



**Chancellor's Cabinet Meeting Minutes
October 21, 2025, 2:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.**

The Chancellor's Cabinet advises the Chancellor by providing guidance and support for the university's highest priorities and governance processes.

In Attendance: Chancellor Stefani Hicswa, Paula Highlander, Kathleen Thatcher, Dan Carter, Suzette Nynas, Mike Bazemore, Lee Vartanian, Kathy Kotecki, Kim Hayworth (arrived at 3:00), and Natalie Preston

Guests: Ann Allen and Dr. Ken Huus from Ruffalo Noel Levitz

Absent: Krista Montague and Leslie Weldon

Did You Know?

More than 600 new freshmen started classes at Montana State University Billings this fall, a 9 percent increase of brand-new underclassmen over Fall Semester 2024, and the largest group of freshmen students since 2019.

SHOUT-OUTS

Lee Vartanian, Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, gave a shout-out to Krista Montague, MSUB Foundation and Alumni CEO, and her staff members for their willingness and work to enhance the annual Faculty Excellence Awards.

Chancellor Hicswa gave a shout out to all of the faculty and staff who participated in the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU) Year 7 EIE visit.

Kathleen Thatcher, Director of Assessment and Accreditation, gave a shout out to Mike Bazemore, Athletic Director, for his handling of the situation when some of the cross country student athletes were involved in a car accident.

Dan Carter, Director of University Communications and Marketing, also spoke in reference to the car accident and gave a shout out to Kathy Kotecki, Dean of Student Engagement, for quickly organizing assistance for the affected students, and involving Student Health Services.

Provost Vartanian gave a shout out to Suzette Nynas, Academic Senate Chair, for providing the “culture of care” language during the NWCCU visit. This was mentioned positively by the chair of the peer evaluation team during the closing meeting.

INFORMATION

Retention Report-Outs

Cabinet members reported on their recent efforts to improve student retention, one of the priorities on the Operational Plan.

Year 7 EIE Visit Debrief

Kathleen Thatcher reported that she has received the preliminary report on MSUB's Year 7 EIE Visit. She is working to complete the fact and error check. Information contained in the report cannot be shared until it is finalized, which is expected to be completed by early November. Discussion followed on how and when to share feedback from the review team.

Artificial Intelligence and Search Engines: Why It Matters

Dan Carter led discussion based on an article (see attached) that he shared, entitled "How to Detect AI Writing Using These Tips" by Rachel Kane. Cabinet members discussed the limitations of information available to AI and the resulting inaccurate material that can be produced as a result.

Provost Vartanian provided an overview of some of the discussions from the AI summit he and other MSUB employees attended last month that was hosted by the Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education.

Operational Plan Priority

Chancellor Hicswa asked for reports on Cabinet members' recent activity and future plans to address the next priority in the Operational Plan: "Strengthen 'Jacket Leadership Team Engagement, Implement Cascading Communication, and/or Use of Shared Governance."

DISCUSSION

Higher Education Landscape

Guests Ann Allen and Dr. Ken Huus from Ruffalo Noel Levitz presented on current national trends in higher education enrollment. They provided details on enrollment and financial data specific to MSU Billings, and an overview of their recommendations.

UPDATES (Reprinted as submitted)

Kathleen Thatcher, Director of Assessment and Accreditation

The Paramedic program at City College will host their re-accreditation visit December 4-5, 2025. Please welcome the review team if you see them!

Natalie Preston, Executive Assistant to the Chancellor

The fall edition of Virtual Coffee with the Chancellor will be on October 23, from 11:30 to 12:30. The Teams link was sent to all calendars.

Kim Hayworth, Vice Chancellor for Student Access and Success**ENROLLMENT:**

Join the Higher Education Landscape presentation by Ruffalo Noel-Levitz on October 21, 2025 from 9-10:30 am (stay as long as you can!) in the Glacier Room. We will review what is happening in enrollment across the U.S. as well new freshman and transfer enrollment at MSUB. All campus faculty, staff, and administrators are welcome to attend.

Fall Preview Day is happening on October 30th on both the University and City College campuses. Please encourage all Yellowjackets to wear nametags and dress in blue and yellow!

NATIVE AMERICAN ACHIEVEMENT CENTER:

Director of the Native American Achievement Center, Sunny Day Real Bird successfully spearheaded a grant proposal for MSUB to join the Rural Student Success Network (RSN). MSUB's \$15,000 grant funding will be focused on market research that will assist City College in our desire to align academic offerings with local and regional workforce needs, especially on the Crow and Northern Cheyenne Reservations.

Elder-in-Residence Programming:

Visit the NAAC Elder-in-Residence webpage for more information and schedule.

Oct. 19-24 Janice Hudetz Little Light

Oct. 26-31 Lester R. Johnson III, Ed.D.

Kathy Kotecki, Dean of Student Engagement

Student Health Services completed their Accreditation Review Visit last week. Overall the visit went very well and the team should have the formal report by next week.

Housing and Residence Life staff is partnering with the Advising and Retention teams to host a Registration Rodeo event November 20th at 6pm in the Glacier Room to promote Spring registration, on campus living and to ensure we can keep students enrolled/engaged for spring semester.

Mike Bazemore, Athletic Director**Upcoming Home Events**

- Women's Basketball Elementary Game (10/21) @ 12pm.
- Women's Soccer vs. NNU (10/23) @ 6pm and CWU (10/25) @12pm.
- Volleyball vs. SFU (10/23) @ 7pm and WWU @ 3pm.
- Athletics Auction and Halloween Party (10/24).
- GNAC Cross Country Meet (10/25) @ Amend; 10am start.
- Women's Basketball Outreach Game (10/26) in Malta, MT.

NCAA Legislation Update (to be voted on at the next convention in January 2026)

- ***Intent:*** To amend the seasons of competition legislation, as follows: (1) To permit a student-athlete to engage in five seasons of intercollegiate competition in any one sport

during their first 10-semesters or 15-quarters of full-time enrollment; (2) To eliminate the currently legislated waivers and exceptions associated with the seasons of competition legislation; and (3) To amend the waivers and exceptions for the period of eligibility, as specified.

- ***Intent:*** *To add women's flag football as an emerging sport for women and establish legislation related to membership, financial aid and playing and practice seasons, as specified.*

Krista Montague, MSUB Foundation and Alumni CEO

This week, I am traveling to Helena and Great Falls to participate in two alumni outreach events and the Montana Chapter of AFP (Association of Fundraising Professionals) Educational Summit.

To date, we have raised \$592,260 in fundraised dollars (cash) for FY26 and have \$2,367,202 committed for the new Sculpture and Ceramic Studio (donors have five years to fulfil their pledge). This 21% of the goal for the new building. Our first *Next Is Now* Steering Committee meeting was held on October 2.

Upcoming events include alumni outreach gatherings in Helena on October 21 and Great Falls on October 23, as well as a 50 Years of Women's Basketball alumni celebration on November 7–8, hosted in partnership with Athletics.

We launched a new alumni engagement platform called Jackets Connect. If you are a MSUB grad, please sign up here: [Jackets Connect](#). This is an intentional, opt-in network to give us more broad networking with graduates.