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# *the* GREEN SHEET



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## A Vivid Picture

*By Kevin Lindstrom, President*

If a picture is worth a thousand words, then the faculty contract at Western Iowa Community College is worth about a quarter of a picture. It consists of 231 words, according to Microsoft Word. It fits easily on one page, signatures included. Prior to right-to-work legislation being passed in Iowa in 2016, the faculty at Western Iowa worked under a contract containing provisions similar to many of those found in the MSCF contract. Eight days after a new legislative majority took office, and with the support of a governor from the same party as the majority, the contract was gone, outlawed. It was replaced with a new so-called contract containing 231 words.

Microsoft Word also tells us that the current MSCF contract contains over 67,000 words. That's a lot of pictures, pictures of things like shared governance, academic freedom, intellectual property rights, professional development, seniority, layoff rights, severance,

insurance, and grievance rights. Oh, and there's the salary schedule, negotiated without limitation. You won't find a hint of any of these in the Western Iowa contract.

Pictures can be stark, even shocking. Showing the Western Iowa contract to our faculty has produced audible gasps. At the very least, it grabs your attention in an alarming fashion.

Pictures also reveal the truth, sometimes where perceptions and wishes have distorted it. I wish things weren't as polar and divisive as they are, but the pictures don't lie. The choices and consequences have never been so clear.

In 2016 the Minnesota House of Representatives took a vote on a bill containing right-to-work provisions. The vote fell along party lines, with two exceptions. While the bill was never going to become law with Governor Dayton in office, the vote provided a vivid picture of intent and of who stands where.



On November 6 Minnesota voters, each and every one of us included, will paint the picture of our future. As you enter the polls that day, you may be conflicted over a number of competing political issues. I'm not going to speak to the other issues, but I know exactly what is at stake with regards to our contract. As you cast your vote, or even as you decide whether or not to vote, please have a picture of our contract, and all it means to you, in your mind.

# The MSCF Value, Calculated

By Matt Williams, Vice President

## What is the value of membership in MSCF?

The answer to this question matters. Anti-union groups have been ramping up their “drop” campaigns arguing that the amount of money people pay in dues isn’t worth what they’re getting back. In this Green Sheet, some of your colleagues have volunteered to share their experiences teaching outside of our contract to help illustrate just how much we’ve collectively accomplished — and why we need to protect it. While I think you will agree that these experiences speak for themselves, I also want to provide important two numbers for context.

**20 percent.** That’s the percentage of faculty at public, two-year colleges in this country who are tenured or in a tenure-eligible position. Nationwide, four out of five two-year educators are considered “contingent” or ineligible for tenure.

**70 percent.** That’s the minimum percentage of faculty across all public two-year colleges in Minnesota who are tenured or tenure track (what we call unlimited status). And yes, you’re reading that correctly: We’re essentially the opposite of the national trends.

## What makes Minnesota different?

If you’re thinking the difference is that we have a union, think again: Some 42 percent of public two-year college faculty in this country are working under some kind of collectively bargained contract. In other words, we’re hardly alone in being a unionized faculty.

What makes us different is that we are a **strong, united unionized faculty.**

As a strong union, we believe in a permanent, professional faculty that receives fair treatment regardless of whether you are full time or part time, and we know that working conditions for our faculty are learning conditions for our students.

We’ve successfully fought for these beliefs because we have strength in numbers to do so. And that’s what makes me so astonished about the “drop” campaigns — I know beyond a shadow of a doubt that my dues are a good investment and it’s not even a question. But since the anti-union groups want to talk about the value of membership in relation to dues, then let’s do this — let’s talk about what we’ve accomplished relative to the rest of higher education in this country.



Tanya shared a story of teaching a five-credit course at a private, non-unionized institution right here in Minnesota. If she had taught that course under our contract, as a member of our union, she would have paid dues, yes, and she also would have been placed on our salary schedule. Using our mid-2000s schedule and the education/experience Tanya had at the time, we can estimate approximately how much more Tanya would have gotten back relative to every dollar in dues she would have paid — a figure I’m calling the MSCF ROI. (Or, if you’re a baseball geek like me: Return on Dues Relative to Alternative Academic Employment.) In Tanya’s case, she would have taken home 10 dollars more for

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[www.msfcfmn.org](http://www.msfcfmn.org)

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# Sorry, not sorry

By Mark Grant, Chair Governmental Relations/Lobbyist

As the November election looms large on the horizon, you may have noticed some changes in how MSCF is approaching this November. My goal is to not only provide some detail as to what we are doing differently this time around, but also provide some context as to why. First off, rest assured this “new” approach is in direct response to what we see as a new reality. I completely believe that this organization has done what it needed to do in the past and has, in many respects, achieved a lot of success. However, in this post Janus world, we have become convinced that we need to do things differently. That calls for a more aggressive approach to November’s election.

This “aggression” is evident in a few ways. First, in communication – both the content and the quantity. Simply put, you are hearing from us a lot. This will take the form of increase social media engagement – Facebook, Twitter, Instagram – as well as email updates and weekly video updates in the MSCF Minute. Also Education Minnesota has committed significant resources to the 2018 election - all of which EM is making available to our campuses. These resources include voter data, early voting materials, pledge cards and funds to help pay for get out the vote events. As a result of this investment, the EM field staff assigned to MSCF have been charged with working with our campuses on these efforts. This means there will be some overlap in our efforts. Kari Ann, Chip, Emily and I have met and will continue to meet to make sure we don’t overwhelm you, but if you find

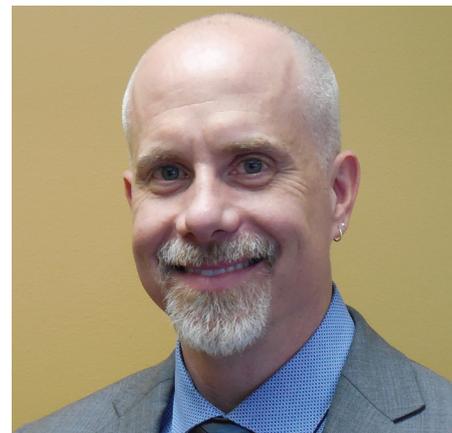
yourself hearing from all of us, this is why.

Also, our “asks” are more direct. We have always encouraged faculty to step up their engagement in an election year and faculty have almost always responded well. But this year, we are working from historical voting data. And that data says the voting turnout in midterm election years among our faculty is not good. That’s not super surprising – overall voter turnout is much lower when the president isn’t on the ballot but we have about a 28% drop off. As state employees whose conditions of employment hinge on who roams the halls of the Capitol in St. Paul, we cannot afford that level of disengagement

So we are asking for a concrete campus plan to get out the vote - three things every campus will do from the first day of school to Election Day to engage faculty and students in the voting process (I have one from almost every campus). We have pledge cards being sent to each campus. I have heard from some that this seems condescending, but the research is clear, if you complete a pledge card to vote, you are far more likely to follow through and vote. And again, 28% drop off.

We’re asking for other types of participation as well – a steady stream of campaign activities like lit drops and door knocks are coming across my desk and they are being shared with faculty in the area as well as all legislative liaisons.

We are also putting our money where our jobs are. We have compiled a list of 12-14 (depending on the time and landscape)



candidates that we believe are worthy of your financial support. That list has been shared with campus legislative liaisons a couple times already and will continue to be pushed until November. We are also featuring those candidates via social media. If everyone reading this donated \$10 to two candidates from that list every couple weeks – we could have a real impact on those targeted races.

This brings me to the last way this cycle may be different from those of the past – we support those who support us. I think this is probably the most unapologetically partisan we have been going into an election. By now, you have probably heard about what happened in Iowa in '16. The Republicans took the Senate and kept the House and the Governor’s seat. It took 8 days – from the day HF291 was introduced to the day it was signed and effective – for Iowa Western Community College’s 30+ page contract to be reduced to a single page.

Because of past voting records here in Minnesota, we know that if the Republicans retain control of both

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## Tanya Smutka, UFT-Biology

Prior to working at Inver Hills, I worked briefly for a private/for-profit 2-year college (this was in the mid-2000s). I was paid on an hourly basis, at a rate of \$17/hour (which, according to them, was at the high end of the scale). For a 5-credit course, I was paid 7 hours per week. Do the math...to teach the equivalent of a full-load under our MSCF contract, I would be paid only \$357 per week (under \$18,000 per year if I taught full-time at that school, year-round, including summers). In addition to the poverty wages, I had no voice. While I have many examples of this, the one that sticks out the most was the time I had a student upset with her exam grade, cornered me in the hallway and threatened me. The meeting with the student, HR, and my supervisor was a completely one-sided conversation, with my supervisor and HR letting the student say anything she wanted without letting me say a word, and doing whatever was needed to keep her (and her tuition dollars) in school, regardless of the fact that she was bullying all of her instructors and classmates. I am so grateful to now work under a contract where I can make a livable wage and have a voice in my work. Every single penny I pay in dues to MSCF is worth more than their weight in gold.

## Ed Hahn, TFT-English

Before joining Inver Hills Community College, I was a visiting assistant professor (VAP) in the English department at the University of Wisconsin–Eau Claire. VAPs teach four sections of first-year writing each semester, working with over eighty students. The curriculum is prepackaged and prescriptive, with four major assignments that are to be completed across four units. Anyone who creates their own assignments or works at their own pace risks being docked in departmental evaluations, which are written by a committee of tenured and tenure-track faculty. Very few of the department's and university's committees are open to VAPs and adjuncts, and the single seat reserved for them on the five-person writing-program committee is not proportional or particularly empowering. The absence of VAP and adjunct voices at every level enables a variety of everyday indignities and institutionalized mistreatment. It is not until late spring that they learn whether or not their contracts will be renewed for the fall, which determines whether or not their health care insurance for the summer will be maintained or automatically refunded and revoked. The lucky ones will keep their salary of \$38,000 for at least one more year.

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## Educators to Legislators – Education Minnesota/ higher education union members currently running for office

- Tim Walz
- Julie Blaha
- Jim Grabowska
- Jamie Mahlberg
- Paul McDonald
- Stephen Browning
- Terry Gjersvik
- Joe Perske
- Paul Marquart
- Julie Sandstede
- Jennifer Schultz
- Jeanne Poppe
- Gene Pelowski
- Lyndon Carlson
- Mary Kunesh-Podein



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## *The MSCF Value, Calculated* continued from page 2

every dollar of dues contributed.

Ed's situation gives us a sobering peek into where these trends have been going over the past 10 years. Not even 100 miles across the state line, Ed enjoyed few of the protections and benefits our members have. If Ed had been teaching in Wisconsin under our contract, he would have taken home 20+ more dollars for every dollar paid in dues, calculated from his compensation in the weakened University of Wisconsin system.

What's perhaps most important to note, though, is that these figures are taking only raw salary into account. What's not getting calculated are benefits, protections, and any sort of voice in campus

governance — things that all add up to being respected and valued as a professional educator.

The most disingenuous part of the anti-union drop campaigns is the idea that everything we have accomplished would somehow simply continue on if people stopped being members — the only difference being that people would have a little more money in their paychecks. This is false. Without our strength in numbers, we would revert to the national averages, and stories like Tanya's and Ed's would become commonplace here in Minnesota, here in our schools.

Are we going to let that happen here in Minnesota? No, not of we have anything to do about it! I hope

you recognize—as I do—that it is a privilege to support an organization that supports all of us. And that means being an active, dues paying member. The dues we pay are a good investment in every possible way. We've accomplished a lot, but there's a so much more to do, and every member is a part of ensuring we're strong enough to keep the fight going.

If you DO know what it's like to work in higher ed without the MSCF contract, I want to hear from you! Email me your experiences at [matt.williams@edmn.org](mailto:matt.williams@edmn.org), and we will help share your experiences so everyone knows what we're fighting for.

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## *Sorry, not sorry* continued from page 3

houses and win the Governor's seat, we will experience the same thing. Where we make no distinction between a strong MSCF and a strong 2 year college system, many do. They like our institutions and like what we do for our students and would vote our contract away in a heartbeat. This isn't speculation, we have the vote counts to prove it.

This is just the reality.

And truth be told, I know many of you have opinions about how we got here and the various missteps unions and political parties have made along the way. And as interesting as I find those, it does not change the current reality.

I have been in several MSCF

planning meetings in the last year or so. Planning meeting around Janus, and membership, and budgets and lawsuits. These meetings are all centered on the long term health of our union. "What do we do if. . ." and "What happens when. . ." kinds of meetings. Inevitably, someone asks, "and what's the plan if the election doesn't go our way?" The reply is always a period of silence, followed by, "Well, if that happens, most of this other planning won't really matter."

We have always had the luxury of a "live to fight another day" mentality. I've been involved with the statewide legislative steering committee long enough to have

seen several election outcomes. And when they don't go our way, we always say, "We'll regroup a few days after the election and figure out how to navigate the new landscape." That is a luxury we just do not have anymore

All of this to say, if it feels like we are singularly focused, it's because we kinda are. If we seem like we are coming on a bit strong, it's because we kinda are. If it seems like we are picking sides, it's because we are. And even if you grow weary of hearing from us, I ask that you see these efforts for what they are, an acknowledgement that this time is just different. Too much is at stake. So sorry, not sorry.

# Screening Experience

*By James Rutledge*

Voting in the upcoming election has never been so important. I would encourage everyone to get involved in some way but, at minimum, vote! This past summer I represented MSCF as a contingent faculty member to screen candidates who wanted the endorsement from Education Minnesota. To my surprise, some of the candidates knew very little about our positions in education and as a union, which is why I would

recommend anyone who has ever thought about running for public office to never be discouraged and get involved in anyway. You can be confident in knowing that that candidates we endorsed feel strongly about our positions. At the screening committees, we questioned the candidates on their positions related to education and unions. The process led us to endorse candidates who will represent our positions as a union

and as advocates for education. With such a close link between the government and education such as funding and oversight committees that continue to monitor and review education reform, our leaders can greatly impact the future direction of education, which is why we need to be involved and have our voices heard: One of the most important things we can all do is vote!

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## Retiring this year? Stay connected with a retired membership

**Retired members help build unity and increase the power of MSCF, and for those who are eligible, there is no additional cost for this great program.**

Retired members will have access to the benefits of retired membership, including:

- Continued access to Economic Services Inc. (ESI), NEA and AFT member benefit programs.
- Staying connected with other retired colleagues through newsletters, regional events, and annual meetings.
- Participating in MSCF political action and legislative efforts on such important issues as pension benefits and retiree medical insurance.

And the benefits work both ways. Retired members continue to help MSCF build power in the union by:

- Volunteering and recruiting other members to engage in MSCF campaign activities.
- Serving as ambassadors for educators and the union with community service groups.
- Covering hearings and lobbying for MSCF's legislative agenda.
- And much more!

**Help your retiring members stay connected. Applications may be found at [www.mscfmn.org](http://www.mscfmn.org) under Members Only, Retired Membership.**

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Chip Dykstra, 651-767-1277

Emily Mateo, 651-767-1268

### Upcoming meeting dates

**10/18/2018**

MEA

**10/25/2018**

Executive Meeting

**11/14/2018**

Faculty Forum

**12/07/2018**

Board Meeting with faculty  
forum to follow