

# MSCF Minute



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## Thankful to be in Minnesota

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by anonymous, MSCF member

I taught at a community college in Iowa for 8 years. One night in frustration with my administration, I stayed up until 2 a.m. searching for jobs; when one of my references connected me with a department at a Minnesota State college, the ball started rolling.

When I told others of my move, they often said, "You're going to Minnesota? They have great unions there!" My first clue that these accolades were true was when I learned that my salary would be on a 'schedule' based on my credentials. This was unheard of at my Iowa college. Because of this and other examples of the strength of MSCF, I can assure you that yes, Minnesota, you are living up to your reputation. Well done.

Back up to what spurred my departure from Iowa: I was always one of those faculty members who watched my paycheck closely and scrutinized the value of every deduction. There were no fair share union dues, and when the union would call and ask me to join, I'd think it over – some semesters I did,

and some I didn't. The union was a small band of faculty with high hopes that were dashed with every meeting with a single HR rep – a stone-cold lawyer with a shark's bite whenever the union's requests might strain the college President's tight purse strings. Union meetings were often dreary affairs, with force-smiled leaders reminding us of our rental-car discounts and ability to wear jeans.

The real power of the college rested with the President: a diplomatic and business-savvy man who lived and breathed the success of the college and its students. He stood with the students and faculty as they gathered when the Twin Towers fell on 9/11, and subsequently vowed to devote campus land to wind energy production for the benefit of lessening America's dependence on foreign oil. He earned his 6-figure salary attending every game, every theatre performance and music concert, and was able to claim a 100+% giving rate among faculty (the "+" came from the adjuncts who gave too.)

But when it came to matching our salaries and benefits to other colleges in Iowa and surrounding states, the union's voice fell on deaf ears, and therefore, less and less faith was invested in the union's purpose. Faculty who had grievances were left to their own devices – often having to wander the maze of administrative offices to see who would listen.

The final straw for me came when a new VP came onboard, and one of the Deans pounced on the chance to convince her that reassigned time for Department Chairs was often "replaced" with a class overload, and therefore was a waste of money. In an effort to gather faculty response to this claim, the Dean and the VP set up an online discussion forum to "solicit feedback" from faculty. I submitted my defense of the reassigned credits, describing in great detail the time I spent as a Department Chair, even if an overload class was in my schedule. I suggested compensating the reassigned credits with a higher stipend – equivalent to what the credits were worth. Nevertheless,

we got the decree that the credits were being eliminated.

I demanded a meeting with the VP and reiterated that this elimination of reassigned credits was a pay cut, but she just kept repeating the Dean's words that Chairs often "replace" reassigned credits with teaching, and therefore the credits aren't needed. I asked if she had seen my defense of the credits on the discussion forum, and she admitted she never even read the responses.

After the meeting I called the union leadership to ask what they knew of this debacle. No one in the union even knew of the discussion forum, or the elimination of Chair credits.

Return the present-day – a few weeks ago in our first chapter MSCF meeting of 2018, when the one-page contract from my Iowa college made its rounds, I instantly recognized the handwriting of my former President. I imagined the current union president sourly conceding to the contract with little to no support from a union with no fair-share dues or proper channels for being heard. I thank goodness I live here now, and I only hope that I can remain thankful to be in Minnesota.

### WE SUPPORT THOSE WHO SUPPORT US

Join Us for a Door Knock for House Minority Leader

**Melissa Hortman**

Friday, October 5 @ 4:00 p.m.

We'll meet at Kevin Lindstrom's house:  
9121 Vickers Crossing, Brooklyn Park MN  
55443

All are invited to Kevin's after for  
pizza and refreshments



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