

Table of Contents:

- From Your President, Page 1
- From Your President Elect, Page 2
- From the Contract Administrator, Page 3
- From the Legislative Liaison, Page 4

From Your President

David Schimpf

Chickens Come Home to Roost

Minnesota government's current fiscal woes are rooted in its fiscal fat times of more than a decade ago. State income tax rates were higher, employment was robust, and State revenue well exceeded State expenditures. At first, Governor V. sent checks to taxpayers to rebate the surplus. If Minnesota had kept to that approach, the impact of subsequent national economic downturns would have been muted. Instead, short-term pandering to voters prevailed. Governor V. and legislative leaders (including the man who would become Governor P.) cut tax rates just before that economic bubble popped, amidst remarks from pundits that the "new knowledge economy" had ended the business cycle. Governor P. refused to raise tax rates after revenue stalled as economic activity skidded.

New Governor D. is willing to raise income tax rates in proportion to ability to pay, but the legislature is unlikely to pass such a bill. It would not solve all of the current money woes, but it would reduce much of the current structural deficit. Minnesota's current huge overall deficit is largely a product of the refusal to raise income tax rates during the past decade, with the resulting shortfalls handled by deferring payments to school districts until future fiscal years ("kicking the can down the road") and by cutting State fund-

ing to municipalities and public higher education. The local entities had to compensate by raising property taxes, a more regressive source. I witnessed the Minnesota State Economist call this "smoke and mirrors" at the State level. As you know, public colleges and universities had to compensate by jacking tuition and fees. The massive deferred payments now come due for the State, which makes the merely painful structural deficit into a nightmarish overall deficit.

It looks like those pundits were wrong during the Tech Bubble. They should have waited for a thorough empirical test of the hypothesis that the business cycle was history.

A Target on our Back

In times of social unrest it is common to demonize one or more sectors of society, so as to appear to offer a clear solution to problems. Public employees are among those who are being demonized as a major cause of national, state and local budget deficits. They have not suffered job losses to the extent that many other employment sectors have, so resentment of them is now easier to foment. I guess that the U. S. would be better off if most public employees lost their job and were added to the ranks of the unemployed! As part of this contemporary political rhetoric, unions for public employees are being depicted as piñatas for angry taxpayers to thrash at while they are (ironically) being blindfolded by many who have the micro-

phones. The new majority in the U. S. House of Representatives may try to pass a law that would permit state governments to declare bankruptcy. Such a declaration would facilitate voiding provisions of public employee contracts. That would further weaken public unions, a long-time core goal of some political groups. Achieving that goal would weaken private-sector unions, a related goal. Perhaps those groups do not realize that the notorious dictators of 20th-century Europe also took the trouble to banish or enfeeble labor unions in their nations.

Not-so-Simple Solutions

Simple arguments hold great appeal for much of the populace. Ronald Reagan made ample political hay with that approach, with his statement that there are no easy answers, but there are simple answers. As scholars know, simple answers are seldom the most correct ones when dealing with human affairs. UMD faculty are all skilled at simplifying ideas to help students understand them, without

Continued on Page 2

**UNIVERSITY
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From Your President Elect

Michael Pfau

At the end of my first semester as President-Elect, I find myself amazed at the immense amount of activity that animates the UEA-D's executive committee on any given day. This group consists of the elected and appointed officers and officials, the President, Past President, Vice President, President-Elect, Member-at-Large, Treasurer, Contract Administrator, Grievance Officer, Negotiator, Legislative Liaison, Benefits Advisory Committee Liaison, Safety Officer, Information Officer, an Education Minnesota representative, and two elected representatives from the Representative Council. Prior to this semester, despite the fact that I had two executive committee members in my own department, I had no idea about the scope and magnitude of the this group's activities. Although the titles are many, this year the activities of these officers have tended to gravitate toward several domains – system governance, legislative politics, and the contract.

On one hand, my eyes have been opened to some of the complexities and minutiae of how UMD fits into the larger University of Minnesota system. In order to keep the Union informed about, and active within, the highest levels of University governance, one of the main duties of the UEA President is to attend the monthly meetings of the Board of Regents. The President's report on these meetings provides a wealth of information about UMD, the University

system, and the manner in which the Regents make the formative decisions that shape the future of Minnesota's public universities. Since there are presently four openings on the Board, UEA is currently in a position to provide input to the legislature about the kinds of candidate we believe would best serve the Board and the University system. The President also keeps us informed about the doings of relevant committees and deliberative bodies on the Twin Cities campus.

On the other hand, through the work of the Legislative Liaison and the President, I am beginning to appreciate state politics and policy-making on an entirely new level. Since UMD is dependent on funding from the state, the political process is quite important to UEA. While our state affiliate, Education Minnesota, engages in its own efforts to influence electoral and political processes, UEA also aims to engage politics and politicians in several ways. While UEA is non-partisan, we took part in a very visible get-out-the-vote campaign late last October. And our Legislative Liaison does an immense service to UMD faculty by providing us with our own set of eyes on the legislative process and a face that legislators recognize as representing UMD faculty. Finally through legislative dinners, breakfasts, and other meetings, several other members of your UEA executive committee are seeking to develop relationships with lawmakers that might benefit our institution.

Finally, the work of the grievance officer, contract administrator, and head negotiator highlight the constant work that attends the creation and implementation of the contract and the maintenance of the rights of bargaining unit members. You need only to look at your current contract for a few minutes to appreciate that it is a large and complex document. This contract's creation is the work of a negotiating team, but its maintenance and implementation is the work of the contract administrator and grievance officer. These two officers frequently meet with our administrators as they seek to clarify policy, resolve disagreements, and address members' grievances. These are the people who stand ready to apply their encyclopedic knowledge of the contract to assist any member that feels they have been treated unfairly.

In the end, as UEA members go about their teaching, research, and service, the UEA officers and officials are busy behind the scenes – informing themselves about processes vital to our interests, advocating for public university education, and protecting and defending members' contractual rights. It's a big job, but the executive committee members work together to watch out for our interests. I hope that, someday, all of you will consider contributing your time as a departmental representative, officer, or official.

Continued from Page 1, **President's Report**

simplifying inappropriately and with frequent cautions about the limitations of your explanation. (Disclosure: my summary of the State budget situation is a simplification.) We all need to put those skills to good use in our discourses with persons outside the university about the importance of effective public higher education, including research, creative activity, and outreach, as well as classroom instruction. One needs to be even more concise with this broader audience than with students, a

cognitive challenge. I hope that you will consider rising to this challenge.

Do not take the attacks on public higher education personally, but do take them seriously. This is, more than ever, a time when you need to resist being goaded into competing with other faculty or having your department compete with other departments, looking out only for "number one". Outsiders who want universities to run like corporations have kept up the pressure to do these very things. In contrast, I encourage you to advocate for public higher

education in general, for students, for the whole community of scholars, for freedom of thought and communication, for a just society, and for campus integrity. UEA will pursue these goals, and we have professional help from our affiliates in St. Paul and Washington. But you, too, are UEA (or you could join if you are not), and you need to consider being part of the advocacy. Contact me or Legislative Liaison Mike Mullins about meeting with lawmakers. You could find this to be an interesting experience.

From the Contract Administrator

Al Roline

Since our last newsletter I, along with our UEA leadership, have been continuing to work with administration on a number of contract related issues. These include the Special Faculty Development Fund and the interpretation of section 250.223 of the UEA contract.

* Special Faculty Development Fund. Because not all of the monies allocated to the fund for the 2010-2011 academic year were expended during the Fall round of proposals, you should have already received a notice of a Spring round that is to be held in most colleges. Please keep your eyes open for such a call for new proposals, as the timelines for submission are very tight. Remember that the guidelines for this funding are that the faculty member must be in the bargaining unit for the full academic year (both Fall 2010 and Spring 2011). Eligible faculty may apply for up to \$400 for development purposes including, but not limited to, the purchase of technology, curriculum writing, expenses associated with a conference, expenses associated with research or laying groundwork for future research, etc. Note that just because you received funding from the Fall round does not mean that you cannot apply for the Spring round (although I believe that preference is being given in most colleges to those that did not receive funding in the Fall).

The Special Faculty Development Fund is open to all faculty in the bargaining unit who qualify. If you are also a member of UEA, you are eligible to apply for another source of funding: Education Minnesota's Professional Development Grants for Higher Education. The Professional Development Grants provide higher education faculty with opportunities to acquire and share new skills and knowledge. These skills might include new instructional ideas, technology, conference attendance, etc. UEA members may request up to \$3,000 to acquire these skills *and* share new learning. Members should also seek in-kind funds to help finance the venture. The deadline for the spring round of grants is April 2, 2011. Applications must be submitted via the UEA office. Grants will be awarded by the end of May 2011 and must be spent before the start of the next academic year. For further information, see <http://www.educationminnesota.org/events/foundation/higheredgrant.aspx>.

* Interpretation of UEA Contract Section 250.223. While teaching loads are generally calculated by the number of contact hours and set out in the workload protocols adopted in your respective college/department, all faculty should be aware of the last sentence in section 250.223 of the UEA contract, which states that "[i]f the total (referring to student credit hours, or

SCH, in a nine-month work assignment) is equal to or greater than 1900 (which is 2850 for non-regular appointments) the Member and the Principal Administrator shall agree upon (a) or (b) above." The reference to (a) or (b) in that sentence is either to a reduction of the member's contact hour limit, or to receive supplemental pay in recognition of the additional workload impact of a high SCH load. While certain faculty may not necessarily wish to enforce that provision (and in fact I drafted an agreement to that effect this fall among a member, the UEA, and administration), I believe some clarification is needed. Note that once the number of SCH exceeds 1900 (or 2850 in the case of non-regular faculty) it is not purely within the purview of the principal administrator to decide which of those options (a or b) are sufficient. A member cannot be assigned a teaching load which exceeds that SCH limit, regardless of whether they fall within the reduced contact hour limits referenced in subsection (a) mentioned above, unless the member and principal administrator mutually agree on the option to be used to recognize them for this additional workload. Members are fully within their rights NOT to agree that option (a) is sufficient recognition for the additional workload they are taking on. If you feel you might be in a situation contemplated by this section of the UEA contract, please feel free to contact me.

Faculty Awards

Congratulations to UEA member David Beard (Writing Studies) for his receipt of the Daniel Rohrer Memorial Outstanding Research Award from the American Forensic Association. He and his co-author received the award for "Toulmin's Rhetorical Logic: What's the Warrant for Warrants?" *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 41:1 (2008): 22-50.

Members are encouraged to contact Scott Laderman (laderman@d.umn.edu; 726-7207), the UEA Information Officer, with news of member awards and accomplishments.

From the Legislative Liaison

Michael Mullins

Greetings and a belated welcome to 2011! I hope you all had a restful break and are ready to enter yet another stimulating semester.

Well, since the recent events in Tucson we have all had reason to pause and reflect on what it is we hope this country stands for and how we all choose to engage ourselves with others in the collective process of living together. A portion of living together is electing and then engaging one another in philosophical discussions – in this specific context, about the role of government in our lives. Indeed, the tense political environment seems to have served as a backdrop for (or been a factor in) the tragedy. Why someone seeks to express oneself violently as an expression of disgust against a particular politician is never clear to me. This was not the first time – nor will it likely be the last time – an individual(s) seeks solutions violently.

While we are certainly shocked by what transpired, our task at hand here in Minnesota is to forge ahead while actively being engaged in a vastly changed political climate. We have a DFL governor for the first time in 20 years and members of a single party all holding the major elected offices in state government for the first time, I believe, since

the 1950s. However, the Minnesota legislature switched political leadership in BOTH chambers. This, many feel, will lead to stalemate. This is a concern not just in Minnesota, but nationwide. It is our duty to attempt to bridge our great differences and seek some solutions. In our case the lives of our students and their educations are at stake.

I traveled to the Minnesota legislature on the 5th of January, only a day after the new legislature was convened and all members were sworn in. I met briefly with the new Chairs of Higher Education Koch and Fischbach as well as a few members of our delegation from Northern Minnesota. I was told by them that it was nice to see someone from a public institution at the Capitol. I asked them why and their responses stunned me. Representatives from Capella and the University of Phoenix – both private for-profit higher education outfits – had already visited them. I think it's clear some of our competition is quite savvy.

I am working closely with my colleagues in MSCF and MNSCU at the legislature to formulate a coherent, concise and, I hope, convincing “counter message” to present to our elected officials. Make no mistake, our task is enormous in this climate. I am only as effective as you assist me in being in my

work. Again this session I will be giving you legislative updates in these newsletters. Again I am asking for volunteers to travel with me to the legislature. We will have a joint Higher Education Day with MSCF and MNSCU, as well as the traditional UMD Day and Duluth Days. I encourage all to take some time and consider possibly going to the Capitol for a day. We only have strength in numbers and a strong voice in unison.

I know not everyone is able to take an entire day for a political mission. So, here are three links that I encourage you to bookmark and visit frequently and, when possible, to submit your opinions:

<http://www.leg.state.mn.us/>

<http://www1.umn.edu/groots/>

<http://www.educationminnesota.org/>

In the last link, under “Spotlight,” click on “Want legislative updates?” This is the website of our parent organization, Education Minnesota.

I wish everyone a good start in the new semester. Remember that involvement is essential. And remember, too, that as Rosa Luxemburg once said, “Freedom is always the freedom of dissenters.”

We're on the Web
uea.locals.educationminnesota.org

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