

# MSCF Minute



*An electronic publication of the Minnesota State College Faculty*

## For or Against?

*by Kevin Lindstrom, MSCF President*

A few weeks ago Mark Grant, MSCF Government Relations Director, approached me about a legislative proposal to move technical colleges out of the Minnesota State system and back into school districts. Mark asked if we would be for or against such a proposal and whether or not we would testify if such a proposal were heard in a legislative committee. I told Mark I didn't know if we would be for or against such a proposal, and I said we wouldn't testify. There are too many outstanding issues and questions to jump to a conclusion on the topic. Given the number of inquiries we've received about the [bill on this topic](#) that ultimately was heard by the House Higher Education Committee, I thought I would share with you what I originally shared with Mark.

First, the practical/logistical considerations associated with this proposal are considerable. Anyone who might say something like, "They moved the technical colleges out of school districts, so they can just as easily move them back into school districts" appears to be setting aside some big stuff. Technical colleges moved out of school districts in 1995. A lot has changed since then. There are new

college structures, new academic structures, and new employee contract structures. There are accreditation considerations existing today that didn't exist back then. The list of considerations goes on and on. More broadly, there are a large number of people in the system who weren't around in 1995 and who may not view such a move as a return to the "glory days."

Second, I'm not sure what problem this proposal is attempting to solve. From the "stuff I learned in counseling school" category, I believe there is danger in moving to solutions before the problem is clearly defined and understood. That being said, maybe there are some real issues in this realm that could be meaningfully addressed by further conversations about how the system connects with school districts regarding technical education. I'm not going to dismiss out-of-hand an attempt, full of questions and concerns as it may be, to start a conversation that may lead to something meaningful in the end. I'd gladly participate in a process that clearly defined concerns and then sought viable solutions to those concerns.

Third, I suspect some of our

members may be, at least on a surface level, in favor of this proposal. I think many folks who were around in 1995 would contend that technical education has lost both scope and stature in the time since then. A study which reveals data about the number of technical offerings in the system today, and that looks back to 1995, might reveal quite a bit. If there has been the magnitude of change that I suspect, having a conversation about the change would be a good starting point. I don't see any problem in seeking the data or in having the conversation.

Fourth, I suspect some of our members would welcome a return to school district salary schedules, at least in some instances. I would make \$10k more per year in base salary if I were back in the Anoka-Hennepin school district. I'm not saying this consideration should lead the conversation, but I'm not going to deny or be silent about the reality either.

In the end, this idea needs a good deal more definition and exploration before we jump to solutions or conclusions regarding its merits. I'm all for such exploration. Then we'll decide whether we're for or against.

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[Click on Mark Grant's picture above for this week's legislative update](#)

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