

Chair Cowles, Trustees, Chancellor Malhotra,

There are two distinct yet related issues I would like to raise as part of my written testimony.

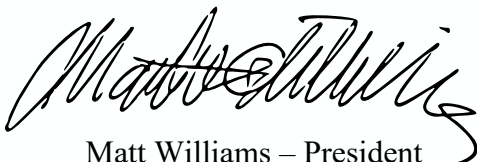
Recently, Dr. Osterholm, director of the Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy at the University of Minnesota, predicted that the next six to twelve weeks will be “the darkest of the entire pandemic.” This comes on the heels of Education Minnesota releasing the results of a survey that found a majority of E-12 educators feel stressed, overwhelmed, and worried about their physical and mental health as a result of the working conditions in their districts.

While the Education Minnesota survey did not directly include higher-education faculty, this summer both MSCF and IFO faculty participated in a similar survey about mental health and stress. The preliminary results suggested that before the fall semester started, even the most experienced and resilient faculty were feeling the effects of the pandemic on their mental and physical health.

This should be a canary in the coal mine for all of us. We know supporting our students during these times is our highest priority. However, we also must recognize that staff and faculty cannot provide that essential support to students at these high levels if we also aren’t supporting staff and faculty. Further, we know the social and economic impacts of this pandemic are felt disproportionately by BIPOC students, staff, and faculty. Our challenge now is to frame the conversation as one of how we can best take care of one another, especially knowing what the road ahead looks like.

Relatedly, I wish to share our strong reaction to President Trump’s recent executive order regarding diversity and anti-racism training. The MSCF believes racism has no place in our schools, our colleges, our communities. We also believe the elimination of racism takes active, intentional work. While the language of the executive order itself may be limited and technical, the intent behind it—to push against anti-racism work itself—could not be clearer. As a labor union, we believe racism devalues the dignity of human life, divides neighbor from neighbor and worker from worker, and diminishes our collective ability to fight for a more just and equitable future. We believe there is an opportunity to raise our voices together to not only support efforts to eliminate racism from our daily lives, but to call out and condemn this move by the Trump administration. We sincerely hope conversations about a joint statement with the system regarding this executive order continue.

Thank you,



Matt Williams – President

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MSCF is an affiliate of Education Minnesota, the American Federation of Teachers,
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