Chancellor's Cabinet Meeting Minutes
October 6, 2026, 2:00 p.m. – 3:45 p.m.

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

Meeting began at 2:00 p.m.

In Attendance: Lee Vartanian, Tia Brown, Kathleen Thatcher, Andrew Bonner, Suzette Nynas, Kathy Kotecki, Dan Carter, Krista Montague, and Natalie Preston
Absent: Stefani Hicswa and Kim Hayworth

SHOUT-OUTS

Krista Montague, MSUB Foundation and Alumni CEO, gave a shoutout to Andrew Bonner, Interim Director of Athletics, for his assistance with a donor who visited the Foundation and gave to Women's Soccer.

Dan Carter, Director of University Communications and Marketing gave a shoutout to Natalie Preston, Executive Assistant to the Chancellor, for planning the September Board of Regents Meeting.

INFORMATION AND DISCUSSION

Enrollment and Retention Update

Lee Vartanian, Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, announced that retention hit a record high. More detailed information can be found in the census press release that was completed by University Communications and Marketing and has been shared with media.

PRR Implementation

Provost Vartanian announced that after completing many meetings with CampusWorks during the summer for the Process Reimagine and Redesign (PRR), a group of leaders will meet in the upcoming weeks to review the resulting reports and recommendations and will form an implementation plan.

Commissioner's Directive on Scholarships

Tia Brown, Vice Chancellor for Administration and Finance, confirmed that there are no updates to the Commissioner's Directive on Scholarships following the Board of Regents Meeting. During the pre-board meeting, Chief Financial Officers from the MUS met and discussed the directive that changes how institutional funds can be used in scholarship awarding.

Accreditation Timeline Update
Kathleen Thatcher, Director of Assessment and Accreditation, announced that the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU) recently reviewed their timelines and processes, and made changes to both. The former seven-year cycle has been updated to an eight-year cycle. Due to this change, MSU Billings' midcycle review will be in Fall 2029 instead of Fall 2028, and the next Evaluation of Institutional Effectiveness (EIE) will be in Fall 2033.

New NWCCU Accreditation Standards will impact some departments. These are expected to go into effect in January.

Meeting ended at 2:43 p.m.
Minutes by Natalie Preston

UPDATES

Andrew Bonner, Interim Athletic Director
The MSUB Athletics Halloween Dinner Auction is back for the 28th year! It is on Friday, Oct. 30, at 6pm at the Pub Station downtown. New this year: our silent auction bidding process will be online, so the link to bid will go further than the attendees which hopefully turns into more opportunities for engagement! More info on the event here.

Athletics has a new athletic training partner in Billings Clinic, previously AMP/Ortho Montana which was through Intermountain Health. Our contracted athletics trainers are Mark Goldy, Blake Boulia (was with MSUB last year and switched employment to stay with us), and part-time help from Brynn Jolma (former student-athlete).

Megan Valente is our new head softball coach (started in late August). We are currently in the hiring process for an assistant coach.

Women's Basketball has their annual 'pack the gym' elementary game on Tuesday, October 20, at 12pm in Alterowitz Gym.
The Cross Country accident happened one year ago on October 3. We have our lone home race on Friday, October 9, at Amend Park (men at 11am, women at 11:45am).

Kathy Kotecki, Dean of Student Engagement
Housing:
Occupancy (As of 9/28/2026):
Our current occupancy is 368; last year at this time we had 348 students in the halls (We have dropped by 17 since our initial number of 385 students due to financial issues and/or choosing to move back home.)

- We have 243 total residents living in Petro (last fall we had 229)
- We have 125 total residents living in Rimrock (last fall we had 119)

Student Health Services:
Appointments: The medical and counseling teams have had a busy start to the semester.

Our Counseling team has had 77 appointments within a three-week period (37 students) and our medial team has had 60 appointments (50 students).

Jerry partnered with Dwight Welch to host a Safe Zone train the trainer workshop with staff from MSU Bozeman on Monday. We had 8 faculty and staff participate in the training. They will be able to offer campus wide trainings and/or individual department trainings.

University Police:
The 2026 MSUB Annual Security & Fire Safety Report was submitted to the Department of Education and e-mailed out to all faculty, staff and students prior to the Oct 1st deadline.

Natalie Preston, Executive Assistant to the Chancellor
On October 8, the Chancellor will host the semester's first Virtual Coffee with the Chancellor from 11:30 to 12:30. An email reminder and Teams link will be provided by the Office of University Communications and Marketing.

Thank you for all of your contributions to hosting the September Board of Regents meeting. It was a success and we received many compliments.

Lee Vartanian, Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs
The College of Education received a $1.4 million grant to support the Special Education Program, led by Dr. Melissa Sullivan-Walker.

The College of Health Professions and Science finalized a lease agreement with Rocky Vista University, allowing their Veterinarian School faculty and students to utilize lab space in the Yellowstone Science and Health Building. A portion of the revenue from this agreement will fund a newly established student fellowship program for undergraduate and graduate CHPS students, providing them with faculty-mentored research opportunities.

MCIE is partnering with Billings West High School to offer vocational rehabilitation opportunities for their students in the Special Education program. The students selected for this program will spend one hour each week on our campus learning a variety of skills.

The fall Library Lecture Series starts on October 6th, with America turns 250 as the theme. On October 13th, Amy Harmon will be speaking about Deborah Samson, the woman who inspired Harmon's book *A Girl Name Samson*. The Buzz Express is experiencing high traffic from students, with supplies running out daily. Faculty were sent an email outlining an assessment done of periodicals currently funded by library funds, including a list of periodicals with low or no current usage being recommended for cancellation.

The Academic Support Center is collaborating with Student Health Services to provide food and personal supplies to students. The Annual Student Writing Competition will begin taking submissions on October 23rd, with the winner to be announced on October 30th. Retention received 275 Navigate alerts from faculty in 2.5 weeks, the largest it has seen at this point of the semester since the software was introduced to campus.

The Center for Teaching and Learning has a variety of faculty workshops posted on their webpage.