



# Minnesota State College Faculty The **GREEN SHEET**

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## Minnesota Transfer Curriculum: A call for review

**T**he September 2003 edition of this publication contained an article in which I laid out some challenges for us. One of the challenges was to “champion a thoughtful, full, and fair review of the Minnesota Transfer Curriculum.”

The discussions around that have matured and we need to relate to you where the issue is. The MnSCU Minnesota Transfer Curriculum (MTC) Oversight Committee (membership below) is a group of representatives of the faculties, administration, and Office of the Chancellor staff charged with monitoring the operation and effectiveness of the MTC.

Within that charge, staff undertook reviews of status from campus to campus over the last few years and published some desk reviews of their findings. The desk reviews established that problems exist, mainly in areas of consistent application of and adherence to the original guidelines under which the MTC was to have been created at each institution.

**By Larry  
Oveson**

**MSCF  
President**



Those reviews led me to have our office do an inventory of each two-year institution's MTC in the form of a course-by-course listing and the goal or theme areas into which each course had been placed. The inventory was disturbing. In my opinion it showed, at some colleges, a significant abandonment of the original guidelines and under-

standings upon which we were to build our MTC.

A study of the anomalies led me to the conclusion that two phenomena had taken place back in 1995. First, the MTC had been presented under clouds of threat and fear. The threat, implied in many places and more explicit in others, was that if your course(s) did not get into the MTC, it would wither, and you would lose your job.

This occurred, I think, not out of misunderstanding, but out of a desire to motivate the faculty to take on the considerable extra work of preparing, presenting, and defending their courses. Faculty did respond with the predictable fear of job loss, and it led to the second phenomenon.

That phenomenon was a systematic understatement of the first understanding or screen for courses. It was always agreed that the first screen through which every course would have to pass was that it be a general education course. This was the explicit reason for banning courses in physical education and business, for example, because they are by nature not general education.

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# Minnesota Transfer Curriculum

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In their rush to have their courses included, faculty understandably went by that screen and put their course up against the template of the goal areas and competencies. “My course meets three of the four competencies in this goal area; therefore, you must allow it into the MTC!” was a frequently heard claim in review committees.

Add to that the politics and interpersonal dimensions of refusing entry into the safe haven, and we had a very difficult situation.

## *A changing environment*

Since its inception in 1994–1995 the environment around the MTC has shifted significantly.

- We have merged higher education systems.
- The first bullet results in bringing the technical colleges much more into the MTC picture. All technical colleges now offer general education to some degree, and they all have the right to have their courses considered for the MTC.
- We have converted from quarters to semesters, with the accompanying loss of course titles and remixing of course content.
- The prevalence of student transfer is greater each year. Student transfer is a much larger part of the academic experience than it was in the mid-90’s.
- We have experienced the pressures of transfer complaints from Trustees and Legislators. This resulted fairly quickly in moving away from the original intent of the makers of the MTC that it would transfer as a package. Very soon after 1995 we began to see the transfer of individual goal areas.
- Legislation authored by Representative Kinkel mandated that all MnSCU institutions adopt the MTC, which brought the state universities into the mix much more so than in the past, and more importantly, it mandated that each sending institution’s placement of a course in the MTC be honored by a

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receiving institution.

- The Trustees expect seamless treatment of students, from application for admission to graduation. Easing transfer is an important part of that initiative.
- Registration personnel, transcript evaluators, counselors, advisors, students, and transfer specialists are expressing concern about the variances and anomalies they find as they work with the MTC and students.
- A national conversation is taking place about general education — its forms, its place in the undergraduate curriculum, and its currency.
- We have learned through experience that the threat and fear of course failure and job loss do not hold up.
- About 40 percent of the faculty in the colleges have been hired within the last ten years, after the original education period on the MTC. These faculty have had little, if any, foundation in the original guidelines, intent, agreements, and understandings associated with the MTC.

All of these things taken together argue for us to ask, “Where are we with the MTC?” The Oversight Committee has considered all of this and is discussing

the potential for a review of the MTC at each institution by that institution.

The goal of a review would be to answer the short-term question above. The long-term outcome, I believe, would be a healthy and vigorous discussion of the question, “Is this where we want to be, and is the MTC still serving our students in this new context?”

In order to take up the national conversation cited above and to assure ourselves that we are doing the best we can by students ten years later, we need to inventory where we are against what we believe the original intent of the makers was and against what we know the original agreements were.

A key tool in that review would be a more under-

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# *Health care concerns provided the motivation for political action*

By Gregory Wright

**I** have had some defining moments before, but the ones that I have recently experienced prompted me to take action. We have all watched our earning power erode over the past few years and we have commiserated over inadequate pay raises.

We have expressed concern about the future of our profession and the difficulty of attracting people of excellence to take over when we retire. I share these concerns, and I have commiserated too; however, I did not act.

My moment for action came in summer of 2003 when I was on the MSCF Negotiations Team. When the estimates of available money for salaries and the increased cost of health care became known, I was deeply disappointed.

After subtracting the health care costs, there was pitifully little money to put into the salary grid. That disappointment eventually motivated me to do something.

I determined that the health care issue cannot be solved by MSCF alone. It is a national issue and needs to be a national priority. This conclusion led me on an interesting and exciting odyssey culminating at the Democratic National Convention in Boston this last July.

My political activities have been dormant for the past few years; however, this year I was determined to act positively to create a change. I took my message to the precinct caucus then to the county convention and was lucky enough to be elected a national delegate at the congressional district convention. I traveled to Boston at the end of July. While in Boston, I joined others to promote health care as a national issue.

Although health care was the catalyst that prompted me to act, I am also concerned about the funding level for education both at the state and national levels. I joined with 123 AFT delegates and 200 NEA delegates to press for funding for higher education.

The Democratic National Convention was a great experience and a great platform to express my views.

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I was interviewed by the New York Times, Air America, and other media services (see the October 2004 issue, pages 12–13, of the AFT On Campus for a picture and interview). I spoke to people from all over America who were in Boston because they also wanted to make a difference. Together we did what we could do to create positive change.

When I returned home to Rochester, I continued to act. I used my status as National Delegate to inspire others, to encourage them to make a difference. Not all of us can be a National Delegate, but we can make phone calls, block walk, distribute signs, or volunteer to help register voters.

I continue to tell people that they can't do everything, but they can do one thing. Doing one thing, no matter how small, will help to make a difference.

*Gregory Wright is the chapter president at Rochester Community and Technical College and serves on the Joint Committee on Credential Fields, Academic Affairs Committee, and Negotiations Team.*

# What is this Ness law all about?

**T**his is one of the most frequently asked questions that has been posed to me ever since it was announced that I would be looking into campus programs to verify compliance to this law. Making sure that the colleges have been following the language of this law has been done previously. At the completion of that investigation, it was stated that MSCF could at any time look into the college practices of this law to be sure that technical education remains “pure.”

MSCF has requested that we take this year to look, once again, at technical and consolidated colleges which offer technical programs. I will take some time to give you the best explanation of what this means in terms of your programs and hopefully put people at ease about the process that has begun.

Technical Education has many components to it and to the technical program structures. When we

**“It is important to remember that technical education trains for career entry employment, and, therefore, needs to offer all levels of education for students to access.”**

develop our technical programs, we choose our most important technical content along with the required number of general studies courses required to construct a certificate or diploma. What is most important about these two academic awards is that they are constructed with technical content courses and general studies courses that will train our students for employment.

The law states: Certificates and diplomas are credentials that demonstrate competence in a vocational or technical area and, therefore, may include a general education component only as part of an articulation agreement or to meet occupational requirements as established by the trade or profession, or by the program advisory committee.

## **What does this mean?**

Instructors need to be aware of what is in their cer-

tificate and diploma program plans. Do they have general studies? Do they have general education? If programs do have general education, can faculty show documentation of articulation agreement, trade and industry mandates or program advisory committee approval? These are the types of questions that may be asked of colleges and instructors in the year to come.

The law states: A technical college or consolidated technical community college shall offer students the option of pursuing diplomas and certificates in each technical education program, unless the board determines that a degree is the only acceptable credential for career entry in a specific field.

## **What does this mean?**

If technical programs offer an AAS degree, then the students should also have the opportunity to pursue certificates and diplomas within this degree as well. It is important to remember that technical education trains for career entry employment, and, therefore, needs to offer all levels of education for students to access.

## **What if a program doesn't offer all of the choices?**

The union will be following up with colleges, checking that they offer all of the listed choices for students to access. What the union is most concerned about is that program faculty understand that under this law they have the “right” to offer more than an AAS degree. We want to be sure that colleges are offering technical certificate and diploma programs along with the degree options.

Program faculty need to be aware of their program offerings and be aware that administration can not simply “drop” a certificate or diploma because the college chooses to offer only a degree choice. Faculty should make sure they are proactive with their advisory committees to document any wishes that they may have on the program offerings.

The law states: All vocational and technical credits earned for a diploma or certificate shall be applicable toward any available degree in the same program.

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# Law protects technical education

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## What does this mean?

Faculty should check technical program plans. Do the credits students are required to complete in a certificate program also apply toward the completion of a diploma? Do the credits students are required to complete in a diploma program also apply toward the completion of an AAS? Is there a career ladder that has been built within this program so students can make a seamless transition without being required to purchase more courses than necessary?

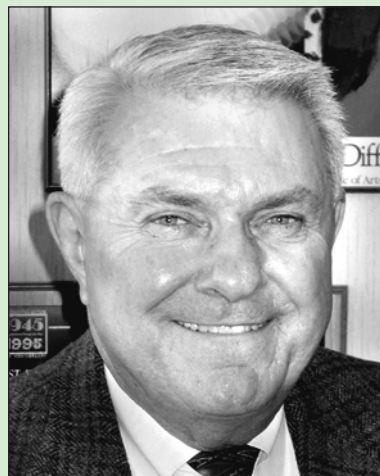
## Where are we in the process now?

- A letter has been sent by Linda Baer to all of the Chief Academic Officers of two-year technical and consolidated colleges. She has informed the administration of the work that MSCF is doing regarding the Ness law and has requested that the colleges provide the information asked for.
- A report from MnSCU has been completed. This report supplies the names of colleges and the technical programs which are not currently offering a certificate and diploma choice along with an AAS degree. MSCF will be contacting individual program faculty to ask if they agree with the program choices that are currently offered and to ask if the faculty are in need of any assistance from the state MSCF office.

- A survey will be sent to program coordinators to identify how many technical credits are offered, how many general studies credits are offered, and how many general education credits are offered within each program plan. This survey has been developed in cooperation with MnSCU so that both management and our state union are able to access this information. Look for this survey to be sent out to campuses during the spring semester. Once the information is gathered, MSCF will be contacting faculty to be sure that the general studies and general education courses have been placed within programs with faculty approval.

Faculty can assist the union by having updated program plans available when needed. It is important that our members understand this process is meant to “protect” technical education and should be seen as a proactive approach to keeping our technical career options available to students that wish to access them. If at any time you have a question about this law, MSCF involvement in the process, or the process itself, please feel free to contact me (Susan-TenEyck-Stafki@educationminnesota.org) with your questions. This is a large project and I thank you in advance for helping me with any information that I might need to complete the work of the union.

—Susan TenEyck-Stafki, Technical Vice-President



## Best wishes, Johnny D.

Veteran staffer John DeSantis will be retiring from Education Minnesota/MSCF in December 2004. John came to us from Education Minnesota through the former UTCE. He worked for MSCF after the union merger as a field staff representative and a legislative liaison. DeSantis joined the staff of the former MEA in 1975 after 12 years of teaching and coaching. He served in MEA's Marshall, Anoka-Hennepin, and Mankato offices. In retirement, John and his wife, Kathryn Pearce, plan to spend time with family and friends, study genealogy, and travel.

We wish John well and thank him for his many years of service to educators in Minnesota.

# Be aware of contractual issues that come into play as semester ends

As the end of fall semester and the holidays are both fast approaching, several contractual items also come into play. Faculty members with more than one credential field are selecting which summer session rotation list to be on, eligible faculty members are applying for sabbatical leave, unlimited full-time and unlimited part-time faculty should be checking the seniority rosters, interested and qualified faculty members are applying for phased retirement, and layoff notices have been issued.

The administration must establish and/or maintain the summer claiming rotation list in preparation for the process to begin early spring semester. This means that each faculty member who holds more than one credential field (assigned field or license) has the option of selecting which list to be on. If you are one of these persons, make sure that you consider the ramifications of your choice, and, if you want to change, make that choice in writing before the end of the semester. It is important to note that you will go to the bottom of the list when you change lists.

Unlimited full-time, unlimited part-time, and temporary full-time faculty members who will have either six full-time equivalent years of continuous employment completed by next fall or since the return from a previous sabbatical leave are now eligible to apply for a sabbatical leave during the 2005–2006 academic year. Summer employment does not count toward eligibility, but all previous part-time employ-

## Contractually Speaking

By William L. Newton



ment does count.

If a sabbatical is anticipated for spring semester only during the 2005–2006 academic year, then work during fall semester also counts toward meeting the six full-time equivalent years of eligibility. Be sure to work with your chapter grievance representative or your field staff if you run into problems in calculating your eligibility. In addition, if your college president or supervisor demands amendments in your plan, be sure to let your grievance representative or field staff member know.

All of the seniority rosters have been published and should be available for you to check out for accuracy. What more can be said about the importance of this document? It is the sole basis upon which faculty

layoff notices are issued and the claiming of work is granted. Check it out.

For unlimited faculty members who meet the eligibility requirements of age 55 and who have worked continuously for ten full-time equivalent years, fall semester is the deadline for applying for phased retirement, a contractual entitlement based on existing statutes. If you are interested in phased retirement, make sure you understand the ramifications of such a decision and apply. For assistance in this process, please contact your field staff.

Finally, layoff notices have been issued. Chapter grievance representatives and the field staff are in the process of contacting each person who has received a layoff notice to go over the contractual rights and benefits. As chapters are providing input into hiring considerations for next year, remember how important it is to work with these faculty members who have been placed on notice of layoff to possibly keep more of your colleagues fully employed.

## Students campaign

jects that MnSCU has detailed in its request.

I am not a writer. I am not sure if my passion for the tuition freeze campaign has been expressed well. But I am a student who is working with other students to make this state better. This is the first cam-

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paign that I have truly invested myself in, and I am willing to work so hard for the rest of the campaign that I have nothing but positive hopes for the rest of the year. I hope to see campuses where both students and faculty work together to make this tuition freeze a reality.

# A word of thanks from your Legislative Steering Committee

**O**n behalf of the Minnesota State College Faculty Legislative Steering Committee, we want to thank everyone for their involvement in Election 2004. The participation by our members was clearly seen across the state of Minnesota in the House of Representatives races. For that involvement, we thank each and every one of you who took time from your schedule to stand up and have your voice heard regarding higher education and other issues that affect us across this great state.

As we move forward and prepare for the 2005 legislative session, we have been working on the goals that we would like to accomplish during the 2005 session. With the House Republicans having a slim margin, we are hopeful that gridlock will not take place this year. In fact, we feel a renewed commitment to public higher education is possible. With this in mind,

we remind all local chapters that we will be encouraging you to have a campus legislative lobby day and invite your legislators in December or January to discuss issues that are important to us in higher education.

Many activities took place during Campaign 2004. For participating in these activities, we thank you. Your action will pay off for us during the 2005 and 2006 legislative sessions.

We remind you to check in on the MSCF web site (<http://mscf.educationminnesota.org>) and review the legislative updates. Our goals will soon be posted along with other information each week during the session. You can also use the site to keep up to date with what is taking place in the Minnesota State Legislature.

—Rick Nelson, Legislative Co-Chair

## MSCF

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### The **GREEN SHEET**

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standable, useable definition of what general education is. This would help each institution's faculty debate in a more focused, coherent way exactly what form their general education should take.

I have our Academic Affairs Committee working on that. They have shown our Board of Directors a draft working document that contains a proposed definition of general education, and they are beginning discussions with the Inter Faculty Organization (representing the state university faculty) about the issue. Regardless of the outcome of discussions with the IFO, our committee will engage you in a discussion about their thoughts on

general education. Look for that to happen this spring.

The 2004–2005 MnSCU Transfer Oversight Committee:

Ray Anschel (MSCF), Nancy Black (IFO), Monte Bute (IFO), Joan Costello (MnSCU), Jean I. Evens (MSCF), Leah Haddad (MSCSA), Derek Hudyma (MSUSA), Betsy Ingram-Diver (MSCF), Debra Japp (IFO), Jerry Johnson (MnSCU), Linda Lade (MnSCU), Greg Mulcahy (MSCF), Anne O'Meara (IFO), Larry Oveson (MSCF), Annette Schoenberger (IFO), Michael Spitzer (MnSCU), Steve Whipple (MSCF), Gregory Wright (MSCF), Scott Wrobel (MSCF), and Alex Yard (IFO)

# Students campaign to freeze tuition

**"I**t was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness... it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us..." The best books are those you think were written about you. Somehow, did Charles Dickens know who I was going to be and what I would be fighting for this year? Because the times I am living in right now certainly provide me with hope and despair and certainly read like a book.

A few weeks ago, my organization was asked to speak to the MSCF Executive Committee and explain to its members a new campaign the student association officially kicked-off on October 6. Alongside the Minnesota State University Student Association (MSUSA), the Minnesota State College Students Association (MSCSA) has been working long days and feverish nights to inform and educate students and citizens across the state about our campaign to freeze tuition for the next two years.

As many of you know, public higher education during the last biennium lost hundreds of millions of dollars at the Legislature. As a result, students have faced tuition hikes of up to 15 percent per year for the last two years, and double-digit percentage increases years before that.

Students understand that in times

By Justin  
Pahl

MSCSA  
President



when the state's budget is running a deficit, all citizens need to make sacrifices, and we realize most people have. But, college and university students feel that after years of double-digit tuition increases, our fair share of the sacrifice has gone above and beyond. More and more students are having to drop classes, take out more loans, and pick up an extra job or two just to get by while trying to earn a college degree. To add insult to injury, there is not a single financial aid program that has kept up with the rapid tuition increases.

The reality of the tuition increases hit home this year when students returned to school and expressed concern that they are getting priced out of their education. MSCSA and MSUSA knew something had to be done and, with over-

whelming support from thousands of students across the state, the campaign got its legs and has been running ever since.

To freeze tuition for the next two years, college and university students are asking the Legislature not only to fully fund MnSCU's request for almost \$197 million, but also to add another \$62.9 million on top of it. The additional funding would allow for tuition to be kept at its current rate for the next two years while maintaining its quality.

With that said, it is understandable that some have had concerns, and we have listened. Some are concerned that MSCSA and MSUSA will be campaigning for an absolute zero percent tuition increase which could lead to the Legislature setting a cap on tuition. That is not correct. If a bill is introduced to cap tuition without adequate funding, I promise the next day we will make an appointment with the author of the bill to voice our opposition. We do not want to lose any classes. We do not want to lose any student services, and we will fight hard against any legislation that would cap tuition without funding MnSCU's full request.

Until a decision is made regarding the funding, however, MSCSA and MSUSA will work with the thousands of students and whoever else wants to join the fight to get full funding for higher education.

I am very excited about the work that both students and faculty can do together to help keep tuition from increasing by leaps and bounds the next two years and still have the funding available for any new pro-

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***"...college and university students feel that after years of double-digit tuition increases, our fair share of the sacrifice has gone above and beyond."***