

651.227.8442
www.ifo.org
490 Concordia Ave, Suite 125
Saint Paul, MN 55103



Chairman Jay Cowles
Minnesota State Board of Trustees
30 East 7th Street
St. Paul, MN 55101
June 15, 2020

Chair Cowles, Trustees, Chancellor Malhotra;

Congratulations to reappointed Trustees, Chair Cowles and Trustee Roger Moe and those newly appointed trustees, Trustee Oballa, Trustee Ajogun, Trustee Sheran, and Trustee Morillo. A Gubernatorial appointment is indeed a distinguished honor; welcome to your new role on the governing board of the MinnState System. I look forward to working together.

IFO Priorities for the 2020/2021 Academic Year:

- 1) COVID Planning and Review: The global health pandemic warrants our on-going attention. The IFO is committed to delivering a high-quality education throughout this health crisis. Our collaboration and planning over the past seven months have been essential and largely successful as we collectively mitigated the impact of an extremely contagious and deadly virus. As we review existing plans and evolve our future planning, our focus will continue to be on the health and safety of all employees, our students, and the larger communities we serve.
- 2) The Equity 2030 Initiative: COVID-19 has illuminated the educational inequities that persist in the MinnState System and most of education in this country including higher education. It is incumbent upon us all to respond to what we have learned and work to transform our system of higher education so that we truly reflect the equitable and inclusive environment we say we want to be.

Some highlighted priorities related to Equity 2030 for the IFO during this academic year include:

- a. Faculty are doing the work in “Equity by Design” that has been planned, developed, piloted, and now in early implementation stages through the Office of Diversity and Inclusion.
- b. The IFO deems it critically important and essential to achieving the goals of Equity 2030, that the workforce reflects the current demographics of our students and ultimately the future demographics of students we wish to attract, retain, and serve well. Therefore, the IFO has dedicated resources to develop an Inter-campus Faculty of Color Mentorship Program. Dr. Gabriel Warren, Professor of Business Administration at Bemidji State University, will lead our effort to develop this mentorship program which is intended to improve the experiences of our faculty, mentor and support tenure and promotion applications, and to improve the retention efforts at our seven state universities.

- c. Faculty roles in retention, recruitment, and academic success of students is the essence of our teaching responsibilities. The perspective of this role for many faculty must focus on those traditionally marginalized communities that historically have been shut out of educational opportunities and not fully embraced by our campuses nor in our communities. The IFO will continue to encourage faculty to be leaders in the transformation needed to achieve Equity 2030.
- 3) Response for George Floyd: The murder of George Floyd highlighted the hollow in our social consciousness prior to May 25th. The protests that have ensued and evidence in the Breonna Taylor, Jacob Blake, and many other cases underscore the racial disparities that exists in America and around the world; our societal structures have a long history of oppression, racism, and white supremacy. Higher Education in this country and the MinnState System are such structures that have historically demonstrated systemic suppression of black and brown people. The goals of closing the academic equity gaps do not go far enough; we can recruit, retain, and graduate more indigenous people and people of color and not eradicate racism. George Floyd's murder has focused a lot of attention on Minnesota and, therefore, it is incumbent upon us to be the agent of change for our students, the communities we serve, and for the state of Minnesota.

As a system of higher education and as a union of faculty, we are either guided by societal influences or we influence society but either way, we always reflect what is relevant in society. We are in an extraordinary moment that calls for social justice and our duty mandates that we respond to the need for justice.

An obvious response for faculty and a system of higher education is a curricular response. The IFO supports the review of Goal #7, the Diversity requirement, of the Minnesota Transfer Curriculum. This goal has applied a broad definition of diversity and the review will involve an intended focus on race and anti-racism for courses in this goal area. In addition, the IFO has encouraged local faculty associations to consider an anti-racism course as a graduation requirement for all university students.

Other responses include but are not limited to, panel discussions, guest lecturers, classroom teaching moments, established scholarships in the memory of George Floyd, etc.

- 4) Law Enforcement Education Reform: We are committed to and we are fully engaged in the MinnState Law Enforcement Education Reform effort. We commend the Chancellor on his leadership and immediate action following George Floyd's murder. As the leading educators of law enforcement professional in the state, it is our responsibility to lead the change in training, culture, and public trust in policing. The IFO supports the appointments of Satasha Green-Stephen and President Merrill Irving as co-chairs in this effort and the comprehensive approach to include both internal and external stakeholders.

651.227.8442
www.ifo.org
490 Concordia Ave, Suite 125
Saint Paul, MN 55103



- 5) The IFO Internal Equity and Inclusion Plan: The IFO has its own equity and inclusion plan that we continue to prioritize. As a labor union, we reject the Police Officers Federation of Minneapolis (POFM) leadership's falsification of union principles to protect members who perpetuate racist violence against the Minneapolis communities of color. Such violence and racism have no place in unions. The labor movement is borne of the fight for all working people, especially those who alone have no power. We stand in solidarity with those traditionally marginalized members in our organization and we strive to facilitate their empowerment. We recognize that racism is systemic, and we are committed to examining ourselves as an organization and our influence at MinnState universities, to call out racism where we see it, and to strive for meaningful structural change that will endure.

The IFO equity caucus structure (based on affinity group regardless of union membership) has flipped our organizational structure and we have accepted our traditionally marginalized groups' invitation to their table, and we have engaged with their conversations.

The IFO Equity and Inclusion Coordinator has been increased to a 100% position this year and our organization's budget reflects our priorities in equity and inclusion work and, moreover, the budget serves as our values document.

- 6) Shared Governance: The IFO has a profound responsibility in shared governance that helps guide our System and our individual institutions and will always prioritize this responsibility to provide input. This year, our input will focus on the financial challenges facing our campus and the guidance necessary to delivery a quality education, meet the needs of our students, and enhance the value our universities contribute to the community and regions we serve.
- 7) Government Relation Efforts: The next legislative session schedule to begin in January will be a budgetary session and the IFO will prioritize our lobbying efforts and partner with the Chancellor, the System Office, and the Trustees in a collaborative effort to secure funding for our students and our institutions.

We will also partner with Students United to ensure every student, faculty, and staff member have the opportunity to cast their vote in the upcoming election.

This represents some of the work the IFO will prioritize during this academic year and we look forward to the opportunity to provide the necessary information to assist the work of the Board of Trustees, the Chancellor, the System Office, and the campus Administrations. Thank you!

Respectively submitted,

Brent Jeffers
IFO President