



University Executive Council

Feb. 9, 2021: Meeting Minutes

Welcome

Chancellor Hicswa introduced the University Executive Council and remarked on how nice it is to see everyone in Web-Ex, and reminded group that they had not convened for nearly one year. Dr. Hicswa posed to the group whether they thought a shorter name for University Executive Council was appropriate, perhaps something inspired by groups of yellow jacket wasps in nature. Dr. Hicswa also remarked that UEC would be doing things differently than in past years, such as streamlining processes in Cabinet. She also spoke about the importance of university leadership focusing on student retention and degree completion, reminding the group that any amount of education is never wasted time for a student, but that they must be able to capitalize on that education and degree completion is what sets students on that path.

Opening Announcements

Chancellor Hicswa introduced her new Executive Assistant, Natalie Preston, who joins her team from the Financial Services and Payroll Department.

Dr. Hicswa highlighted the following dates for upcoming events: February 11th will feature the Legislative Videoconference sessions. (12:00pm via Web-Ex or in person in McDonald Hall Room 163 on MSUB campus) Interested parties can RSVP to attend on the Billings Chamber website. February 11th is also the next Virtual COVID-19 Town Hall @ 3:00 pm. Dr. Hicswa reminded the group that past sessions of COVID-19 Town Halls can be accessed at the link on the MSUB website and these should be reviewed as they contain the basis of past COVID-19 decisions.

Dr. Hicswa reminded everyone that February 15th is Presidents' Day, so offices are closed and this is a good time to rest in order to be at our best for our students, employees and co-workers.

February 18th is the next annual 'Jacket Giving Day, so Dr. Hicswa asked the group to be thinking about how they want to contribute.

Lastly, February 23rd will feature the Faculty Excellence virtual ceremony at 4:30 pm and can be attended via Web-Ex.

COVID-19 Update

Chancellor Hicswa highlighted the latest update regarding COVID-19 which was reported at the most recent COVID-19 Town Hall session held February 4th. The new MSUB Quarantine Policy following the CDC guidelines, is that MSUB students, faculty, and staff who are in quarantine may conclude their quarantine period and return to campus (or leave the quarantine rooms if they live on campus) AFTER DAY 10 without a COVID test IF they have no symptoms. This reflects additional days to the national option. It is VITAL that everyone in this situation take extra care in maintaining strict physical distancing, mask wearing, and proper hand hygiene to protect our MSUB population.

Dr. Hicswa reported that the CDC has also added an option for individuals to conclude their quarantine period after DAY 7 with a negative COVID test, however MUSB WILL NOT allow this option for our campus due to the high risk of transmission. If MSUB students, faculty or staff living off campus select the DAY 7 quarantine option, please remain off campus until DAY 11 if you don't have symptoms. She reminded the group that in other aspects, such as in MSUB's campus-wide mask mandate, campus precautions exceed those outlined by the CDC and/or Yellowstone County. She also applauded MSUB for being called "the safest place in Billings" by John Felton, President and CEO of Riverstone Health. The most important thing to remember regarding these recommendations, is to stay home if you do have symptoms, and do not neglect rest, self-care, and precautions.

Legislative Update: Maureen Brakke

Maureen Brakke updated the group with the Legislative Update, a version of which she also emails each Friday during the Legislative session. Ms. Brakke provided updates on the two pieces of pending legislation that the MUS is monitoring most closely, these are:

[HB102](#): Revise gun laws – The MUS testified in opposition of this bill and anticipates amendments with implications for the MUS.

[HB112](#): Require interscholastic athletes to participate under sex assigned at birth – The MUS continues to provide information as to how the bill will interact with current NCAA policy.

Per Ms. Brakke's update, MUS supports HB112, but is monitoring how President Biden's proposal to include gender-identity among statuses protected by federal anti-discrimination laws may interfere with the passing and/or implementation of such a bill.

With regard to HB102, Ms. Brakke informed the UEC that there are two changes to the bill as of January 29th, which are: HB 102 was amended to move the implementation date from "immediately" to an effective date of June 1, 2021 and to exclude firearms as follows: (i) the possession of a firearm at an athletic or entertainment event open to the public with controlled access and armed security on site. The amended bill passed both houses and is heading to the Governor's desk for a signature.

Chancellor Hicswa added to the legislative update that the MUS works closely with Montana Legislators, and the Board of Regents will formulate implementation guidelines from which MSUB can model our own as part of the MUS system, meaning we do not need to "build these from the ground up" on campus.

SSI Presentation: Joann Stryker

Director of Institutional Research Joann Stryker presented the results of the Student Satisfaction Survey, which is one in an Instrument Assessment rotation of surveys administered to students on campus. She explained that the survey results came in before the full COVID-19 impact of offices and classes transferring to remote/virtual functioning, and should therefore be considered "pre-COVID" data. The surveyed students included both undergraduate and graduate students but not high school students. There were 11 categories or "scales" into which the questions were divided, with City College having some different questions than those asked of students on the university main campus. Students were asked their satisfaction with each item listed, and to rate its importance to them, and both the results of these questions and the "gaps" identified between satisfaction and importance were analyzed. Results can then be used to identify MSUB's strengths and challenges based on the things students answered MSUB is doing well, and the areas where they were less satisfied but placed great importance. With regard to strengths, these should be celebrated among departments and publicly to market those features that set MSUB apart from other institutions. With regard to challenges, when analyzing provided data we should ask whether it is simply the result of students'

perception, and not an area where changes need to be made, or if it is something that needs to be addressed and changes made.

Ms. Stryker highlighted the following findings of the survey:

-Academic Advising is what is most important to students.

-Campus Support Services is the area with which students expressed the most satisfaction.

-Safety and Security showed the largest gap between importance to students (high) and satisfaction among students (low).

Ms. Stryker showed the council by sharing her screen on the Web-Ex platform how to access the survey questions and results on the MSUB website, and the ways in which the data can be further broken down by various sub-populations, i.e. students in certain programs, first-generation students, etc., however she reminded the group that if too many criteria are applied to one data set, the number of respondents reflected becomes so small that the data loses validity for analysis. She recommended that the data be analyzed on the higher levels to preserve its integrity. Ms. Stryker also reminded the group that the survey results reflect students' perception, so while this is useful information, depending on the topic, other information should be taken in consideration before decisions are made based upon it.

Chancellor Hicswa mentioned that the faculty completed a smaller student survey after the primary COVID-19 impact to campus.

Another survey used is the NSSE, from which the SSI differs in its higher emphasis placed on student services as opposed to the NSSE focus on academics, however there are common themes in these surveys that produce trends, the co-occurrence of which elevates the importance that they be addressed.

Vice Chancellor of Student Access and Success Dr. Kim Hayworth highlighted the importance of early feedback to first generation students, and those students who are academically at risk. She stated that students in these populations lack resources for gauging how well they are performing in college on their own, as they may not have parents with whom they can compare the college experience. Therefore, performance measurements such as quizzes and early grades should be provided to give these students a barometer of their performance, instead of relying only on later midterm and final grades when it may too late for necessary intervention, or deserved celebration.

Chancellor Hicswa seconded this encouragement that faculty can "show students they can do it!"

Dr. Hayworth also provided one key example of how student feedback resulted in an organizational change on campus: The Career Services and Advising departments were restructured, directly addressing a challenge identified by student survey results. This is an opportunity to show students that they are being listened to, and changes are made, which Dr. Hicswa pointed out is a great way to get more feedback from students.

Closing Announcements:

MSUB men's and women's basketball teams play at Rocky Mountain College on Wednesday and can be supported by watching the livestream on the university website.

Dr. Kurt Toenjes reminded everyone that any campus or off-campus events need to follow the COVID-19 safety plan. Events are increasingly encouraged to grow student engagement, but it remains critical that they are conducted according to our university COVID-19 protocol.

There have been many new staff members added to campus departments during the past year.

Laura Gittings-Carlson shared a slide show of the eight new staff members who have joined the SSS/TRIO teams on the main university campus and at City College.

Darla Tyler-McSherry, Director of Student Health Services shared that they have hired a new lead mental health counselor named Jerry Girard. He is a small-town Montana native and offers counseling appointments Thursdays at City College and is on the university campus for most of the week. They have also added David Butler as director of the new COVID-19 testing laboratory, as well as MSUB graduate Cody Walters who will be pursuing a medical career.

Interim Police Chief Brandon Gatlin introduced Melissa Brennan as UPD's newest officer. She is an alum of MSUB and has brought a positive attitude and influence to her job.

Assistant Vice Chancellor of Administration and Finance Heather Hanna announced the hire of Budget Analyst Nicole Wilton, and Payroll Technician Tia Anderson.

Dr. Kurt Toenjes announced the hire of Hannah O'Donnell as a new administrative assistant for Health Care Services.

Dr. Jana Marcette announced that Mackenzie Grubbs, formerly of eLearning, has become the new administrator for Graduate Studies, and is lending her expertise to create a Graduate Student orientation in D2L.

Chancellor Hicswa announced the addition of Dave Nordel to the MSUB team. Mr. Nordel replaced the former Provost as Incident Commander during the summer. He brings a background of military service and many years in the healthcare industry and has thus been unofficially dubbed "Chancellor of COVID" as he helps university leadership navigate the ever-changing COVID-19 protocols.

Native American Achievement Center Director Sunny Day Real Bird announced the center's recent hire of Native Success Advisor Eva Hoops. Ms. Hoops is a Hardin, MT resident and is working with the Crow and Northern Cheyenne Reservations, as well as setting up campus tours for native high school students.

Librarian Darlene Hert introduced the Library staff's new Distance Learning Librarian, Victoria Contreras, a Billings native.

Chancellor Hicswa's Closing Remarks:

Dr. Hicswa implored everyone to set a good example for students and staff by following all COVID-19 protocols and encourages everyone to keep up the good work with respect to staying healthy and safe. She reminded the group that MSUB was highly complimented by John Felton. Dr. Hicswa also reminded everyone to be careful in the very cold temperatures and asked that we remind students who may be from warmer areas that frostbite is a real danger. She also reminded the group that the Human Resources department is checking out shoe spike-attachments that can help people more safely walk around campus. She gave "kudos" to Brian Mackey and his crew for the expedient daily removal and clearing of snow.

Susan Simmers announced that Brian Mackey has replaced the previous leadership and is now in charge of anything Facilities related. Additionally, the new Custodial Manager is Michael Swavely.

In closing, Chancellor Hicswa referenced Gestalt in reminding everyone that the sum of the parts is greater than the whole, and that we too, as a group can achieve more than we can individually.