

MSCF Members,

Last night the legislature and Governor Dayton worked through the night to end the special session and agree on essential bills. The Higher Education Bill is very bad news for our two-year colleges, for our students, and for us. Once again higher education suffered substantial cuts in state appropriation dollars. Making those cuts worse is the fact that the overall state budget borrows money from k12 districts and sells off the state's tobacco bonds, which means that without new revenue in the future, higher education will be forced to accept yet more substantial cuts in order for Minnesota to balance its budget.

Here is a quick summary of legislative actions most relevant to the state's two year colleges:

- The higher education appropriation is \$2.6 billion, slightly more generous than the Republican-controlled conference committee bill, and far more drastic a cut than the Governor's original higher education proposal.
- MnSCU will be cut by 10.6%.
- State Grant Funding/Financial Aid will see a 7.3% increase, with no changes to the funding for any other financial aid programs, such as work study, American Indian scholarships, or child care assistance.
- The Office of Higher Education will see a 5.4% cut to their administrative funding. Various student support programs run by the OHE are cut by 12.5%.
- MnSCU's two-year colleges can raise tuition no more than 4% for FY 2013, which means the cuts will have to come from somewhere else (i.e. bargaining units).
- Both MnSCU and the U of M must hit certain benchmarks in areas such as diversity, graduation rates, and financial aid to receive 1% of their funding.
- The proposals to prohibit cloning research were stricken from the bill.
- The age for senior citizen discounts for college classes is lowered from 66 to 62.
- Colleges and universities are encouraged to set up programs that offer stable tuition over four years for undergraduates (a student would get a locked-in tuition rate, and the colleges would have to track which student has which rate).
- MnSCU must provide progress reports on transfers, and they must study successful transfer systems in other states.
- Some good news: Governor Dayton was able to prevent legislation that would have led to 30% increases in our members' health premiums; he was also able to remove language that would cut the state workforce by an arbitrary 15%, thus saving 5,000 state employees from job loss.

The following items are approved on the bonding bill:

- \$30 million for HEAPR
- \$5.357 million for the fine arts building renovation at Anoka-Ramsey Community College in Coon Rapids;
- \$10.566 million for learning resource and student services renovation at Hennepin Technical College, Brooklyn Park and Eden Prairie;
- \$3.444 million to design and acquire land for a science education center at Metropolitan State University;
- \$14.901 million for the Livingston Lord library renovation at Minnesota State University Moorhead;

- \$21.984 million to design and construct the academic partnership center and student services building at Normandale Community College;
- \$3 million for the Iron Range engineering program facilities at Mesabi Range Community College; and
- \$42.334 for the integrated science and engineering laboratory facility at St. Cloud State University.

MSCF is disappointed in this legislative session. It is obvious to us that we need to refocus our energies and our approach to government relations. Next year's legislative session will almost certainly bring more attacks on collective bargaining rights and academic freedom. Beyond that looms the 2012 election, perhaps the most significant election cycle for public higher education and collective bargaining in Minnesota's history. Please stay tuned for more information in the coming weeks as we begin to lay out the foundation for the critical work ahead of us.

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