

The Mankato Update, Winter Edition, 01/19/10
IFO Faculty Association—Minnesota State University, Mankato

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Note: IFO Grievance Officer & Equity Advocate Pat Arsenault and IFO General Counsel Connie Howard will be on campus on Wed., January 27 to discuss and answer questions about program redesign and closure and seniority. Watch your email for details.

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

This week, MSU Administration will release data on academic programs determined by the “program metrics” that have been developed during Fall Semester 2009, and that data will be used to identify programs for possible budget cuts or elimination. Many of you who read this will have played some role in developing those metrics as they went through your various departments and colleges; the Budget, Planning, and Assessment/Evaluation Sub-Meet committees; and main Faculty Association Meet & Confer. At the FA General Meeting last Thursday, those attending raised important questions and comments about this program evaluation and its likely results, including retrenchment of some full-time faculty. For the benefit of those who could not attend, this newsletter will summarize the main points of that meeting and outline some dates to watch for and events to anticipate during this semester.

Many of you have recognized the pending financial crunch that the state and the university will be facing within two years, if not sooner. I have unabashed pride that you have endorsed openness, transparency, and faculty input in how the university will prepare for that coming emergency; and that you have engaged in direct participation in fashioning the criteria and the process for that preparation. IFO President Rod Henry has recognized our efforts as a model that other state universities might do well to look at.

Now, however, it is time to step back. As faculty, we have lived up to our responsibilities as part of the shared governance of MSU Mankato. As department members, we still have wide latitude to make recommendations to Administration about the shape and future directions of our own programs. But, as IFO members under the contract, we have now come to that point where Administration must take on its own legal burden of “hard choices.” We cannot and should not tell Administration where to cut programs and personnel, no matter what individual opinions we might have. However, we must also continue to give diligent attention to Administration's decisions and give them our feedback on how those decisions are being made.

Above all, we must continue to demonstrate our respect and compassion for each other, not just as union members and colleagues, but as fellow human beings. Real lives—including people in staff and even Administration—are going to be touched and real pain will be felt in the coming weeks as the abstractions of processes and rights turn into actual facts. Let's not forget that those facts have faces.

Don Larsson, MSU Mankato Faculty Association President

INFORMATION SUMMARY FROM FA GENERAL MEETING, 1/14/10

A. BUDGET OUTLOOK: FY 2012-2013

- While the recession is “officially” over, recovery will still be relatively slow according to the January budget update from Minnesota Management & Budget. For details, go to <http://www.doer.state.mn.us/fu-current-fore>.
- The official MMB November forecast projects a state budget deficit of \$1.3 billion for FY 2011 and still predicts a “structural shortfall” of \$5.2 billion for FY 2012-2013. For details, go to <http://www.doer.state.mn.us/forecast>. A new official state forecast will be released in February or early March and will be the reference point for this state legislative session.
- By 2012-2013, MSU Mankato could have a shortfall of \$6-10 million.
- There is general agreement that the federal stimulus money has bought us time, alleviating the possibility of much deeper budget cuts in this year, and giving MSU Mankato the breathing space to cover next year’s costs, according to VP Rick Straka.
- But there is new concern that even the current situation may not be too stable, since a Ramsey County judge has ruled that part of Governor Pawlenty’s “unallotment” of state funding for this biennium was unconstitutional. If that ruling stands and is applied to the Governor’s other unallotments, it could throw the state into budgetary chaos right away.
- Virtually no one expects any solutions to come out of this year’s legislative session. The Governor is all but officially campaigning for the Republican nomination for President, and much of the state House and Senate leadership—both DFL and Republican—is officially or unofficially running for Governor. Even getting a good bonding bill this year might prove difficult. See the analysis by Russ Stanton, the IFO’s lobbyist, in the latest IFO Update: <http://www.ifo.org/Update/january10.html#pos>.

B. REVIEW OF PROGRAM METRICS PROCESS

Fall 2009:

- About 35 faculty and staff members applied for the BESI early retirement incentive. 22 of those are IFO faculty. A few faculty have withdrawn their applications since then. Estimated savings are still over \$1 million by FY 2012-2013.
- Administration stated that retrenchment is a possibility at two Meet & Confers, meeting the contractual standard for that possible action.
- New criteria for program evaluation and possible suspension/closure were introduced at Meet & Confer. Specific metrics for those criteria were developed in discussion with the Budget, Planning, and Assessment/Evaluation Sub-Meets, culminating in a three-hour joint workshop in late November.

December 2009-Early January 2010

- Academic Affairs, consulting with Don Larsson and Jim Grabowska, refined the criteria and metrics for program evaluation. Metrics were reviewed and discussed by the FA Executive Committee at the January 7 retreat.
- On Tuesday, January 12, Provost Olson discussed the metrics with department chairs at the monthly Department Chairs Breakfast; Associate VP Sandmann posted the metrics document to all faculty. (See attachment.)
- Administration has identified individual programs by CIP codes from the MnSCU Academic Program Inventory, and the metrics have then been applied to each program, with results reviewed by the college deans.
- **Thursday, Jan. 21:** Anticipated release of metrics results as applied to individual programs.

C. METRICS APPLICATION

For details see the attached document, "Program Evaluation Metrics"

- By January 21, there will be release of a spreadsheet that gauges performance under each criterion for each academic program identified by CIP (National Classification of Instructional Programs) code, including lower division, upper division, and graduate programs, when measured against other MnSCU institutions. There will also be a much longer spreadsheet breaking down specific programs in terms of their overall rankings across the criteria.
- Rankings under each criterion will be indicated by a
 - 0 (zero)**—meets the standard or average for that criterion
 - + (plus)**—exceeds the standard or criterion
 - (minus)**—falls below the standard or criterion
- Three groups of programs will be identified from the rankings:
 1. Programs that are likely to be eliminated (probably a relatively small group). Some of these programs already have few or no students or faculty in them.
 2. Programs that will have some substantial budget cuts, ranging from cuts in operating budgets and staff to outright retrenchment of probationary/tenured faculty (probably the majority of programs will fall into this second group). Some programs might be merged or combined. Some programs might see the elimination of a major or a minor.
 3. Programs that will experience few "substantial" cuts (another fairly small group, which will not have further review until after March 1)
- Departments and programs will then have two weeks to respond to quantitative and qualitative rankings in a concise document of 600 words or less (presumably one document for each program within that department).
- Initial rankings and final results will be brought to the next two Meet & Confers, scheduled for January 28 and February 25. Any program changes to be effective by AY 2012 must be announced by March 1, 2011, which is also the deadline for any changes to the Seniority Rosters (see below). See contract Article 20, Section A, Subd. 1:
<http://www.ifo.org/contract09-11/IFOMNSCUAGREEMENT2009-2011.htm#ART20>
- Notification to faculty affected by program cuts, closure, or redesign—including layoffs through retrenchment—will follow the schedule on the attached "Program Evaluation Metrics" document.
- The university must have plans so that students who are currently in a program marked for suspension/closure will be able to graduate, so suspension/closure could take 1-3 years to accomplish.

D. Program Redesign, Retrenchment, and Seniority Roster Changes

- Any program marked for closure or facing cuts that will involve the layoff of probationary or tenured faculty is, by definition, being retrenched
- Retrenchment must proceed by program, as set out in the Seniority Rosters.
- The order for layoffs of faculty is established in Article 23 of the contract:
<http://www.ifo.org/contract09-11/IFOMNSCUAGREEMENT2009-2011.htm#ART23>
- The process for determining seniority is established in Article 29 of the contract:
<http://www.ifo.org/contract09-11/IFOMNSCUAGREEMENT2009-2011.htm#ART29>
- As long as it meets required deadlines and its obligation to meet and confer, Administration has management rights to redefine programs and reconfigure seniority rosters.
- Most of the current Seniority Rosters will probably be brought into line with the academic programs that are identified by CIP code for the evaluation process. There may be some exceptions for rosters that resulted from past settlements of lawsuits or grievances.

- The number of years of service and seniority for any individual will not change, unless there is a factual error. Such errors are grievable, but redefinition of the rosters is usually not grievable.
- Initial drafts of redesigned Seniority Rosters should come out at about the same time as the program evaluations, this week.

E. Some Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Has the IFO considered other ways of handling the budget shortfall, such as voluntary pay cuts or furloughs?

A: While no ideas should be beyond consideration, such cuts or furloughs present several basic difficulties:

- Cuts and furloughs, especially when “voluntary,” would be only temporary answers to a long-term, structural state budget problem. Even if that were not the case, such “temporary” measures have a way of becoming permanent.
- The track record where such measures have been taken in other states (usually imposed on faculty who lack contractual protections) is mixed, at best.
- Practical administrative problems—including reconfiguration of the academic schedule or recalculation of faculty fringe benefits—might substantially reduce any budgetary savings from furloughs or cuts.
- Such measures would go against the IFO-MnSCU contract, requiring a Letter of Understanding that would have to be endorsed by the IFO Board of Directors. Such endorsement is highly unlikely.

Q: Why is Administration using the data for 2007-2008 to determine credit generation and credit hour/FTE Faculty ratios? The 2008-2009 data book has now been posted.

A: Administration’s answer is that 2007-2008 is the year for which they have common data for comparison of programs across MnSCU. Not all programs will find that answer acceptable, and they should appeal, using the more current data. See the Institutional Research page at <http://www.mnsu.edu/institres/currentreports/>.

Q: How would retrenchment affect our department’s TA lines?

A: Retrenchment as such would have no effect, since TAs are funded separately and their positions are not addressed by the contract. Any changes in the TA budgets would be a separate issue for the affected program.

PLEASE ADDRESS YOUR CONTINUING QUESTIONS TO DON LARSSON, JIM GRABOWSKA, OR YOUR UNIT REPRESENTATIVE. (See below for contact information.) PLAN TO ATTEND ONE OF THE SESSIONS BY THE IFO’S PAT ARSENAULT AND CONNIE HOWARD ON JAN. 27.

DATES TO WATCH:

January 21	Release of academic program evaluations
January 27	Campus visit by Pat Arsenault and Connie Howard. (See announcement above)
January 28	FA Meet & Confer
February 5?	Deadline for department/program responses to evaluations
February 25	FA Meet & Confer
March 1	Contractual deadline for redefinition of programs and Seniority Rosters

See timetable in attached Program Evaluation Metrics documents for further details.

ADMINISTRATIVE UPDATE

Following last year's reassignment of Student Affairs to a Dean of Student Affairs reporting to the Provost, and the retirements, resignations, or pending retirements of many key administrators, the latest change has been a shift in the responsibility for **Institutional Diversity**. The position of Vice President for Institutional Diversity has been eliminated, and Linda Duckett (Music Department, Co-Chair of the President's Commission on the Status of Women) is currently serving as Acting Dean until an Interim Dean of Institutional Diversity is named in a few weeks. There will then be a formal search for a permanent Dean in that position. In the meantime, the Faculty Association welcomes the return of former VP for Institutional Diversity Mike Fagin to the faculty, recognizing his many years of service and devotion to the cause of diversity at this University. We trust that the University will also remain constant in its dedication to meeting the needs of increasingly diverse bodies of students, faculty, and staff.

In other news, we welcome Becky Barkmeier as the new **Director of Human Resources**. Ms. Barkmeier will begin her job next week during an especially crucial time for effective leadership in that office. The Faculty Association is glad that she will continue to be assisted by DeeAnn Snaza, whose experience as Acting Director should be a great resource. Our thanks go to DeeAnn for her hard work and good will during a very difficult time.

Next week, four candidates for **Dean of the College of Arts and Humanities** will be interviewed on campus. For details, see <http://www.mnsu.edu/acadaf/deansearch.html>.

Finally, President Davenport has alluded to further organizational changes to come. The Faculty Association awaits those with the hope that those changes will help to reduce costs, improve administrative efficiency, and meet the university's current and long-term goals.

REMINDERS

- The DFL will have a forum for candidates for Governor on campus this Friday, January 22, at 7:00 p.m., in CSU 253-255
- A committee of the MnSCU Board of Trustees will be holding a "listening session" on campus, Monday, February 1, 6:00-8:00 p.m. in CSU 253-255. For details, see <http://www.mnsu.edu/news/read/?id=1263332930&paper=topstories>
- New MavCash machines are now up and working in CSU, across from the Barnes & Noble Bookstore; in the library; and near Wiecking Auditorium. You can also add money to your MavCash account online for discounts at Stompers in CSU, campus vending machines, and copy machines on campus. For details, see <http://www.mnsu.edu/mavcard/mavcash/addmoney/index.html>.
- You can get a Faculty Discount Card from the campus Barnes & Noble that is good at either that store or the Barnes & Noble store at RiverHills Mall. The card expires with the calendar year, so you will need to get a new one for 2010.
- The Promotion & Tenure Workshop conducted by the Faculty Development Sub-Meet is scheduled for Feb. 19. Watch for details.

CONTACT INFORMATION (Terms for 2009-2010)

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MSU Mankato Faculty Association Web Site: <http://www.mnsufa.org>