

the GREEN SHEET



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Drift and Stall

by Greg Mulcahy, MSCF President



The election is over, and the known results are not good for MSCF. Of course, we don't yet know who the governor is, though the available evidence indicates Mark

Dayton won. That is the best outcome MSCF can hope for, but it alone will not fix the state's 6 billion dollar deficit, restore the cuts to the MnSCU system, improve our terms and conditions of employment, or arrest the drift of public higher education, both nationally and in Minnesota.

Recently I met with the AFT Higher Education leadership in Washington D.C. This was shortly before the election, and the national climate for higher education was bad. Everywhere. AFT staff expressed a desire to begin a dialogue with national figures in the assessment and measurement movements. These figures are generally housed in foundations or specialized university centers. When the names of some of these figures were listed, I knew them. I've heard some of them present and many of them referenced at MnSCU. The feeling at AFT is higher education unions need to be part of this conversation. Insofar as that goes, I agree.

But.

But for too long, as I've mentioned before in these pages, faculty have been the victim of a manufactured crisis promoted by self-appointed experts whose books and consulting contracts rely on the constant churning of that crisis. As faculty wages decline and faculty terms and conditions deteriorate, these real problems are ignored with free-floating demands for "accountability" and "measurement" that do not consider where our students come from and what skills, deficiencies, and aspirations our students bring with them. While I support real measurement and real accountability, I support it in a realistic context, not to sell my next book, and I don't believe, as a colleague famously remarked, "you can fatten a calf by weighing it."

I am suspicious of academic fads, jargon, and nebulous institutes or foundations with little or no accountability or defined relationships to disciplines. More and more of what passes for serious discussion of higher education rests on an a priori assertion of a crisis followed by solutions (push college into the high schools, have a three-year B.A., put everything online) no one has asked or very seriously demonstrated a need for. Jargon, of course, is essential to preserving the appearance of internal expertise by excluding external analysis—by, in short, separating those who know the inside language from those who don't. It seems to me the experts started to drift from the day-to-day reality of serving our students about the time I started hearing the word metric.

(continued on page 2)

Measurement is fine, and jargon is perhaps inevitable, but ideas, and particularly ideas about the allocation of scarce resources, deserve critical scrutiny. These ideas are always ultimately political.

Drift and Stall

(continued from page 1)

Before that I, an English teacher, understood the word metric in common parlance as meaning pertaining to the metric system or, more dimly, understood it as relating to a real value in math. Suddenly, I heard it again and again to mean, I think, measure or measurement or metrics as measurements. I thought the English words were fine, and the introduction of this new usage struck me strange. Are we to look forward to the reintroduction of Brumaire?

Measurement is fine, and jargon is perhaps inevitable, but ideas, and

particularly ideas about the allocation of scarce resources, deserve critical scrutiny. These ideas are always ultimately political. The crisis culture in higher education and national politics is largely about moving public money from the public sphere to the for-profit private sphere. Halliburton, no doubt, has metrics attesting to its privatizing efficiencies and played this game with the federal government.

So faculty drift in one direction as the “experts” drift in another and the political culture in the state is stalled and in the nation likely paralyzed.

Sometimes I think I’m being too gloomy: after all, things might look brighter by the time Thermidor rolls around. But my real concern is educational leadership is following the lack of political leadership, that jargon will sink clarity, and created crises will disguise real ones. The last national election seems to bear this out. I was born in a country with a political culture that believed it could do anything. In retrospect, that was too much. I live in a political culture that believes it can afford nothing. That is certainly too little.



Congratulations!

Congratulations to Riverland Community College instructor Sheryl Barton. This fall Sheryl received recognition for her work in online instruction, and she was also the recipient of the KAAL ABC 6 News Excellent Educator Award.

Quality Matters™ is a faculty peer-review process designed to certify the quality of online and blended courses. Quality Matters™ has given Sheryl national recognition for the development of her online course in Medical Terminology. Previous Riverland MSCF members of Quality Matters™ recognition include Jill Holmes (2009) and Heidi Schara (2009).

In October of this year, Sheryl was also the recipient of the KAAL ABC 6 News Excellent Educator award. Sheryl was nominated for the award by a Riverland student for her dedication to her students and her skills as an educator. Previous Riverland MSCF members to receive this award include Shirley Nelson and Jerry Girton.

If you know of MSCF members who have been recognized with awards for their teaching and/or professional development, please forward that information to the MSCF office so that we can get it in the next Green Sheet.



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2010 MSCF CONSTITUTIONAL OFFICER SPECIAL ELECTION RESULTS:

The following results are UNOFFICIAL until the MSCF Board of Directors certifies the results at the upcoming meeting on December 3, 2010.

The newly elected Liberal Arts Vice President is **Damon Kapke, Lake Superior College.**

What Kind of “Jobs, Jobs, Jobs”?

by Kevin Lindstrom,
MSCF Technical
Vice President



Governor Tim Pawlenty that really caught my attention.

Tafoya: *“If, in fact, Tom Emmer somehow pulls a rabbit out of his hat and winds up taking the governor’s office, and it’s Republican across the board, what big change might you expect to see?”*

Pawlenty: *“...I think you’d take on a lot of what I call the left-leaning interest groups, particularly the public employee unions.”*

I was so alarmed by the content of the message and the attack nature with which it was delivered, that I went back and listened to the podcast to make sure I heard correctly. What you see here is what I heard.

As I sought to create some sort of context in which to understand Pawlenty’s comment, I decided to set it against the “Jobs, Jobs, Jobs” mantra of the new legislative majority. If we’re the bad guys, then the kind of jobs we stand for must be radically different than the kind of jobs they’re talking about. I don’t know for sure what kind of jobs they’re for, but I do know, with great certainty, the kind of jobs we’re for.

I was listening to the post-election aftermath on the radio when I heard an exchange between Michelle Tafoya, afternoon host on WCCO, and

We’re for good paying, stable, permanent jobs. Nobody is getting rich being a faculty member, but a lot of mortgages are being paid, groceries are getting bought, and tax obligations are being met with the money we do make. The kind of stability we strive for in our jobs adds stability to the economy. If this isn’t the kind of jobs they want, then what kind of jobs do they want?

We’re for jobs that include good benefits. We believe that insurance coverage is a social good. We believe that retirement benefits provide not only our members, but the economy,

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with long-term stability. We believe that removing or lessening benefits strains the economy more than it helps the economy. If this isn’t the kind of jobs they want, then what kind of jobs do they want?

We’re for a strong and continuing commitment to professional development. We are the standard bearers for rigor in the qualifications required to do our work. We constantly chal-

lenge our members to engage in professional development and seek to provide support, in a variety of ways, for professional development efforts. Our commitment to quality rises above a number of challenges to it. If this isn’t the kind of jobs they want, then what kind of jobs do they want?

We’re for active engagement by our members in their workplace. We want people to join committees, voice their opinion, and be active in a variety of ways on campus. We believe that subject area experts are the best people to make decisions in their disciplines. We want a workplace

full of intellectual inquiry and hearty academic discourse. If this isn’t the kind of jobs they want, then what kind of jobs do they want?

I suppose I could go on, but I hope you get the point. We’ve got, and will continue to maintain, the high road in the “Jobs, Jobs, Jobs” discussion. With all due respect, Governor Pawlenty, we’re not the problem. We’re the solution.

Legislative Future for MSCF

by Rick Nelson, MSCF
Legislative Chair



Thank you to all MSCF Local Legislative Liaisons, Chapter Leaders, and members statewide. Thank you for your efforts and energy during Campaign 2010 to help spread the message about what we do every day in the classroom...the place where "Teaching and Learning" takes place.

The MSCF Board of Directors adopted a Get Active campaign to encourage our members to become involved in the electoral process these past seven months. Some of our members across the state accepted the challenge and participated in the process.

With new members in both the House and Senate, now more than ever we must keep talking about what we do in the classroom "Teaching and Learning". As MSCF members, we need to inform the administrators and elected officials that we teach our students, and are in contact with them each and every day.

As we move forward to the 2011 legislative session it is important that we, as an organization and as individual members, tell others what we do. We educate:

90% of new auto mechanics graduates

84% of new construction trades graduates

85% of new law enforcement graduates

83% of new nursing graduates

49% of new teaching graduates

38% of new business graduates

In addition to the statewide figures above, share your own story. Convey to your House and Senate representative that many of our colleges have specialty programs that fit the needs and wants of local and regional businesses. Great things are happening within MnSCU colleges and we need to keep it that way. Minnesota needs to maintain its longstanding investment in higher education, which will provide quality and affordability for its students.

Be proud MSCF. Be proud of how we contribute each and every day in our communities. We help to make Minnesota competitive in the global economy.

With that said, below is a list of the MSCF 2011 Legislative Goals that will bring us into the new year:

(continued on page 5)

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Remembering Dan Sperling

by Kevin Lindstrom,
MSCF Technical Vice President

My good friend, Dan Sperling, died on September 11, 2010 after a brief battle with cancer. Dan was a counselor at M State – Moorhead for many years. He was a valued colleague and a leader in many ways. As the pastor said at his funeral, "Dan was one of the good guys."

A scholarship fund, named the Dan Sperling Realize Your Dream Scholarship, has been set up at M State – Moorhead in his memory. Contributions, with a notation for the purpose of Dan's scholarship, should be directed to the Moorhead Community and Technical College Foundation and be sent to Chuck Chadwick, M State – Moorhead, 1900 – 28th Ave S., Moorhead, MN 56560.

Future Board Meeting Dates

The meeting dates as approved are:

Friday, December 3, 2010:

Board Meeting

Friday, April 15, 2011:

Delegate Assembly and Board Meeting

Motions Approved

at September 17, 2010

Board of Directors Meeting

1. Motion and second from the Executive Committee to approve the 2010-2011 committee appointments as submitted. Carried
2. Motion and second from the Election and Executive Committee to approve the 2010 Constitutional Officer Special Election process as submitted. Carried

(continued from page 4)

Legislative Future for MSCF: 2011 MSCF Legislative Goals

Investment. MSCF Supports:

- Increasing Minnesota's investment in higher education.
- Funding the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities HPERA 2010 capital bonding projects that were approved by the MnSCU Board of Trustees. Consideration for new bonding projects that fit into each college local mission to improve teaching and learning.
- Restoring the higher education funding base to the 2009 level.
- Reducing administrative costs and the salary gap between faculty and administration.
- Exempting MnSCU from the one-third debt service requirement starting with the 2011 session.
- Making M.S. 135 A. 01 binding upon MN Legislature, which would require the state to pay at least 67% of costs at all public colleges/universities, with students responsible for 33%.

Instructional Excellence. MSCF Supports:

- Insuring that all PSEO, concurrent enrollment, and online courses have the same content, rigor, and accountability as traditional college courses.
- Attracting and maintaining the highest-quality education employees through competitive salaries, continuously adjusted for inflation.

Governance. MSCF Supports:

- Adopting a selection process for Board of Trustees members that more closely emulates the University of Minnesota Board of Regent appointments.

Pension and Benefits. MSCF Supports:

- Protect pension funds for pension purposes only.
- Including domestic partner coverage.
- Parity in employee and employer contribution of all pension programs.
- Sharing the normal costs of benefits and benefit improvements equally between the employee and the employer.
- Allowing higher education faculty who selected IRAP to buy into the TRA program at full actuarial cost.
- Allowing Individual Retirement Account Plan (IRAP) higher education members the same access as TRA members to the combined annuities program.
- Providing age 65 as the normal age of retirement and providing the Rule of 90 or comparable benefit for all public employees hired on or after July 1, 1989.

Financial Aid and Tuition. MSCF Supports:

- Capping financial aid grants, loans, and tax credits at the highest cost of attendance at a MnSCU institution.
- Minnesota State College Student Association and Minnesota State University Student Association efforts to control tuition.
- State and federal financial aid grants, loans, and tax credits based on family income to make public higher education affordable to all citizens.

2010 Fall Training

at Ruttger's Bay Lake Lodge



Dave O'Donnell meets with his committee members. Text books and open sourcing curriculum were just two of the topics discussed. From Right to Left: Kristin Pederson, Fond du Lac, CC; Dave O'Donnell, Committee Chair, Vermilion CC; Don Fischer, AASC Chair, Northland – E. Grand Forks; Bob Defries, Alexandria Tech & CC; Joe Juaire, MSCF Treasurer; Tom Woodhouse, Riverland CC; Deanna Forsman, No. Hennepin.



Kevin Lindstrom, MSCF Technical Vice President, discusses ideas with Chapter Presidents on how to be an "effective" leader.



The Faculty Rights Committee gathered to discuss compliance visits, potential topics for *Contract Compliance*, and grievances. From Right to Left: Jay Pivec, Minneapolis CC; Derek Fox, Itasca CC; Norm Halsa, Northland CC.



Grievance Reps from all over the state meet with MSCF Field Staff and Education Minnesota Attorney, Jess Anna Glover, to discuss contract issues.



Grievance Reps are quizzed on contract questions.



MSCF officers and Field staff conduct Leadership Training for Chapter Presidents and Grievance Reps. A few of the topics discussed were workload, legislative issues, bad managers, and improvement for communication.



Rick Nelson, Legislative Steering Committee Chair, meets with his committee members to discuss the MSCF Legislative Goals and the November election. Right to Left: Rick Nelson, Century CC; Karen Bronshteyn, Anoka Tech; Tim McCluskey, Dakota County Tech; Steve Dalager, Lake Superior CC; Tim Wrenn, Century CC

Coping with Poor Management

by Sara Ford,
MSCF Field Representative



While all of you work under the umbrella of the same collective bargaining agreement, there is no question that your working conditions differ substantially

from one campus to the next. Some of you work with deans, provosts, human resource directors, academic vice presidents, and college presidents who understand the value and importance of collective bargaining agreements, who believe in fair play, and who have the skills to manage well.

But others of you work with supervisors at one level or another who lack such attributes. As field staff, we see administrators who manage by fear and intimidation, we see managers who base decisions on personal affiliations, and we see managers who inhibit our members' ability to do their jobs by simply failing to do theirs. We also have far too many members whose concerns, ideas, and insights are ignored by managers who either don't have the skills to mine those resources or who lack the courage to acknowledge the value in doing so.

Given the stress such relationships can cause, we thought it worthwhile to write down some suggestions and tips for coping with difficult managers.

For those of you who are individually affected by these difficult relationships, there are a number of strategies that can help either to carve out a more peaceful environment in which to do your job or to insist on better treatment, or both. Our biggest piece of advice is to keep your emotions out of the relationship. The more emotional we are, the less rational we become, and in many cases, the more vulnerable we become to a variety of forms of manipulation.

In general, if you believe you are dealing with unfair treatment, document it, verify it, get responses in writing, and work with your chapter grievance representative.

- If your supervisor harms your ability to do your job by failing to respond to messages, start a progressive cc chain in all email communications. After the first three days, send again cc'd to the HR director. After three more days, send again cc'd to the HR director, the college president, and your grievance representative. If the pattern continues, your grievance rep and chapter president will have the evidence they need to move forward.
- Ask straightforward questions of your supervisors in writing. Email is less personal than face to face conversations, but in many of these cases, less personal is a good idea, and it is harder to deny what is said via email.
- Be aware of your rights in the collective bargaining agreement.
- Talk with your grievance rep about what kinds of patterns you see, so that he or she can help you ascertain whether contract or legal violations might be in play. Together, map out a strategy for insisting on better working conditions.
- Raise concerns through your chapter leadership. You have more protections from reprisal if you work through the processes made available by the collective bargaining agreement via shared governance and the grievance procedure.

For those of you representing faculty in these difficult situations, the biggest piece of advice we have is that you stand by them and insist on fair treatment.

- Go to meetings with your members. Make sure they know they are supported.

- Don't let yourself or your members be flattered by administrators who might be looking to distract you from unfair treatment of others.
- Look for patterns.
- Bring problems forward in shared governance, and follow through on the conversations there.
- Make it clear to administration that unfair treatment of some faculty members is treated no differently than unfair treatment of all. Work with your members to make sure they understand the importance of insisting on fair play.
- Be aware of the legal and contractual language that might be relevant to the treatment being described, grieve when appropriate, and call the MSCF office when you need to.

During the last academic year, we spoke with a college vice president who is quite good at his job. He consults with the MSCF chapter president at his campus and values her perspective, he hires deans who will honor the college's contractual obligations, he responds to faculty members experiencing difficulty with offers of assistance and support, and he generally treats college employees respectfully. The vice president was angry about an administrator who had issued discipline to a faculty member inappropriately, and offered the following adage:

"You know what? I got a lot of faculty members who piss me off every day, and you know what I do? I leave them alone and let them do their jobs, because they make a difference in the classroom." If only everybody who manages went to management school...

If you have other strategies that you think would benefit members in situations like this, please forward them to field staff. Let's empower our members to insist on fair treatment for all.