

Why Me?

Why me?

Why should I as

...a faculty member,

...a union member,

...a union representative get involved in a campaign to help fund a legislator?

Why should I talk to a legislator regarding funding for public higher education?

Our Legislators and our Governor, bound by the Minnesota Constitution, have a responsibility to fund health and human services, transportation, health care, K-12, among many other aspects of daily life. Within these aspects is the responsibility to fund public higher education. Funding public higher education is part of doing the right thing to ensure our future in the state of Minnesota.

Why, then, should we be involved in helping Legislators make good choices in funding public higher education? A few of the many good reasons are listed below.

1. We all know that money does not grow on trees. Our Legislators and our Governor need to be persuaded to fund public higher education with the money that is at their disposal.
2. Regardless of your party affiliation, it all comes down to priorities. Over the past decade, the priority of public higher education has declined dramatically. There was a slight upward change in the 2007 legislative session where we reversed the downward trend that started in the late 1990s. This positive change was due in part to members of MSCF and other organizations getting involved and actively campaigning for and talking to Legislators who would stand up, speak for and support public higher education.
3. Education of our Legislators is important. Many times Legislators have said to our members, "I didn't realize you did that", referring to all the work involved in public higher education. These Legislators need to know how many hours we spend in and out of the classroom. They need to know that we meet with students, that we work on curriculum and develop new instructional models for the classroom. They need to know that we work on campus-wide committees to help our students reach their full potential.

We need to inform the Legislators about the importance of public higher education and how the lack of funding prevents us from doing our job well. We need to tell them about the rationale of academic freedom and copyright issues. If we do not keep them informed, common course numbering, degree requirements, a reduction in pension, and possibly a reduction in benefits could be put into effect. If there is another budget cut, there could be some push to take back some of the salaries and benefits we currently have in our contract.

Our Legislators and our Governor need to know about our issues. This is a fact regardless of what side of the legislative aisle you are on. As we move forward during the Legislative session and beyond, we hope you will ponder these thoughts and take an opportunity to become engaged in the legislative process.

If we don't stand up for public higher education, who will? We need to stand up and have our voices heard.