

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

Welcome to a new academic year, and a special welcome to the many new faculty joining our ranks! I am in the midst of visiting the seven state universities, and it is energizing to listen to your ideas and concerns. As I share them with the IFO staff and Board of Directors, I am encouraged by the resiliency and determination of our faculty to these challenging times for public higher education. You bring innovation, enthusiasm, and expertise in providing an extraordinary education for our university students. But our state universities and faculty are continuing to be subject to extremely challenging and yes, even painful times.

It is no secret that the Republican-dominated legislature, especially its more conservative wing, is attacking public employees and unions. Despite this, we were able to hold our own during this past session. Thanks to the unified efforts of our Government Relations Committee and campus faculty led by Russ Stanton at our state office we successfully fended off issues such as the so-called Right-to-Work constitutional amendment, massive cuts to health care benefits, and other legislation detrimental to faculty welfare.

Contract negotiations with Minnesota State College and Universities (MnSCU) are on all faculty minds and have been well underway since fall semester 2010. Your hardworking Negotiating Team and the IFO staff have had more than 60 meetings over that 19 month period. Progress has been made, and we now have tentative agreements on language issues of faculty concern.

Negotiations are always tough, but they have been made even tougher because of the hostile legislative environment. On August 13, 2012, I attended the hearing of the Legislative Subcommittee on Employee Relations intended to act on the ratification of MAPE and AFSCME's contract settlements. During this past year I had repeatedly heard reports about the hostility and straight party line voting at our state capitol. Nothing would have prepared me for the uncalled for viciousness I witnessed that morning. Senator Mike Parry, Chair of the Legislative

Committee, opened the hearing by announcing that he would not hold a vote on their contracts that day. He further threatened the attendees with eviction if there was any noise from us—a threat he evoked more than once despite the quiet behavior of the state employee taxpayers in the audience. In my four years of attending legislative hearings on higher education and contract hearings when I served as your president in 2004-08, this is the lowest point legislators have ever sunk. It was both shocking and frightening---and most importantly, it does not bode well for faculty pay increases if the same people control the legislature next year. I urge you to look for yourself if you think I may be exaggerating (<http://www.mape.org>). After 4 years of flat pay, it appears our only hope of getting a general pay increase is if we get a DFL legislature.

It is in this climate that I encourage you to inform yourself of government decisions (or non-decisions) that directly affect your livelihood and the wellbeing of your families. There are critical seats in university districts that can turn the tide. If we leave these legislators in office and there is not a change, we will be looking at demeaning take-backs to our compensation and benefits. I urge you to join and get involved in the Inter Faculty Organization. This is your organization. It is dedicated to improving faculty welfare and the state universities, and controlled by faculty. We all have a lot at stake.

As you celebrate this Labor Day remember the unions who brought it to you and how their efforts have helped to improve conditions for union members through widespread employer based health-care coverage, child labor laws, safety standards in the workplace, and the Family and Medical Leave Act.

NEGOTIATIONS UPDATE

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

The Negotiating Team entered the summer optimistic that Interest Based Bargaining (IBB) would conclude on a positive tone and the parties would transition into “positional” bargaining with some real momentum toward a settlement. However, by the middle of June it became obvious the IBB process had run its course. Although the IFO was making a sincere effort to improve Article 23 (Retrenchment) in a manner that would be mutually acceptable to both parties, the warm and cozy atmosphere of IBB quickly turned contentious. Following the change in climate, the final issue in IBB, a MnSCU item labeled “faculty input,” was pulled from the queue. It was time to start positional bargaining.

As a whole, IBB proved to be a productive process under the conditions facing us this round of negotiations; we have reached tentative agreements (TA) relating to seven different articles in the contract including a rewrite of Appendix G. Although much of the agreed upon language is considered clean-up and reorganization, there are substantive changes that will benefit faculty. The clean-up items will make the contract much easier to read and understand. Some highlights of the substantive changes include, an expansion of acceptable use of 19B funds, the extension of the probationary period upon request for untenured department chairs, and an acknowledgement that changing expectations during one’s probationary period shall not disadvantage a faculty member’s tenure decision. It is important to note, that these and other substantive changes were achieved with no bargaining cost to the union. In other words, we didn’t have to give anything away to management in trade for items that will benefit our membership. It is also important to note however that the language changes in the agreed upon TAs **will not** be implemented until the entire contract is ratified.

We have scheduled September 14 and 15 for an exchange of “openers” that will initiate our move into positional bargaining. We have also scheduled dates every month through December for negotiating sessions with the MnSCU team. One session per month is traditional, however, in the past, we have negotiated two and three weekends in a row if necessary. We have also decided it is not in our interest to concurrently negotiate the 2013-2015 contract; therefore, our opener will not include the 2012 Delegate Assembly resolutions. The reason is the compensation package we are about to negotiate is part of the MnSCU economic allocation from the 2011 legislative session and the economics for the 2013-2015 contract will not be allocated until this spring at the conclusion of the 2013 legislative session. The upsets in the recent primaries have made it inevitable; we will definitely have a different

group of law makers in January. It behooves us to settle our current contract and wait for the next legislative process to play out.

The campus representatives began work for this round of negotiations on October 23, 2010; our friend and Minnesota State University Moorhead representative, Oscar Flores, has documented 60 calendar days that team members have participated in our collective bargaining efforts. Although rewarding, the sacrifices of these negotiators and their families have been daunting. And of course, the hard work and dedication of the IFO-Staff, particularly Connie Howard (IFO General Counsel) and Tiffany Nelson (IFO Legal Assistant) is invaluable to our organization. Please find time to thank these wonderful people!

YOUR VOICE IN ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

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

This year the IFO's voice on academic affairs within the MnSCU system will be critical! The first topic is the legislatively-mandated **TEXTBOOK TASKFORCE**, which will issue a report by the end of Spring semester. We will work to maintain full faculty control over textbook selection. **Program approval, e-Education, credit transfer, exemplary teaching, intellectual property, "metro plan"** are other items on MnSCU's agenda. *It is our job to keep them aware of faculty views as MnSCU attempts to define the future of public higher education.* Please consider representing IFO in these state-wide discussions by volunteering through your local faculty association.

To facilitate strong, consistent messages to administrators, we will be holding a joint meeting of all faculty who are representatives to MnSCU councils/committees/taskforces and all faculty members on the IFO Academic Affairs and Academic Technology Committees. This meeting will be held partly in conjunction with the IFO Executive Committee meeting on **October 12th** from **10 a.m. to 3 p.m.** If you are currently serving on one of these groups, you will receive an e-mail invitation soon. Please contact either one of us for more information.

The Academic and Student Affairs division of MnSCU has been restructured and the four consultative councils formed last year will be fully operational beginning in September. In future issues we will report on the work of those councils.

IFO SPONSORS RETIREMENT WORKSHOPS

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

New and Newly Tenured Faculty Retirement Workshops

All new faculty members have one year from the date of hire to select either the Teachers Retirement Association (TRA) or the Individual Retirement Account Plan (IRAP) as their basic retirement plan. **The decision a faculty member makes can mean the difference of thousands of dollars per year in contributions, and hundreds of thousands in retirement income, and is irrevocable unless a faculty member receives tenure.** The choice can also dramatically affect portability of retirement benefits if a faculty member changes jobs. While both TRA and IRAP are good plans, they are designed for very different career patterns, and the plan that best fits a particular faculty member will vary depending on past pension coverage and/or anticipated future employment.

If a new faculty member has previous service under a Minnesota defined benefit plan such as the TRA, the Minnesota State Retirement System (MSRS), or the Public Employee Retirement Association (PERA), the default plan they will be covered by if they don't make a choice is TRA. For most new faculty members, who do not have TRA, MSRS, or PERA, the default plan if they do not make a choice is IRAP.

Because of legislation the IFO succeeded in lobbying through the legislature a few years ago, newly-tenured faculty

get a second one year window of opportunity to switch to TRA.

To help faculty members sort out which plan is best suited for them, I conduct workshops on each of the campuses each fall. At the workshops, I compare the IRAP and TRA plans feature by feature, explaining the differences in contributions, vesting, portability, risk, early retirement penalties, and withdrawal options. I also go over supplemental retirement, and the Tax Sheltered Annuity and Deferred Compensation plans, and explain the differences between the Traditional and Roth versions of those plans.

In addition to the workshops, I will meet individually with any new or newly-tenured faculty member to go over their particular retirement concerns. **To schedule an individual appointment, simply contact your local faculty association president or office.** This information can be found in the IFO Directory.

The workshops and individual appointments are free. The IFO does not sell or endorse any products or services. The workshops are simply a service to the membership. **A schedule of the times that Russ will be on each campus can be found on the IFO home page.**

Workshops for Faculty Nearing Retirement

The deadline for faculty to give notice of retirement in order to get certain retirement benefits, such as the final year two-step increase and the early separation incentive, is October 15th for a retirement to be effective after the academic year and before the start of the next academic year. Faculty seeking to enter phased retirement or the Annuitant Employment Program next fall must also submit their letter of application by October 15th of this year.

During late August, September, and early October, I will be conducting workshops on each of the campuses for faculty nearing retirement. If you are five or less years from retirement, you should find these workshops helpful. They cover a variety of retirement related subjects, including:

- The final year two-step increase for giving early notice.
- The Early Separation Incentive (ESI).
- Severance pay.
- Supplemental Retirement.
- TRA acceleration and annuitization options.
- The tax-free Health Care Savings Plan.
- Phased retirement and the Annuitant Employment Program.
- Retiree healthcare options.
- Paid up life insurance options.

I will also meet with any faculty member who wants to discuss his or her particular retirement concerns. You can schedule an individual ½ hour appointment with me by calling your local faculty association president or faculty association office (see IFO Directory). Again, the workshops and individual appointments are free. The IFO does not sell or endorse any products or services. Check the IFO home page for the dates that I will be on each campus and for contact information for setting up an individual appointment. You do not need an appointment to attend the general workshops.

IFO URGES “NO” VOTE ON MARRIAGE AMENDMENT

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

In 2011 the Minnesota legislature passed a proposed constitutional amendment to limit marriage by defining it as the union of one man and one woman. Constitutional amendments only need to pass the legislature by a majority vote in order to be submitted to the voters—the Governor does not have to sign the bill nor can he/she veto the bill.

Therefore, 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 marriage amendment. The IFO urges a **no vote** for the following reasons:

Individual Liberty. Our nation was founded on a principle of individual liberty—the freedom of individual citizens to pursue happiness on their own terms, without restriction by government, provided they do not harm or interfere with the rights of others. One of the most cherished freedoms in our society is the freedom of each citizen to marry the person he or she loves. The proposed constitutional amendment on marriage would, if passed, set an unhealthy precedent of using our state constitution to restrict rather than guarantee individual freedom.

Religious Freedom. Our nation was founded on a principle of religious freedom. Many religious faiths oppose gay marriage—and we respect their rights to practice their beliefs. However, many religious faiths do not oppose gay marriage, and they too should be allowed to practice their religion and recognize marriage as they see fit. We believe it is inappropriate to use the state constitution as a means by which one religious faith forces its doctrines on citizens with different beliefs. Many religious groups agree—over 100 religious organizations including the United Church of Christ, five Minnesota Lutheran synods, Minnesota United Methodists, and several Jewish synagogues have adopted positions against the proposed constitutional amendment.

Equality Under the Law. The proposed constitutional amendment would embed in our constitution unequal treatment for gay and lesbian citizens with respect to their right to marry the person of their choice. Since over 500 Minnesota laws provide rights, benefits and obligations linked to marital status, denying marriage equity also deprives gays and lesbians of important economic and social rights married couples enjoy: such as the right to spousal coverage under a health plan, to inherit in the absence of a will, to make medical decisions for an incapacitated spouse, to receive workers' compensation death benefits, and to sue for wrongful death of a spouse.

A Recruiting Disadvantage. The proposed amendment limiting marriage would make Minnesota a less welcoming state for gays and lesbians compared to states that do not constitutionally restrict marriage. State universities recruit both nationally and internationally. Potential employees from states like Connecticut, Iowa, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York, Vermont, and Washington D.C., and from countries like Belgium, Canada, South Africa, Spain and the Netherlands, where same-sex marriages are recognized, may not want to move to a state that constitutionally does not recognize their marriages. Perhaps this is why the leaders of major corporate employers such as General Mills, St. Jude Medical, Medtronic, Thompson Reuters, and RBC Financial have taken positions against the amendment restricting marriage. Marilyn Carlson Nelson, Chair of Carlson Companies, stated in the Pioneer Press: “As a CEO, I can say with certainty that to constitutionally mandate discrimination is bad for business and bad for the economic opportunities of all Minnesotans.”

Constitutional Inflexibility. Constitutions are basic documents that, by design, are costly and difficult to change. The campaigns for and against this proposed constitutional amendment restricting marriage have already spent millions of dollars. State law already prohibits same sex marriage in Minnesota—but it can be changed if future legislatures prefer different laws. Attitudes across the country are changing. In addition to the states that already allow same sex marriage, Maine, Maryland, Washington, and California seem to be on the verge of recognizing same sex marriage. This generation of voters should not use the Minnesota Constitution to bind the hands of future generations to make laws they deem appropriate.

Inclusiveness. Minnesota has a reputation for fairness and inclusiveness, and the proposed constitutional amendment, if adopted, would tarnish that reputation. That is why some of our most respected civic leaders have spoken out in opposition to the proposed amendment on marriage. These include: former Vice President Walter Mondale, former Governor Arne Carlson, Independent Candidate for Governor Tom Horner, former Chief Justice of the Supreme Court Kathleen Blatz, Governor Mark Dayton, former Senator David Durenberger, and many more.

This is not a partisan issue, it is a fairness issue.

Unity. Unions are about supporting one another. At the present time the rights of gay and lesbian members are under attack. They deserve our support.

The decision on whether or not to amend the state constitution is now up to you, the voters. We urge you to **vote no** on the proposed constitutional amendment restricting marriage.

TAKE ADVANTAGE OF YOUR TUITION WAIVER BENEFITS

by [Connie Howard](#), *IFO General Counsel*

IFO faculty who want to take advantage of their tuition waiver benefits under Art. 27, Sec. G, of the IFO Master Agreement for fall semester 2012 should be mindful of the deadlines for submitting requests. Except as noted in the table below, the deadline for submitting requests for tuition waiver benefits is 10 days after the first day of class for which benefits are sought. Check with the HR office on your campus for more information (see contact info below).

| CAMPUS | HR CONTACT | PHONE |
|---|---|--------------|
| Bemidji State University | Kiki Schnackenberg | 218-755-3966 |
| Minnesota State University, Mankato | JoAnn Scholtz | 507-389-2464 |
| Metropolitan State University | Nancy Moritz | 651-793-1277 |
| Minnesota State University Moorhead | Deb Lewis | 218-477-2158 |
| St. Cloud State University | Pat Thielman Deadline for requests for tuition waiver benefits for fall classes – September 7, 2012, 12:00 noon | 320-308-3203 |
| Southwest Minnesota State University | Barb Okrina | 507-537-6208 |
| Winona State University | Sandy Reed | 507-457-5005 |

Since spring of 2009, MnSCU has instituted an online tuition waiver benefit application system. To apply, please **click [here](#) and you will be routed to MnSCU's website for access to this system.** You will need your ID, password, and home institution information.

- Under the IFO Master Agreement, full-time faculty are eligible for up to 30 semester credits of tuition waivers per year.
- Part-time, adjunct and community faculty in the IFO bargaining unit (i.e. who teach two courses **or** more than three credits in a year) are entitled to tuition waiver benefits equaling the number of credit hours taught. For purposes of tuition waiver, the applicable year begins on the first day of fall semester and ends the day before the succeeding fall semester. (For example, if an adjunct faculty member is assigned to teach 10 credits during the academic year and another 6 credits during the following summer session, he/she would be entitled to up to 16 credits of tuition waiver to be used during that same period.)
- Tuition waiver benefits may be used to cover tuition and fees (other than laboratory and special course fees) for undergraduate or graduate courses, including doctoral courses **at any of the MnSCU four-year universities—not just at a faculty member's home institution.**
- A faculty member's spouse or dependent children may use any portion of the tuition waiver benefit not used by the faculty member. However, such benefits cover tuition only (not fees) for spouses and dependents.

by [Donna Blake](#), IFO Controller

Effective August 27th I have taken on the responsibility of Membership Coordinator. I look forward to working with all of you in this new role. Please contact your local faculty association or me if you have any questions regarding your membership status or member dues/fair share fees deductions.

The deadline for submitting a lump sum payment for your FY13 member dues or fair share fees is September 1, 2012. Payroll deductions for most faculty will start with your 9/21/12 paycheck. Click on the “about” link on the IFO home page to see the FY13 member dues and fair share fees schedule. You can sign up for instant membership at anytime by using our convenient online membership application found on the IFO homepage www.ifo.org.

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