Minnesota State College Faculty

December 13, 2018

Dear Members of the Minnesota State Community,

On December 12, two MSCF faculty members were assaulted by a student on our Normandale campus. Our thoughts go immediately to both faculty and their families. We wish them healing and love and will provide them whatever support we can during their recovery. We also want the entire Normandale community to know we are and will continue to be with them in whatever capacity they need.

As union members, our first priority is the safety of our faculty. Violence directed at faculty members is unequivocally unacceptable. We commend the administration of Normandale for their speediness in addressing the situation, and we challenge the Minnesota State system office to immediately begin taking steps to ensure an attack like this never happens again. Our faculty are the primary points of contact with students and therefore, the ones with the greatest knowledge of and often the ones who are most vulnerable to student aggression. We call on Minnesota State to listen to faculty and protect them. We are committed to our students, to their success and achievement, and it cannot be at the cost of our own personal safety.

As union educators, we also realize our safety is inextricably linked to the safety of our campuses, and we know enough about our own campuses to know that this could have happened at any one of them. Minnesota State must commit financial resources to making sure all classrooms and offices have the best possible infrastructure and technology to address emergency situations, retrofitting existing buildings and designing new facilities with safety in mind. It is negligent to suggest the expense of these measures is too great when the lives of our colleagues, friends, and families are at stake.

Further, everyone in the campus community should know where to go, what to do, and who to call in the event of an emergency incident. These protocols and procedures need to be simple, straightforward, and doable. We must do better than online training modules and half-measures.

Finally, we call upon all members of college communities across the state to speak out when they feel unsafe, and we call upon college administrators to respond in responsible ways. We've heard far too many stories of faculty who have either not spoken up because they didn't think anything would be done, or of faculty who have spoken up only to have their concerns set aside. An environment absent legitimate responses to expressed concerns is inherently unsafe.

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MSCF is an affiliate of Education Minnesota, the American Federation of Teachers, the National Education Association and AFL-CIO.

What happened at Normandale was unacceptable. One faculty member was punched in the face multiple times. The other was hit in the face with a backpack. It could have been worse, much worse. The backpack contained a gun.

We are committed to creating college campuses that are places of teaching, learning, and hearty academic discourse. We are committed to college campuses that are places of student development and growth. We are committed to college campuses that are places full of optimism and promise. And, above all, we are committed to college campuses that are safe.

Sincerely,

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