

MSCF Minute



An electronic publication of the Minnesota State College Faculty

LTFS

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Volume 3, Issue 2
August 25, 2016

Providing an extraordinary higher education to all Minnesotans is a goal shared by all charged with delivering it. That sounds pleasant, straightforward, and simple enough. But, is it true?

We're about to find out.

Minnesota State's draft [report on Long-Term Financial Sustainability \(LTFS\)](#) contains several suggestions aimed at addressing a supposed looming financial crisis. Even if our doubts about the validity of the premise are set aside, the recommendations must be measured, individually and as a whole, against the stated goal. As the draft report moves through consultation and toward final form, the process would be well-served by continually asking, "Does (insert recommendation here) contribute to providing an extraordinary education?"

In those instances where the answer to this central question is "no," we are obligated to dismiss the recommendation or to search for the underlying motivation for offering it. With the stakes so high, there is no room for false

premises, half-truths, or manipulation of the facts.

There also isn't room for coded language. Phrases like "streamline the curriculum," "establish criteria for campuses to have full, dedicated administrative structures," and "flexible labor practices" beg for clarity. Absent further definition, those phrases could be used to justify just about any action. Given history, there simply isn't the level of trust necessary to leave the recommendations undefined. We need to know what the phrases mean and who owns them.

Speaking of history, one can't help but notice how the LTFS report [mirrors](#) the first draft of [Charting the Future \(CTF\)](#). Some of the words may have changed, but the content is unmistakable. Combining this fact with the fact that the LTFS report contains content that would presumably fall under the current CTF efforts, we are left to wonder what is going on here, what the agenda really is, and who is driving it.

External reform agendas we've seen in the past show little regard for people. Students who are least likely to succeed are treated as obstacles. Employees are treated as widgets. Both groups are marginalized in the plans developed via external agendas. Frankly, those notions are present in this plan, just as we've seen them before. It would appear they never truly left.

There certainly is a crisis here. To the extent the LTFS plan is nothing other than the continuation of an agenda, the plan is the crisis. If, on the other hand, there is a real financial crisis looming in need of a plan, then the final report will be modified to be clear, treat all people with respect, and reflect our shared values. It's the only way to deliver an extraordinary education.

MSCF Core Value Statement

MSCF believes in a permanent, professional faculty; fair treatment for all faculty whether full or part time; faculty control and direction of an academically rigorous curriculum; faculty control and direction of professional development including sabbaticals; benefits and security for faculty and their families including domestic partners; true academic shared governance; access, rigor and opportunity for students; true education, not fads or shortsighted political agendas.

(Adopted by the MSCF Board of Directors, September 18, 2009)

