

# MSCF Minute



An electronic publication of the Minnesota State College Faculty

## The College – Session One

by Brent Braga and Nate Maertens, MSCF Members

The 2018-2019 cohort of the Emerging Leaders College (ELC) started with an in-depth analysis of two articles of our contract by two of our ELC members. Rich Finley (Riverland) presented Article 8, and Pamela Yang (Century) presented Article 9. This was followed by a rousing presentation on the history of MSCF by Shawn Mueske (Ridgewater), who did his doctoral dissertation on the origins and evolution of MSCF. It was fascinating to hear how much we have had to fight for the rights we have today.

As we contemplate the rich and interesting history of MSCF, it is worthwhile to think about how the hard-won benefits of our union are measured in comparison with the performance of other community colleges across the nation.

Just before the fall semester started, the personal finance website WalletHub released their ranking of two-year colleges in the US (<https://wallethub.com/edu/best-worst-community-colleges/15076/>). Of the 700-plus institutions ranked by the site, four Minnesota State colleges were in the top ten, with an additional three in the top twenty. A companion ranking of state college systems put Minnesota second in the nation.

We professional educators are right to be wary of lists like WalletHub's. It's not possible for any survey to quantify all of what we do in a way that can produce credible rankings. There is, however, something to celebrate about the WalletHub lists. Many of the metrics the site used reflect the value of what we as a united faculty offer to our students and our communities. 12.02 of the points on WalletHub's 100-point scale come from the student-faculty ratio and share of full-time faculty. Article 11 of our contract requires the system to keep the first of those low, and Article 20 keeps our percentage of full-time faculty at one of the highest in the nation. Faculty salaries (Article 13) make up another portion of the ranking score.

Other criteria WalletHub and other ranking systems utilize reflect our dedicated, professional, organized faculty. Retention, transfer, and completion rates are important by any meaningful standard. Those rates are far likelier to be high with committed instructors that our contract guarantees to students. Many of our fellow MSCF members, and many of our faculty fellow-travelers in Education Minnesota, IFO, AFT, and NEA, advocate for increased funding for institutions, scholarships and grants, sensible student loan

programs, and tuition-free education. Our wins in those areas account for another quarter of Minnesota State's success.

What we should celebrate from rankings isn't the number next to our institution's or system's names. Instead, it's that those outside of academia view the benefits our contract affords us, our colleges, and our students as valuable. As we look toward the future, it is vital for our union recognize our contract's role in providing that value.

### FOLLOW US!



### Post-Election Review

Join MSCF state leadership for a discussion of the results of the Nov. 6 election, the opportunities and challenges facing us post-election and to begin discussions about what we can do in the coming months to protect and strengthen public higher education.

[Please RSVP](#) by Friday, Nov. 9.

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### Know your contract

I often hear from faculty who are being asked by their administration to offer a course as an independent study. Contract language says independent studies **MAY NOT** be used to substitute for course offerings, and while this can be agreed to in writing between the faculty member and administration, independent studies are **STUDENT INITIATED!** Definition of Independent study assignments... **"SHALL BE** defined as the faculty member's supervision and teaching a student of a course that has been approved by the college's regular course approval procedures, or shall be defined as the tutoring of a CBE (Competency Based Education) student."

*Independent Study Assignments (Article 11, Section 1, Subd. 5):*

- have no scheduled formal lectures or labs (is available by arrangement with an instructor)
- are **STUDENT INITIATED**
- **MAY BE** part of a semester load or overload
- are not subject to summer rotation
- usually does not exceed 4 students

- Kari Ann Cruz,  
MSCF Field Staff