

Colleagues,

Your safety and health, and that of our communities, is our number one priority right now.

We have heard concerning reports about mandatory in-person meetings or other pressures to be physically on campus next week. Let me be clear: No one should feel pressured to report in person next week *if you have any concerns about jeopardizing your safety or the safety of those around you.*

We have made it clear in all of our communications with the system office that all employees must be held harmless for protecting their safety during this public health emergency. We will continue to press for this common-sense protection in all available venues.

As system-level plans were being developed for next week, our position and understanding was always that plans would reflect two essential principles: 1) The health and safety of employees would be considered in all actions, and 2) Employees would need the space and time—free of other obligations—to do the work necessary to transition to alternate modes of delivery.

After guidance was issued from the system late last week, we saw many campuses create plans that did exactly that. Across our state on many of our campuses:

- All employees are being given the option to work remotely and/or use remote-meeting technology
- There has been clear communication that anyone concerned about health risks can and should work remotely with no penalty and with no explanation needed (to preserve health privacy)
- A commitment to flexibility and trust of everyone's professionalism


Examples of this trust include: Meetings, especially in-person meetings, but virtual ones as well, have been described as encouraged and useful but not mandatory. Plans have been put in place to share information from the meetings if employees are unable to attend.

In our conversations with the system, these measures are exactly what we had in mind. Not only do these best practices ensure the health and safety of campus communities, they also respect long standing agreements and practices (including our contract), indicating an important respect of partnership and collaboration. This should be happening on all of our campuses.

Unfortunately, as I mentioned above, we have been hearing from faculty that some colleges have created plans that instead prioritize control and invasive oversight, conveying a lack of trust in their employees and a dangerous disregard for the health and safety of the entire campus community.

Our greatest concern is the short-sighted position some colleges have taken – requiring employees to be present for mandatory meetings or, if they cannot be, forcing them to use personal leave/sick leave – endangers our faculty, especially those with underlying health conditions or who are at elevated risk.

55 Sherburne Ave., St. Paul, MN 55103  
651-767-1262 800-377-7783 Fax 651-767-1266  
[www.msctmn.org](http://www.msctmn.org)

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



Furthermore, not allowing employees to work remotely severely erodes the flexibility we will all need to get the work of rapidly adapting courses done. As we know, many faculty already have unconventional work structures and may have childcare or other caretaking obligations that simply cannot be reworked at the last minute.

Let me be clear: If your local college administration has created plans involving mandatory in-person activities next week that are not revised by Monday morning, please do whatever you must to remain safe and/or protect others around you who may be at elevated risk of infection. Communicate with your supervisor, use personal or sick leave, or—if those options aren't available to you—contact your local MSCF leadership, who should connect with state MSCF officers or field staff ASAP.

At 4 p.m. this afternoon, the system office responded via email to our repeated attempts to alert them to this issue. We are now providing them with a list of campuses where we know these short-sighted plans are in effect, and we hope to see swift clarification to all campuses about best practices during this situation. Local leaders can join us in reiterating and reinforcing this message – and clear need – to their local administration.

Here is one action we can all take:

Because it is spring break, we know not all faculty are currently checking their email. Check in on your colleagues via social media, text message, or personal email. Make sure they are aware of the change beginning Monday. During this difficult time, we can all benefit from taking a little extra care of each other.

Again, I want to reiterate that the health and safety of everyone is our number one concern. Please continue to contact us if you have questions.

In unity,

Matt  
Matt Williams | President  
Minnesota State College Faculty  
p: 651.767.1265 m: 612.295.1744  
mscfmn.org | matt.williams@edmn.org