Faculty Association Meet and Confer
December 4, 2008
3:00 p.m., CSU 204
(Faculty Chair)

NOTES

Attendance:
Faculty: Don Larsson, Jim Grabowska, Paul Hustoles (recorder), Mary Visser, Georgia Holmes, Chris Corley, Debra Anderson, Paul Mackie, Anne O’Meara, Jim Petersen, Daniel Toma, Becky Schwartzkopf, Jackie Lewis, John Seymour, Mary Bliesmer
Management: Richard Davenport, Scott Olson, Lori Lamb, Bryan Schneider, Rick Straka, Patricia Swartfager-Haney, Avra Johnson, Michael Fagin, John Winkworth

FA President Larsson called the meeting to order at 3:04 p.m.

1. Information Items
   b. FA President’s Report—FA President Larsson: Thank all of you who were able to attend the Holiday Gathering at the FA Office and thanks to Donna Blom for her work on this. In the last couple of minutes we got an update from Russ Stanton describing the budget forecast. The deficit will be $4.8 billion in the next biennium, plus a shortfall this year for a total of $5.25 billion. The IFO has been very disappointed with the Board cutting $55 million from the Chancellor’s request. They have been talking about internal campus reallocations. As a campus with some reserves, that makes us nervous. We were all surprised when the Board was presented with the 120 credit hour limit and did not act on it. They seem to be ignoring the Legislature. The IFO Board did pass the Distinguished Teaching Award proposal. This will result in a letter of understanding. MnSCU is putting forth a set of diversity awards, but not to individuals. The Negotiation Team is starting their activities. We felt all along that language issues would be the most important this year. We are all concerned about the money matters. We thank the President for his patience and understanding in clarifying the article in the Free Press on KMSU radio this morning. We do have a number of concerns relating to budget and planning. The notices of vacancies do contain some new language regarding nine-month contracts and some regarding vehicle use requirements. Please let us know if you have any questions about any of this. We have been getting some procedural questions about promotions, sabbaticals and chair elections. We are helping to get that straightened out. The spring FA retreat will happen on January 8, 2009. We will be looking at our committee structures, especially those that we now call “ad hoc.” Maybe some of these committees could be combined or linked together. We have had an unusual number of issues that we have had to file as grievances. FA VP Grabowska: We had four. One has been resolved at Step 1, one with an MOA, and two were determined to be resolvable only at Step 3 and both have been filed. One deals with tuition benefits. We still have to make sure that faculty get notice before the due date. The other had to do with career steps. FA President Larsson: There is a good chance these two will go to arbitration.
c. MSU President’s Report—President Davenport: I hadn’t had the chance to see the paper before the talk show. Thank you, Don, for calling in. No matter how hard you try to explain, it almost always gets confused. The 15% quoted in the paper is not too far off, but it was not explained. They left out a lot of the components. And all the budget cuts would not come down to the campus. We are talking about a 3-6% reallocation. We will be putting out a note to the entire community regarding what the budget scenario is looking like. We are in good shape compared to several institutions. We have prepared for a rainy day and this is a rainy day. Minnesota can expect to lose 77,000 jobs in this downturn. MnSCU will play a pivotal role in returning the workforce to help people get back to work. The State’s expectation is that higher education drives the economics of the state. Just last year, MSU itself contributed $377 million to this community. Multiply that across the stage and the impact is significant. It is too early to tell what the impact on our tuition and programs will be. The Governor’s and legislative decisions will not be made until around May. We do need to be prepared and we do have to have contingencies. The Office of the Chancellor recommends a 7% reserve. Many do not have any reserves however we have 7% in our reserve. We will slow down our spending. We do not have to freeze hiring or travel. However, that doesn’t prevent the Governor from doing that. I don’t want to send out the message that it will be easy to solve this problem because it isn’t. We will go with the economic flow and see what develops. I do not anticipate layoffs this year given our reserves. The term financial exigency came up only because there were Board Members that wondered if we were getting close to declaring financial exigency. The attorneys and System finance folks determined that we are far from that. Retrenchment is always an issue, but there is no need to talk about that right now. I wouldn’t be overly concerned about what is happening at other institutions. The Chancellor has been very emphatic that we would not be sharing our precious reserves or resources. The other institution might get help, through a loan, but not through other institutions. There is concern on the part of the Chancellor’s Office regarding the Governor’s online challenge. The IT e-application issue is a serious problem reaching crisis proportion. If students are so frustrated that they can’t submit an application, that could have tremendous detrimental effects. We have had up to 1,700 applications stack up during the last few weeks. Finally, the IT staff visited our campus and found some quick fixes. FA President Larsson: I went to LTR and was heartened to hear that MnSCU is starting to pay attention to this issue.

d. MSU Provost’s Report—Provost Olson: On the 120 credit issue—we put out a survey through the department chairs to see if they could get through this easily or not. Out of 130 programs, 97 were not going to be a problem. Thirty-some were going to have trouble. Twenty-some were hoping to seek a waiver and are probably eligible. I think engineering, nursing, and dental education will have a pretty easy time. There was a misperception that no waivers would be permitted but that is not the case. We strongly encourage you to seek a waiver if you feel you are eligible. Some BFAs could be a challenge. And some programs are seeking accreditation and that might be an issue. We are likewise puzzled that the Board did not take action on this. Unless the legislation is changed, we will assume that it will be approved. There should be a survey going out to department chairs asking them for further comment about this. Gary Peer is looking at ways about how we can enhance our off-campus profile. Our campus at 7700 France was a good move. There are a lot of opportunities out there. The bumper crop of high school
students is this year. It will go down in the near future. If you haven’t been up there, I would encourage you to stop by, go on in and take a look around. The budget report can be found at: [http://www.mmb.state.mn.us/](http://www.mmb.state.mn.us/). Tomorrow I will send out an email to all faculty. It will talk about how the Deans and VP’s offices are going to put dollars into an educational reserve. This does not apply to department budgets. We are going to preserve the contract and instruction to the extent we possibly can, and preserve excellence in other areas, as many as we possibly can. FA President Larsson: We had inquiry from one chair about finding ways of just getting their own work done. According to the contract, Departments have the right to make recommendations about how they work.

e. Human Resources Topics—HR Director Lamb: You got electronically the position vacancies. You will note on the classified list that several positions are listed as being “on hold”. That is a direct result of the current budget discussions. You will see more of this in the future. You can appreciate that we don’t want to hire staff right now that we can’t sustain in the future. We are trying to be prudent. We don’t want to have layoffs. Every position that is being filled now is being reviewed by the Cabinet and has been for a year now.

2. Action Items

a. Policy Review—FA President Larsson: Under 2c4 in the agenda, regarding the University policy on Faculty Availability, we had questions about finals week and final grading day. Provost Olson: The finals week schedule is different than the regular class week. Availability to students is certainly a premium for students during that time. FA President Larsson: We do recognize them as duty days. Provost Olson: There may be value for FA leadership to have discussion with MSSA leadership about this. FA President Larsson: Individual college Deans might have differing practices as well. It might be wise for them to clarify for their faculty. Regarding e1 on the agenda [Alcohol and Other Drugs], why is this particular policy being reviewed at this time? President Davenport: Everyone is aware of the issue with binge drinking. The light has been shed on our campus and our community because of recent tragic incidents. One of the problems we have had is trying to communicate to the students the importance of responsible drinking. We think the percentage is small but our student code of conduct has long included a provision for enforcing the off-campus behavior of our students. We are concerned about the image of the students, their futures and their health. And the City itself asked why we aren’t doing more. Those are the reasons that we moved this policy review forward. Not so much the problem but the message. We would never advocate for a prohibition, but we are concerned about the impact of binge drinking on our students. FA President Larsson: We will be preparing our response. Any updates on d? HR Director Lamb: d1 was not forwarded to the President; d2 was signed and implemented.

3. Discussion Items

a. MnSCU/Legislative Relations—FA President Larsson: In regard to salary equity settlements, the 2006 survey has finally moved into action with over 90 faculty on our campus getting from 1 to 5 steps. We just found out that those letters were distributed by Tuesday. We were concerned that those employees would be able to take
tax shelter steps. HR Director Lamb: If faculty want to ask questions we ask that they do so respectfully. I had a staff member in tears today. Every faculty member gets a work sheet. We will do everything in our power to get these out as quickly as we can. There are a number of faculty who are no longer here. FA President Larsson: There is no excuse for us to deal with this with a lack of respect. But this has taken years. A lot of faculty are feeling understandably frustrated. But we do want to make sure there is some allowance for some of those to avoid the potential tax bite. HR Director Lamb: There is yet time for this. President Davenport: Our strategy is to wait and let this thing play through.

b. Budget and Planning Process—VP Straka: It is amazing what a difference six weeks makes. At that time we were looking at a potential surplus. Now we have a deficit for this biennium. We were thinking that $4 billion would be realistic for next biennium but it wasn’t. We still have our reserve. The Governor could declare an unallotment but there are some very clear steps that have to be followed. A deallocation could be done in a targeted fashion. We are going to have to see what is going to happen. The $4.8 billion is about 14% for the state’s budget over the next biennium. This is a huge change since last February. The Legislature and the Governor have both said that there will be some adjustments. Spending cuts will not handle this. It could be an income tax or some way to help with this. We are more heavily dependent on tuition. Even if we were cut 15%, it would only be out of the 40% we get from the State. We will get millions less than we got this year. But we don’t know what that is yet. Another variable is inflation. The Governor has called some statewide union leaders to talk about this. We have $90 million in compensation alone [statewide]. We raise $700,000 for every one percent of tuition raised. We will not be able to hold to a 2 or 3% tuition cap. But all of this will have to work itself out. And what will our enrollment be? I think we are going to have to figure out if our 3% planned cut will be enough. We do have some flexibility, including unused equipment allocation and strategic plan initiatives. We can’t give up all of this, but we can use some of this. We will be monitoring all of this. FA President Larsson: In the short term, we have that deficit to deal for this fiscal year. VP Straka: Deallocation is much more likely than an unallotment. FA President Larsson: Will we see an immediate impact in spring semester? VP Straka: We are left with reserves; the Governor could call a travel, hiring or equipment freeze. I hope that doesn’t come out. Provost Olson: Can you address the fear of redistribution within MnSCU? VP Straka: I have never seen that happen in the general fund. That would be an absolute disincentive to those who plan well. There are troubled waters ahead, but our plans are good and we have some flexibility. It will take all of us working together to succeed. We have received several good suggestions on our website requesting insights on how to help with this issue. We can solve this together. FA President Larsson: It is good that we have a process in place to have this input. There will be a lot of details to address. One of our concerns is getting a holistic sense of consequences. If, for example, we are cutting back on our TA budgets, this could be detrimental to class offerings and our graduate programs. And there are programs that we are trying to grow. We have heard about the need to grow enrollments and we would need to support this too. It is all of a piece. FA: It is clear that cutting faculty would cut revenue because of the proportion of tuition that would represent. VP Straka: Tuition and fees are not covered now by financial aid. It is going to be tough. FA President Larsson: We have some important
positions that have not been filled; assessment has been on my mind most. One of the
questions we need to ask is if there is some way that we can direct that the necessary
tasks get done? Provost Olson: We have offered the assessment position to two or three
people and it has been turned down. Any ideas you have are welcome. We have to re-
think that. The RASP position, likewise, has been turned down. Dean Blackhurst thinks
that the problem is one of title. At least we have an interim in that. VP Swatfager-
Haney: We have tried to make sure that duties are reassigned and we back fill as much as
we can. We can do this for the short term but, after awhile, you burn people out. FA
President Larsson: Both Planning and Budget might need to consider this. There are
places where we need to see some of the specifics. We know the colleges have been
making plans, but it might be interesting to see exactly how they are planning to meet
these goals in everyday terms and not just in percentages. That could be useful. Provost
Olson: Those will all be reviewed as part of the Budget Meet and Confer process. VP
Straka: We are meeting on December 10 and we will begin the discussions. I would
hope that we can get this out as quickly as we can.

c. 25% Courses Online—FA President Larsson: It might be useful if Dean
Lipetsky could bring some data about how we are currently doing with online education.
FA: We should also be looking at the services that we are providing for these students.
Schneider: Some colleges are offering tremendous opportunities. FA President Larsson:
But at what price?

d. Great Place to Work—Provost Olson: We have been working on a plan to
publicize the results of the survey. There will be a website coming up in January that will
allow you to see it in detail. A subgroup is looking at the areas that have been identified
as problematic. For example, one thing seemed to be a formal mentoring system. There
was one issue where people are looking for another job, but we need to find out if that is
in general or by specific bargaining group. There was a conference committee between
Planning and the Great Place Committee and we are looking at a process on how to
develop a Core Values Statement. That was shared this morning with Planning. You
will learn more about it as it goes through the process. FA VP Grabowska: In terms of
this process, we are concerned about faculty involvement. We don’t what this to be an
exercise where it just appears on someone’s desktop to be dismissed. We need to get
faculty buy-in and participation. We have to develop core values, not just identify them.
FA: This can impact budgeting. We need to clarify these. FA President Larsson: A lot
of these are implicitly embedded in the Mission Statement. HR Director Lamb: The
consensus of the group was to start from scratch but to have examples around that would
spur some creativity. We did not want to be prescriptive about this. FA: What is the
timeline to this? We should also involve the Assessment Committee. Provost Olson: It
should be done by May. If you have ideas about how other submeets should be part of
the process, let us know. This will work best with greater involvement. We have to
focus in on what matters most around here. FA VP Grabowska: I think it is crucial.
Everyone is asking why we are making the cuts we are making. This must be informed
by values.

e. Bullying Survey Update—HR Director Lamb: This is part of being a great
place to work. The President intends to make this an actionable item. This is still a high
priority. This week we should be getting a final report from our consultants. We
previewed a draft of the report at the retreat in August. After several rounds, there have
been no suggestions to change the action plans the consultants are recommending. For example, one of the recommendations was to do a core values assessment. They need to be working together. You will be hearing about some good action oriented things this spring.

**f. Safety Procedures**—FA President Larsson: I perceive a certain lack of coordination at the state level regarding safety. At our level we have some systems in place. But there seems to be a lack of connection between some of these things. I walk into the YMCA and they seem to practice test lock-down or emergency procedures all the time. Or sometimes we inform one building but faculty might not be housed in that building or they teach in another. We will bring forth some questions and proposals.

VP Swatfager-Haney: We would be happy to report to FA leadership on some things that we are about to roll out.

The meeting ended at 4:47 p.m.

John M. Winkworth
Reviewer for Management

Paul J. Hustoles
Reviewer for Faculty