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Chancellor Devinder Malhotra
Minnesota State Colleges and Universities
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Chancellor Malhotra,

As in most professions and people's lives during these times, the COVID-19 pandemic has caused an extraordinary amount of stress on the faculty, coaches, and counselors at the seven Minnesota State universities. When the pandemic hit and we all sacrificed to continue to serve our students, our members took on this task with passion and grit. However, as the days turned into weeks and the weeks into months, we have continued to hear countless stories of our members feeling overwhelmed and stressed to the point that I am concerned for their mental health.

One of the major stressors during this time is trying to keep up with the tasks not directly related to serving students. Our membership has taken on a tremendous responsibility of transitioning their curriculum to hybrid or virtual delivery models, often teaching students simultaneously in multiple modes, and accommodating students who, themselves, have more needs than usual. In order to keep up, we have faculty, coaches, and counselors all working longer hours, more days, and trying to manage their families' lives. As with many families in today's world, our members have bravely battled through challenges as K-12 schools switch to virtual modes of delivery, their loved ones are serving on the front lines as healthcare workers, or families are faced with layoffs.

We ask you to collaborate with your leadership council to find ways to reduce the workload for faculty with work that doesn't have an immediate impact on the students we serve. For example, we have heard positive reports from campuses about delaying program reviews. In addition, some other examples of delays that may benefit the health of our members include, assessment requirements, HLC visits or related tasks, extraneous committee work, standard training, and administrative searches.

The IFO encourages you to lead a discussion amongst campus presidents to find ways to reduce workload so we can maintain an intense focus on student success. IFO members continue to do the hard work required to serve our students, and we ask our leadership to help us find ways to ease the burden of these difficult times.

Sincerely,

Brent Jeffers
IFO President