Potential BSUFA statement re: Beltrami County Commissioners’ vote on refugee resettlement, 1.13.2019 draft

On January 7, 2019, the Commissioners for Beltrami County, where Bemidji State University is located, took a vote on the resettlement of refugees to Beltrami County. President Trump’s executive order invited counties and states to opt in or out of the resettlement of refugees, who are owed protection and shelter under state, federal and international law. The Commissioners voted 3-2 to reject the resettlement of refugees in Beltrami County.

The County board’s decision sends a hostile message to refugees and other immigrants. In spite of this, the Bemidji State University Faculty Association (BSUFA) unequivocally welcomes refugees and other immigrants, as our colleagues, as our students, and as our neighbors. Refugees and other immigrants have contributed richly to our campus community, and to our Beltrami community, and we celebrate this heritage.

The BSUFA also rejects any suggestion that race, color, religion, language or national origin is a reason for treating migrants with suspicion. This prejudice betrays principles of respect and equality that define our profession and our county, when they are at their best. It betrays the fundamental values of Bemidji State University, which has committed itself to promoting international and multicultural understanding. Fears of refugees are often sustained by misinformation and innuendo; and so we pledge ourselves to building a campus, and a community, that embodies our values of inclusivity and factual thinking.