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January 7, 2020

Minnesota Vaccine Allocation Advisory Group:

This letter is submitted on behalf of the 4000 plus members of the Inter Faculty Organization (IFO). The IFO represents all faculty, coaches, and counselors at the seven Minnesota State universities.

I would like to thank you all for your hard work in determining how to effectively rollout the COVID-19 vaccine to protect our citizens from the real and dangerous impacts of this deadly disease. I'm incredibly proud of our membership for their willingness to meet the needs of students and put in numerous extra hours to provide the best possible educational opportunities under the current circumstances.

I submit this letter to urge this group to consider including Minnesota State higher education faculty and staff as part of the Frontline Essential Workers group under the "Education" subgroup in the IB and IC phased allocation of COVID-19 vaccines.

We believe it is important to explicitly include higher education faculty and staff under the Education subgroup to provide clear direction and communication to the thousands of higher education faculty and staff in Minnesota. It is not uncommon for the general term "Education" to exclude higher education in state policy making.

Our faculty and staff will be essential to the economic recovery of our state. Providing opportunities for students, faculty, and staff to gather for in-person classes will provide our state with the educated and qualified workforce that will be needed to move forward. We have seen many students resisting the online format, and many other students simply do not have adequate internet and equipment capabilities. These students are being left behind. The addition of higher education faculty and staff at the early stages of the vaccine distribution will provide the opportunity for our campuses to begin planning robust in-person course offerings and a version of collegiate athletics for the fall 2021 semester.

Our campuses are vitally important to the communities where we are located and the regions we serve, and we are hopeful that getting higher education back to normal with full on-campus offerings and a restart to college athletics will also increase enrollment. Making our workplaces safer through vaccination will provide the opportunity for faculty and staff to safely return to campus and help us serve our entire student body without leaving any student behind.

Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Brent Jeffers
IFO President

cc:
Gov. Tim Walz
Commissioner Dennis Olson