballot on November 6th.

Both the IFO Board and the IFO Delegate Assembly voted overwhelmingly to oppose the so-called “Voter ID” amendment. In addition, the faculty at Metro State and Winona State passed resolutions in opposition to the Voter ID amendment. The faculties at other state universities are considering a similar resolution.

The IFO urges a **no vote** for the following reasons:

**Voting is a Right, not a Privilege.** Like freedom of speech and freedom of religion, the right to vote is a fundamental Constitutional right. Every eligible voter has the right to vote, and no government—state or otherwise—can take away this right. The fact is that an estimated 200,000 Minnesotans (including many of our students) do not have a government-issued photo ID with a current address. Supporters of the Voter ID amendment compare voting to cashing a check or renting a car. If it is, then voting is a privilege for some citizens, not a fundamental right for all. In order to promote voting as a fundamental right, we need to remove barriers to voting, not add them.

**Voting should be Maximized, not Minimized.** Minnesota has a long, bi-partisan tradition of ensuring that every eligible voter can vote. In fact, because of this bi-partisan tradition, Minnesota has long led the nation in voter turnout. We do this by making sure that all eligible voters can vote with as few barriers as possible. One of the most important bi-partisan innovations was the creation of election-day registration. Voters who are not pre-registered can currently register at the polls. Even if you support the idea of voters showing photo ID at the polls, you should vote no: this amendment will eliminate same-day registration, potentially disenfranchising over 500,000 eligible voters in Minnesota.

**Voter ID would not work.** Requiring voters to show a government issued photo ID with current address would only stop one kind of fraud: voter impersonation. After extensive recounts and the most rigorous examination of a state election system in US History, there were absolutely zero evidence of voter impersonation.

**The Amendment would create an entirely new voting system.** If passed, the Minnesota elections would be burdened with a new “provisional” ballot system. This means that every polling place would have to offer a “provisional” ballot to any voter who did not have a government-issued photo ID with their current address. These ballots would only be counted if the voter returned to a government office with the proper ID. For some voters, this would mean time, money and travel—often not possible for voters. That’s why in states around the country that have provisional ballots, 30% of these ballots are never counted.

**Voter ID is expensive.** At a time when funds for higher education have been dramatically cut, it’s hard to imagine why we should support a costly system that solves no existing problems. Because cities and counties would have to create a vast new election system, the Citizens for Election Integrity estimates the costs to state and local governments at over \$50 million of start up costs and \$10 million of on-going costs. This could mean greater cuts to higher education (among other things).

**Voter ID is ambiguous.** Finally, even if you think the points above justify the costs, you should vote no because the amendment itself is ambiguous. The actual amendment states that, “All voters, including those not voting in person, must be subject to substantially equivalent identity and eligibility verification prior to a ballot being cast or counted.” It is not at all clear what “substantially equivalent identity” or “eligibility verification” means. Would it eliminate absentee balloting? What about overseas soldiers? Do we really want to change our Constitution in such a vague way and empower a future legislature to manipulate the voting system for their gain? Supporters should work to try to convince a majority in the legislature and the governor to support their proposal, rather than bypassing the lawmaking process and place a permanent and vague restriction on voting.

The decision to amend the Minnesota Constitution is a serious one and, as voters, we will make this decision on November 6<sup>th</sup>. We urge you to **vote no** on the proposed constitutional amendment limiting the right to vote.

## UPDATE ON AUDIT OF DEPENDENTS COVERED UNDER STATE HEALTH PLAN

by [Patrice Arseneault](#), *IFO Director of Grievances & Equity Issues*

The state's Minnesota Management & Budget (MMB) office has completed the first phase of the Dependent Eligibility Verification Audit of state employees with dependents who are covered under the State Employee Group Health Insurance Program or "SEGIP" for health and / or dental insurance coverage – an audit that was mandated by the 2011 state legislature. MMB hired an outside vendor, HMS Employer Solutions, to collect the verification documents from state employees (who were employed as of February 23, 2012). HMS completed an audit and appeals process and reported to SEGIP those dependents of state employees for whom HMS did not receive the requested verification documentation by July 16, 2012. On August 1, 2012, SEGIP terminated coverage for those dependents of state employees who were identified by HMS as lacking "verification" on their eligibility for health and or dental coverage, and sent COBRA notices to faculty and other state employees who lost dependent health and/or dental coverage.

SEGIP reported that out of the 75,000 dependents who are covered by the state's health plan, about 3,100 dependents were removed from the state's health plan on August 1 because the vendor HMS did not receive documentation to verify their eligibility to be covered.

State employees who lost dependent coverage on August 1, 2012, will have an opportunity to "add" dependent coverage for 2013, during the open enrollment period from November 1-14, 2012. Please keep in mind that within 30 days following the end of the open enrollment, employees will be asked to "verify" the eligibility of any new dependents who were added during the open enrollment period. If you do not provide the documentation that SEGIP requests, your dependents will not be added to your health care coverage in 2013.

The IFO has learned there are several faculty who lost health and/or dental coverage on August 1, 2012, for dependents who qualify as "eligible" under our contract. We are taking steps to reverse erroneous terminations of coverage and otherwise remedy faculty whose dependents should be covered through the appeal and grievance processes with SEGIP and with MnSCU. We have not heard from all faculty who lost dependent health care coverage. **If you lost health care coverage on August 1, as a result of the audit and you have not been in communication with the IFO, please contact IFO legal assistant [Tiffany Nelson](#).** We would like to learn about your experience and current situation, and to include you in our appeals regarding the loss of coverage.

## CAMPUS CLIMATE SURVEY

by [Patrice Arseneault](#), *IFO Director of Grievances & Equity Issues*

On November 1, you will receive an email from your Faculty Association with a message from IFO President Nancy Black urging you to fill out a questionnaire for an important study being conducted by the IFO to help us understand what the climate is like for faculty teaching at the seven Minnesota state university campuses. This survey represents the second phase of a two-phase project sponsored by the IFO Equity Committees - the Multicultural Issues Committee, the Feminist Issues Committee, the GLBTA Issues Committee, and the Benefits Equity Committee. The IFO is seeking input from all faculty in all types of appointments, including adjunct or community faculty, faculty with fixed-term appointments, and non-tenure track, probationary and tenured faculty, and including IFO members and faculty who are not members of the IFO union.

The two-phased project being conducted by the IFO equity committees is a study of the climate for faculty on the seven state university campuses related to issues of sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, religion, race, ethnicity, and national origin. The first phase of the study involved asking faculty volunteers from each campus to participate in focus group sessions. As was reported in last April's IFO Update, the equity committees completed Phase I of the study last year and presented to the IFO Board a qualitative report on the findings from lead

researchers Deb Peterson and Colleen Greer.

The results of Phase I guided the development of a comprehensive survey to assess the climate on campus for all faculty. Phase II of the IFO's climate study is an online survey of all state university faculty, using key concepts from the focus group report.

Please look for and plan to respond to the IFO's request for you to take the online survey on campus climate at your university. All responses to the survey will be anonymous; the questionnaire will not ask faculty who respond to identify themselves, and IP address tracking will be disengaged. We will not know which faculty member is providing any given response. In addition, any interim report(s) and the final report will release information only in summary, aggregated form.

## ACADEMIC AFFAIRS UPDATE

by [Donna Brauer](#) & [Cindy Phillips](#), *IFO Academic Affairs Coordinators*

As your Academic Affairs Coordinators one of our main responsibilities is participating in a variety of MnSCU advisory groups. Last year the MnSCU division of Academic and Student Affairs implemented a new "consultation" committee structure with four advisory councils and a Coordinating Commission to assure that important issues don't "fall between the cracks." Donna Brauer was instrumental in creating this revised structure and co-chairs the Commission, assuring that our views, albeit advisory, are heard.

The four councils are: 1. Policy, 2. Student Affairs, 3. Academic Affairs and 4. Academic and Student Support Technology. This month we will describe the Policy Council.

The MnSCU Board of Trustees has adopted formal policy on many topics important to faculty and students as you can see at <http://www.mnscu.edu/board/policy/index.html>. The Academic and Student Affairs Policy Council is charged with advising System Office staff, the Vice Chancellor and the Chancellor on academic and student affairs policies before those documents are submitted to the Board of Trustees for final approval. This includes new policies and a review of all existing policies on a five year rotation. Up for their five year review this academic year are 2.2 State Residency Requirements, 2.8 Student Life as well as 3.35 Credit for Prior Learning and 3.37 Minnesota Transfer Curriculum. No new policies are currently on the horizon; generally these develop in response to mandates from the legislature, so after the 2013 legislative session, a need for new policies might arise.

At the first meeting of this academic year (September 20, 2012) revisions to Policy 3.36.1 Academic Programs were discussed. The Council recommended the elimination of emphases within the Associate in Arts Degree primarily because students tend to view an emphasis as a "major," which led to frequent misunderstandings when the student transfers.

Articulation Agreements seem to be an arrangement that we all love to hate. Two year schools complain about how hard it is to get four year schools to agree and four year schools complain about being inundated with time-consuming requests. The immediate issue the Council addressed was the existing requirement for the Associate in Fine Arts degree and the Associate in Science-Specific Field degree to have an articulation agreement with a MnSCU University. The Council recommended this be changed to require an articulation agreement with a four-year school and encourage but not absolutely require it be a MnSCU University. These recommendations now go to the Vice Chancellor for review.

Questions or comments to Donna Brauer at [Brauer@ifo.org](mailto:Brauer@ifo.org) and Cindy Phillips at [Phillips@ifo.org](mailto:Phillips@ifo.org).

CONTACT US

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