Chancellor's Cabinet Meeting Minutes
November 3, 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.

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

Absent: Dan Carter

Meeting began at 2:05 p.m.

SHOUT-OUTS
Chancellor Hicswa gave Andrew Bonner, Interim Athletic Director, a shout-out for the Halloween Athletics Auction raising record-breaking funds.

Krista Montague, MSUB Foundation and Alumni CEO, gave a shout-out to Sunny Day Real Bird, Director of American Indian Outreach, for hosting a tour of the Native American Achievement Center with a donor who gave 50k per year to the center for the next three years.

Kathy Kotecki, Dean of Student Engagement, gave a shout-out to the Sodexo Dining Services team for scoring 4.4 out of 5 on their recent student satisfaction survey.

Kim Hayworth, Vice Chancellor for Student Access and Success, gave a shout-out to Natalie Preston, Executive Assistant to the Chancellor, for her assistance in hosting the Enrollment Celebrations.

Andrew Bonner gave a shout-out to Suzette Nynas, Faculty Senate Chair, Tom Rust, Faculty Athletic Representative, and Rebekah Gasner, Assistant Athletic Director for Compliance and Student Athlete Services, for their work in helping students navigate the new 5-year plan rules.

Lee Vartanian, Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, gave a shout-out to Cindy Bell and Jenay Cross from the Office of Grants and Sponsored Programs, and Dan Carter, Director of University Communications and Marketing, for a successful Researchfest! event.

Chancellor Hicswa gave a shout-out to Krista Montague and Luca Battistotti for hosting successful alumni receptions in Helena and Great Falls in recent weeks and planning the alumni event in Bozeman on November 4.

INFORMATION AND DISCUSSION

Strategic Vision: Operational Plans
Kathleen Thatcher, Director of Assessment and Accreditation, discussed developing the planning and reporting process aligned with the new strategic vision. While Cabinet members are familiar with the operational planning process, a method is needed to report plans and progress toward strategic priorities at the departmental level. To comply with Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU) Standards, the process will need to include measurable goals and targets, along with plans to address areas where targets are not met. Retention and graduation rates are institutional-level metrics that can be disaggregated and used in tracking progress in some cases. Appropriate department-level metrics and reporting frequency will also need to be determined. Discussion followed.

Longitudinal Retention and Graduation Rates
Chancellor Hicswa reminded Cabinet members that she has received a directive from Clay Christian, Commissioner of Higher Education (OCHE), to significantly improve retention and graduation rates at MSUB. Kathleen Thatcher presented new static dashboards that can be accessed on the Institutional Research webpage and show MSUB compared to peer and aspirant institutions' rates on the metrics by which OCHE bases performance funding to Montana University System institutions. The two most important dashboards to be familiar with are Full Time Retention Rates and 6-year Baccalaureate Graduation Rates. Chancellor Hicswa highlighted that MSUB has made progress in both of these areas, but the university is well below peer and aspirant institutions. Discussion followed.

September MUS Campus CEO Meeting
Prior to the September Board of Regents meeting, Commissioner Christian met with all campus CEOs to discuss some procedural and policy changes.

Searches for deans and vice presidents/chancellors must include a member of the Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education (OCHE) staff on the search committee. If the university hires a Human Resources (HR) director, Kerry Davant, Executive Director for Human Resources & OCHE Title IX Coordinator, must be involved in the search process.

Changes to legal reporting relationships and procedures were also discussed. Employee-related legal matters should first be directed to OCHE HR rather than to legal. Procedures for student-related issues remain unchanged.

POLICY

Facilities and Equipment Policy Draft *see attached*
Cabinet members reviewed policy draft. Provost Vartanian will input suggested edits and move forward for first reading by 'Jacket Leadership Team.

Indirect Rate Policy Draft *see attached*
Cabinet members reviewed policy draft. This policy draft will move forward for first reading by 'Jacket Leadership Team.

Meeting adjourned at 3:34 p.m.

The next Cabinet meeting is scheduled for November 17, 2026.

Notes by Natalie Preston.

UPDATES

Krista Montague, MSUB Foundation & Alumni CEO
The Foundation and Alumni team has been busy reconnecting with Yellowjackets across Montana. We recently hosted alumni gatherings in Helena, with 18 RSVPs, and Great Falls, with 30 RSVPs, and we're looking forward to our next event in Bozeman on November 4. These gatherings have been a wonderful opportunity to reconnect with alumni, hear their stories, and celebrate the lasting impact of MSU Billings. We are also excited to welcome Lexie Mann as our new Assistant Director of Annual Giving, Events & Engagement beginning November 1. Lexie will serve as the key contact for the Wine & Food Festival and will help lead our growing alumni and donor engagement efforts. Our Next Is Now campaign continues to build momentum, with $8.1 million in commitments, including just over $3 million dedicated to the Sculpture & Ceramic Studio. We remain focused on building support for this transformational project while continuing to advance the broader priorities of the campaign. Our annual Celebration of Scholarship will be held Tuesday, November 17, in the Glacier Room. Members of Cabinet are invited to join us as we celebrate and thank the donors who make scholarships possible and recognize the students whose lives are impacted by their generosity.

Kathy Kotecki, Dean of Student Engagement
Student Health Services:
HEROES is leading the efforts this fall to support Thanksgiving meals for students. In the past, meal boxes with Thanksgiving meal items were created for students who applied; however, they are trying a new strategy this year and are going to do $50 gift cards so they are able to purchase their own meals. We will also promote community agencies that offer meals during this time.

University Police:
The IMT did an Active Shooter table top drill on Oct. 14th. We had great participation and engagement.

University Police facilitated an Active Shooter drill with City College faculty and staff on Oct. 15th. The goal is to rotate buildings and help ensure the teams within those spaces have the opportunity to participate in a real simulation. The Student Union/Residence Halls is next on the schedule to do a drill.

They are currently facilitating a search to hire a new officer.

Housing/CFE:
We have hired Sean Khan as a temp Sound and Lighting Tech to help support Petro theater Events.

5 RAs and 2 Hall Directors attended an RA conference in Provo, Utah Oct. 23-25.

Kim Hayworth, Vice Chancellor for Student Access and Success
Enrollment Celebrations on November 2nd
Please come out to celebrate the fall 2026 enrollment achievements!
City College Tech Commons @ 12 pm
University Campus SUB Atrium @ 1 pm

Spring Registration
Registration for current students opens November 2nd and new student registration begins November 9th. Jacket Student Central and University Academic Advising are using Navigate campaigns to promote registration and academic advising appointments.

Navigate Workshops
Director of Retention, Katie Moffat is offering two more training sessions scheduled for this semester in the Navigate360 Staff/Faculty Training Series! The next two sessions will focus on use of the reporting tools in Navigate360 and will be held on the following dates via Teams:

- Nov. 13, 2:00-2:45
- Dec. 1, 3:00-3:45

Contact Katie if you would like to participate.

Disability Support Services (DSS)
In an ongoing departmental assessment effort, October 26-Nov. 6th, DSS is surveying almost 400 students registered with DSS on their satisfaction with accommodation support services. A similar faculty survey will be sent to about 250 faculty and adjunct instructors Nov. 2-13th, 2026. Analysis will be shared spring 2027.

Higher Education Enrollment Landscape Presentation
Thank you to all who were available to attend the Oct. 27th presentation by Encoura Award Plus consultant, Ann Allen. Kim will share the slide deck with JLT once Ann updates some of the data.

FAFSA highlights were:

- FAFSA filing rate for new freshman and transfer applicants increased to 55.4% of all applicants or a 11.4%. MT overall filing rate was 52.1%.
- FAFSA filing rate for enrolled new freshman and transfers was 88.2%

Yellowjacket Excellence Scholarships (YES)
To follow the MSU Commissioner's directive on merit-based MT resident scholarships, starting in fall 2027, the YES award eligibility tiers and awarding parameters will change. YES and the Big Sky Award are tuition-designated scholarships.
YES -Fall 2027 University Campus First-Time Full-Time Freshman
3.90 - 4.0 GPA $3000
3.50 – 3.89 GPA $2000

Big Sky Award for WUE and Non-Resident First-time Full-Time Freshman

- $2000 renewable
- A student can receive both a YES and Big Sky Award
- Available to students not receiving athletic aid

All previously awarded YES criteria and parameters will be honored. For the 26-27 academic year, City College students were eligible at nine credits or more.

2026 YES | University Campus

Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3
3.95 and Above	3.949 - 3.65	3.649 - 2.85
$3,000	$2,000	$1,000

2026 YES | City College Campus

Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3
3.95 and Above	3.949 - 3.65	3.649 - 2.85
$1,000	$500	N/A

Elder-in-Residence
The NAAC will be hosting elder Philip Beaumont Jr, Nov. 2-6, 2026. Check here https://www.msubillings.edu/naac/elder-in-residence/index.htm for his biography and detailed schedule.
Fall Preview Day
THANK YOU to everyone who assisted with Fall Preview on October 23rd. It was a great day with over 50 faculty and staff involved in offering 15 different presentations promoting academic programs, support services, and engagement opportunities. It was truly a team effort to share with our guests all MSUB offers.

Lee Vartanian, Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs
The Diesel Technology program received a $100,000 grant to invest in updated lab and hydraulics equipment along with new diesel engines from the Dennis and Phyllis Washington Foundation in partnership with Modern Machinery.

The College of Business Dean search process will begin this month, with the goal of inviting finalists to campus during the spring semester. Dr. Ted Purinton, Dean of the College of Education, will chair this search.

Boosting Graduate Program Enrollment is a goal of Academic Affairs this year. Enrollment has decreased 31% over the last 5 years. I have created a Graduate Enrollment Task Force to explore

strategies to improve graduate enrollment and chart a sustainable future for the administration of our graduate programs. Below are the task force members:

- Kurt Toenjes, Dean, CHPS (Chair)
- Sam Boerboom, Director of Graduate Studies
- Lacey Banger, Chair, Graduate Programs Committee
- Julie Pettit, Director of Admissions
- Christina Wulf, Admissions
- Joanne Stryker, Institutional Research
- Cheri Johannes, Registrar
- Sue Balter-Reitz, upcoming Academic Senate Chair
- Dan Carter, Director of University Communications & Marketing
- Ted Purinton, Dean, COE
- Tami Haaland, Dean, CLASS

Adjunct Access to email and Canvas - One persistent frustration has been the issue of adjuncts losing their email/Canvas access in between terms. Our new CIO, Jason Davis, and Dawn Morris, interim Director of HR, have worked together to extend email and Canvas access from 30 days to 120 days past the end of employment. This should fix this issue for the fall-to-spring and spring-to-fall periods.

Keeara Rhoades's Margins & Arm Ends Multimedia Exhibition is currently open through November 19th, with an artist talk and reception on November 5th.

Andrew Bonner, Interim Athletic Director

Golf & soccer have concluded their fall seasons and basketball has officially begun. In the next few weeks, volleyball & cross country will wrap up their fall season, and track & field will begin their indoor winter season.

Athletics hosted their Halloween Dinner Auction on Friday, Oct. 30th at the Pub Station downtown. The first year of online bidding for auction items, so hopefully a good post-event update from Andrew.

Athletics is working on various student-athlete support projects, specifically exploring the idea of student-athlete specific advisors to help with the 5-year plan of study.

Athletics submitted a bid to host the Southern C Divisional Basketball Tournament, which would bring 16 high school basketball teams to campus from February 25-27, 2027. We hope to have an answer in the next few weeks.

Natalie Preston, Executive Assistant to the Chancellor

The Holiday Lighting Ceremony is scheduled for Thursday, December 3, at 4:45 pm on the south steps of the administration building. We will light up the building, have music, and hot cocoa, cider, and cookies. Families and community members are welcome.

The Holiday Party will be on Thursday, December 17, from 5:00 to 7:00 pm in the Glacier Room. Look for more information via email in the upcoming weeks.

Policy Number 820.00
University Facilities / Equipment Use

MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY BILLINGS **POLICIES** 1500 University Drive Billings, MT 59101

820.00 Academic Facilities with Specialized Equipment

Subject	Facilities
Revised	05/2023
Effective Date	05/2023
Review Date/s:	05/2028
Responsible Party	Facilities Services & Academic Affairs

DRAFT

1. INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to address controlled access to academic facilities that include specialized equipment and the consistent application of rules and regulations for all users. This includes, but is not limited to: laboratories, studios, shops, performance/practice spaces, and specialized instructional or technical environments. Teaching and Scholarship activities performed by MSU Billings personnel in their respective units are not impacted by these guidelines.

References: MSU Billings Facility Use Policies and Procedures 603.1; Montana Board of Regents Policies 1008: Physical Facilities and 1909: Competition with the Private Sector

2. USE BY FACULTY, STAFF, AND STUDENTS

Faculty, enrolled students under the supervision of faculty, and other employees of MSU Billings who are acting within the course and scope of their employment, may be authorized to use research facilities/equipment with appropriate approval from the Department Chair, Dean or direct supervisor.

3. USE BY RESEARCH COLLABORATORS

External collaborators may use academic facilities/equipment to work on collaborative projects, training, instructional support, creative activity, or technical development.

A project is considered collaborative if the University and external collaborators have real and substantial intellectual, creative, or technical involvement in joint planning and conduct of the work. Projects that involve only access to facilities/equipment or where University personnel are acting as private consultants are not considered collaborative under this policy.

4. USE BY NON-AFFILIATED USERS / EXTERNAL ENTITIES

A. Eligibility and Approval

Non-affiliated persons or groups may be granted access to MSU Billings facilities/equipment only when such use

- aligns with the University's mission,
- does not interfere with instructional, student, or sponsored activities, and
- is approved in advance by the appropriate Department Chair and Dean (or designee)

Approval is granted at the discretion of the university.

B. Required Agreements

Prior to access, non-affiliated users must execute any required University agreements. Agreement requirements will be determined by the University and/or Department based on the nature of the activity, level of risk, and applicable regulations..

Fees, Maintenance, and Cost Recovery
Use of academic facilities and equipment by non-affiliated users is subject to fees designed to recover the full cost of operation, including direct and indirect costs. Fee structures will be established by the responsible unit/s in consultation with appropriate University leadership and applied consistently. Payment terms must be agreed upon prior to access. See Research Facilities/Equipment Use Procedures

C. **Liability and Insurance**
Non-affiliated users assume responsibility for their activities while using academic facilities/equipment. All non-affiliated users must provide proof of adequate insurance and/or indemnification consistent with Montana Board of Regents and MSU Billings Facility Use policies

5. **GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR USE**

A. Code of Conduct for all Users/Entities
All users must adhere to a professional code of conduct while on University property and using academic facilities/equipment. At minimum, this requires that users:

- comply with all MSU Billings policies, facility rules, posted signage, and instructions from supervising personnel;
- maintain a safe, respectful, and non-disruptive environment for students, faculty, and staff;
- use facilities/equipment only for the approved purpose and only during authorized times;
- refrain from unauthorized modification or misuse of facilities, equipment, or systems;
- protect University resources and confidential or proprietary information during use; and
- immediately report any safety incidents, damage, malfunction, near-miss, or improper use to the supervising faculty/staff member or facility manager.

Violations of this code, safety requirements, or agreement terms may result in immediate suspension or termination of access.

B. Training, Safety, and Supervision
All users must comply with all applicable safety requirements, laws, regulations, and University policies. Required training and supervision levels will be determined by the University based on the nature of the facility, equipment, and activity

C. Priority of Use and Scheduling
Academic facilities/equipment are primarily maintained to support the University's teaching, creative, scholarly, technical, and service mission. Scheduling priority will be applied in the following order:

1. MSU Billings students and faculty engaged in instruction, academic program activities, and sponsored/creative/scholarly work;
2. Other internal MSU Billings users outside the hosting unit/department;
3. Non-affiliated/external users or entities.

The University reserves the right to reschedule or suspend non-affiliated use to meet institutional needs.

D. Responsibility for Damage, Loss, or Excessive Wear
All users of academic facilities and equipment—including faculty, staff, students, research collaborators, and non-affiliated users—are responsible for damage, loss, or excessive wear attributable to their use.

The University reserves the right to recover associated costs, which may be charged to the individual user, the user's department, or the external entity, as appropriate.

Access to facilities or equipment may be suspended or revoked in cases of damage, misuse, or failure to comply with applicable requirements.

E. Compliance and Revocation of Access
Failure to comply with this policy, facility rules, safety requirements, scheduling priority, or agreement terms may result in immediate suspension or termination of access without refund of fees. Reinstatement of access, if permitted, may require retraining, revised agreements, and/or additional fees.

6. **DEFINITIONS**

- Academic facilities include laboratories and other specialized environments used for teaching, training, creative activities, technical work, or scholarly activity. This includes, but is not limited to:
  1. science and research laboratories,
  2. art studios and galleries,
  3. music rehearsal rooms, instrument labs, and performance spaces,
  4. welding, autobody, auto repair, construction, and other trade/technical shops,
  5. computer labs, simulation environments, and specialized computing spaces,
  6. any other controlled-access instructional or technical facility.
  7. Academic facilities do not include the Library, conference space, PE building or regular general-use classrooms unless specifically designated as controlled-access spaces by building managers.
- Specialized equipment includes technical, creative, instructional, or complex equipment owned or operated by MSU Billings. Examples include scientific instruments and equipment, shop tools and machines, vehicles and diagnostic systems used in instructional programs, studio/performance equipment, computing hardware/software environments, and other high-value or regulated equipment requiring supervision or training.
- Non-affiliated persons or groups – For purposes of this policy, any person or group performing activities in MSU Billings facilities/equipment who is not employed or engaged by MSU Billings to perform such activities is a non-affiliated person or group. Such activities will be considered external and charged a user fee regardless of the for-profit or non-profit nature of the activity, person, or group.

4201	Facilities and Administrative Costs
Subject	Financial Services, Grants and Sponsored Programs
Revised	XX/2026
Effective Date:	09/1997
Review Date/s	07/2013, 09/2026
Responsible Party:	Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs & Grants and Sponsored Programs

1. INTRODUCTION & PURPOSE

Facilities and Administrative Costs (also called "F&As," "indirect costs," "IDC's," or "overhead") are those costs that are incurred for common or joint purpose benefitting more than one cost objective They include categories such as library operations, utility costs, depreciation of buildings and equipment, operations and maintenance costs, grant and contract administration and accounting, and general administrative expenses for central offices such as Human Resources, Purchasing, or similar campus offices.

At Montana State University Billings, Facilities and Administrative Costs are generated from external research, training, and service grants and contracts. F&A funds will be under the direction of the Provost or their designee. Where appropriate, the Provost or their designee will seek counsel from the Chancellor, Vice Chancellors, Vice Provosts, and Academic Deans on matters related to F & A policies and procedures

2. FACILITIES AND ADMINISTRATION RATES

MSU Billings' federal F&A rate is negotiated periodically with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Alternative rates are applied to non-federal or non-research programs/projects. Current rates are found in the GSP Proposal Preparation Sheet and Facilities and Administrative Cost Procedures.

3. F & A RECOVERY

Unless prohibited by the funder, all sponsored project/grant budgets must include the appropriate F&A rate in accordance with BOR policy 404.

The full allowable facilities and administrative rate will be charged unless the funding source has a lesser rate which it charges uniformly to all grantees. In no case shall the Principal Investigator negotiate a rate with the funding source

Proposals submitted to state agencies must also follow the BOR Policy 404.

4. F & A DISTRIBUTION

Indirect cost returns are distributed among the Central Administration account controlled by the

Provost or their designee; College, Department, or Unit; and Principal Investigators/Project Directors (See Facilities and Administrative Cost Procedures).

F&A funds will be dispersed in a manner to encourage, support, or enhance activities related to the over-arching objectives of the division or unit in which grant funding is housed. F&A funds generated from research grants should, for example, enhance the productivity of the research environment. F&A generated from service grants should be used to enhance the grant-funded program and division or unit (See Facilities and Administrative Cost Procedures).

F&A costs are governed by the principles of Uniform Guidance: 2 CFR 200.414 -- Indirect Costs. All F&A funds are subject to federal, state, and university procurement policies and procedures. See Unallowable and Restricted Expenditures policy for a description of allowable/unallowable expenses.