

# MSCF Minute



*An electronic publication of the Minnesota State College Faculty*

## Campus Climate

*by Kevin Lindstrom, MSCF president*

Shortly after the election last fall, in response to acts of violence happening across the country and on college campuses, the system office convened a workgroup on campus climate. Over the course of a couple months and several meetings which included constituent groups, the system office produced a resource document called “A Guide to Supporting Safe and Inclusive Campus Climates.” A copy of it can be found [here](#).

Hopefully all of you have seen this document by now. System office staff have assured me that this document has been distributed to all employees and that everyone understands their obligations in relation to matters described in the document. More specifically, the system contends that everyone knows who the campus point of contact is for referrals should Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents appear on campus looking for an individual.

I bring this to your attention because the system office has created what I’ve labeled a very “legalistic” construct

around this document. It’s clear from conversations after the creation of the document that the system office has very specific behavioral expectations of all employees in relation to the document. Any action outside this relatively narrow construct could be considered a violation of the law. Providing identifying information about an individual could be considered a violation of the law. Likewise, interfering with the execution of a court order could be considered a violation of the law.

As this process has evolved, and as the system’s construct emerged over time, I continued to ask where in any of this advocacy for students resides. The document is a useful, informative, and necessary resource, but it shouldn’t be mistaken for advocacy. I believe higher education institutions have an obligation, especially regarding topics like this, to go beyond information and get to advocacy. I believe we should be having meaningful conversations, even if those conversations are difficult, regarding our values related to topics like immigration, undocumented individuals, and what

truly constitutes the creation of a safe and inclusive environment.

These should not be one-size-fits-all conversations. What works and reflects values at one campus or college may not work or reflect values at another one. Therefore, the conversations must be local, not directed by any state-level entity, the system office or MSCF. The conversations should be free from outside interference or constraint. The conversations can’t be legitimate or meaningful if certain words or concepts are expressly prohibited from consideration or even utterance. The conversations, given the nature of the topics involved, should be difficult. Navigating the difficult together is quite possibly the only way to make real progress.

I believe those of us at the state level have an obligation to encourage the difficult conversations on the most meaningful topics. That’s not what the document or the system construct built around it does. That’s what I’m hoping to do here.

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## Campus Success Story

The MSCF local leadership at Century College has been busy coordinating social events over the past academic year. Each event has involved different faculty groups, such as temporary or full-time. Some have involved all faculty for the purposes of socializing and networking. This past fall, one specific to full-time faculty resulted in the attendance of 10 non-members, a few of whom signed up for membership afterwards. There have been open forum lunches, and other events where non-members were invited beforehand to discuss the benefits of joining. Recently, one event was held specifically for temporary faculty. It was a 7:30 a.m. coffee and bagel get together where they discussed their contractual rights and the new HLC requirements. Approximately 14 temporary faculty attended, two of whom signed up after the event. Part of the success is due to making sure enough people help plan so no one person is overwhelmed, says Rick Nelson, chapter president. The other thing they have made sure to do is meet quarterly with other bargaining groups to foster good relationships and coordinate a few events together.

### **Welcome New Members!**

Kim Gravelle  
Century

Renae Oswald-Anderson  
Century

Michele Stumpf  
St. Cloud

Lynn Zormeier  
St. Cloud