

Minnesota State/MSUAASF Meet and Confer

April 24, 2020

ZOOM Meeting (COVID-19)

Present: Tracy Rahim, Zak Johnson, Shirley Murray, Lori Wynia, Jim Anderson, Mel Iverson, Josh Lease, Bonner Karger, Tim Alcorn, Tyler Treptow-Bowman, Troy Schmidt, Victor Cole, Jill Quandt, Kristy Modrow, Sami Gabriel
Jim Jorstad, Sue Appelquist, Eric Davis, Devinder Malhotra, Ann Maile, Jaime Simonsen, Chris Dale, Melissa Fahning, Ron Anderson, Teri Hinds, Clyde Pickett, Ron Anderson, Bill Maki

1. Equity 2030

Chancellor Malhotra addressed applying equity lens to everything – including events surrounding COVID-19. Teri Hinds (hired about 6 weeks ago) is coordinating Equity 2030 work (most recently in Washington DC, previously at WSU). She spoke of integrating the work that is being done across the system. Small changes can make big impacts, and we don't need to be asking for new things – more focus on coordination and collaboration of efforts. Teri is very open to feedback and sharing ideas. The pandemic disruption has made inequities much more visible (e.g. availability of broad band access). We need to embed this work into the current environment; making decisions about the delivery of education with inequities in mind. Tracy asked about what the Chancellor fellow have been doing. Chancellor said there was a pivot about what impact COVID-19 would have on enrollment, and particularly enrollment for more at-risk students. This then leads to more mitigation strategies. Teri said the fellows have been working with her to strategize on the current environment, advocacy-based change management, engaging with communities, employers, etc. They've also been involved in the move to online delivery with equity lens. She also spoke about data democratization work. Clyde Pickett noted the effort that has been made in looking at curricular work and possible professional development needed in this area.

2. Legislative Update

Melissa Fahning reported that the House has met in floor session 4 times. Most all legislation has been COVID related. Committees have been meeting quite a bit, addressing both COVID and non-COVID related issues. The Senate has also met. In higher education, they confirmed a commissioner. Senate has created bipartisan COVID-19 Response working group. There are so many unknowns. Some updated financial forecast information will come in first week in May. One priority currently includes bonding. Senate is very interested in tax provisions to help businesses. Other priority is COVID-19 Relief Account. There are federal funds coming to MN and the legislature wants to weigh in on how that money is used. Other areas of focus are on worker safety and relief. Contract ratification bill was heard in House committee (all contracts are in there). There was a procedural error and it has to be taken up again on Monday. Tracy stated that we are hearing it will be very difficult to get contracts

through. Melissa said she thinks contracts will move forward in the House, but the Senate may present challenges in getting these approved. Republicans are concerned that contracts do not address the current budget situation. Chris Dale noted that many Republicans think that raises at this time (with economic fallout of pandemic) may be unwise. Melissa reported that House Higher Ed. will be meeting next week and Chancellor Malhotra will be testifying. Not a lot of other bills are anticipated this term. At the federal level, stimulus packages included the CARES Act (MN State share is 93.4 million with ½ going to students and other half to the institutions.) There's also a Governor's emergency education relief fund which is for K-12 and higher education. Federal government also passed Phase 3.5 bill appropriating more relief. There is movement toward a Phase 4 and there is hope that may include more money for higher education.

3. COVID-19

a. Budget concerns and considerations for the campuses and the System

1. When/how can campuses start using reserves?

Bill Maki said that pre-COVID19 a couple of institutions planned to use reserves already. Now, more universities are using reserves to cover revenue fund losses due to refunds. CARES funding may be used to restore that. In FY 21, Universities budget timeline will be pushed back about a month to account for federal funding and enrollment projections. At that time, universities would tell of intent to use reserves. Variables will include what federal funding ends up being, as well as the unknowns of enrollments. Must be sure we have capacity to balance the budget. Tracy asked about how COVID is impacting budget system-wide. Bill Maki said the biggest impact is lost revenue. Many large traditional events have been cancelled and these are revenue-generating. Some additional costs include determining what things will look like after stay-at-home order.

b. How/when would MN State declare a financial emergency under State Statute (135A.19)? What would that mean for employees?

Chancellor said this would be an extreme step and there are many intermediate steps. Of particular interest are enrollment figures and CARES funding. He said this hasn't been uppermost in consideration since intermediate steps have not been taken yet. Malhotra said there will be tough decisions ahead, and system will keep us updated. Tracy asked IF this would happen, how it would impact employees. Chris Dale said the statute is clear in that it would reduce the notice periods to allow for layoff of employees without notice. He repeated that that is not the focus right now. Malhotra said this has never been invoked. Tracy noted that U of M may be positioning itself for this, and this is a concern for our employees. Malhotra said he doesn't want to minimize these concerns, but wants to emphasize that U of M is much different than MN State. Adjustments here would be much more gradual if needed.

c. Enrollment projections and concerns with fall-out from COVID-19

Malhotra said most enrollment projections are based on “past will continue to the future” and the current situation does not fit that. Current focus is on looking at time-series analysis looking at critical variables: unemployment, drops in personal income and ability to pay, and anxiety of being in congregate settings. Ron Anderson said it’s important to understand student/family behavior under COVID-19. Ron also noted that we need to look at the opportunity side of this – capturing those who haven’t attended here before, such as students who may have been leaving (out of state). Staying close to home and affordability may play in MN State’s favor. There is great variability in “draw area” of institutions. This is important to understand.

d. Furlough—what exactly is involved with furlough and is MN State or MMB looking at implementing it?

Chris Dale noted that the term furlough is not in the contract. There are many different interpretations. Tracy stated that North Dakota and Wisconsin are implementing this. Questions about benefits and insurance are important if there is a temporary unpaid leave. Eric repeated that consequences of furlough are not defined. CBA’s do allow for salary savings leave and those do preserve benefits. Eric said that MN State or MMB may be looking at it but it’s too early. Furloughs are designed to preserve jobs versus layoffs are more permanent. Furloughs also “share the pain.” While there are no active conversations about furloughs, they will continue to explore what this might look like if it is needed. Tracy stated that members and administrators are talking about this on the campuses. Additionally, there are questions about impact on retirement if either voluntary salary savings leave or involuntary leave.

e. Are there any assumptions on how long employees can telework if they are still accomplishing work and serving students away from campus? What would re-entry look like for bringing employees back on campus?

Malhotra said these conversations have just started and he expects these matters to be considered at each university as well. He acknowledged the importance of social distancing and need for gradual returning to campus. Malhotra said those with compromised immune systems would not be forced back - they would follow CDC and MDH guidelines. Tracy asked if this would be a system or campus decision. Malhotra said system will set parameters and allow flexibility for campuses. He noted that how work is done may be reorganized post-COVID-19.

f. When will we know more about classes in Fall 2020?

Ron Anderson said that campuses are focusing on 3 scenarios: 1) normal face-to-face 2) reduced face-to-face; 3) no face-to-face. Current enrollments are about 20% below year-to-date, but timing this year is anticipated to be different. Decisions are

being delayed. While people are looking for certainty, there is none. There are no deadlines for exactly what posture we will be at in fall. The focus will remain on contingency planning.

- g. What is the discussion around fee refunds for Spring 2020? If classes are online in Fall 2020, will all fees be charged? (This was not addressed due to lack of time.)
- h.

4. Recognition of Outgoing ASF Board members:

Shirley Murray (State Secretary), Zak Johnson (State Vice President), and campus local presidents: Tyler Treptow-Bowman (Winona), Bonner Karger (Bemidji), Troy Schmidt (Moorhead) and Mel Iverson (Mankato) will be concluding their terms on the Board at the end of this year. Thanks for service was offered by Tracy and also by Chancellor Malhotra.

5. Request for Special Meet and Confer

Tracy requested a special meet and confer this summer given the current unprecedented situation. Chancellor agreed to this. Tracy offered thanks for the weekly contacts with key system personnel and will work with them on scheduling this special M&C date.

Future Meetings:

- September 25, 2020 – 1:30-3:00 ▪ December 4, 2020 – 10:30-12:00 ▪ February 19, 2021 – 10:30-12:00 ▪ April 30, 2021 – 10:30-12:00

Notes recorded by Shirley Murray, MSUAASF State Secretary