



Chancellor's Cabinet Meeting Minutes

July 21, 2026, 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: Lee Vartanian, Kathleen Thatcher, Suzette Nynas, Andrew Bonner, Dan Carter, Krista Montague, Kim Hayworth, Kathy Kotecki, Leslie Weldon, and Natalie Preston

Guests: Karen Miller and Michelle Williams

Absent: Stefani Hicswa

PRESENTATION

Strategic Plan

Guests Karen Miller and Michelle Williams of Kaleidoscope Group presented on the new strategic plan. Discussion followed.

SHOUT-OUTS

Cabinet members shared messages of congratulations and celebrations for recent events and contributions of faculty and staff on campus.

INFORMATION

Process Reimagine and Redesign Update

Lee Vartanian, Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, provided an update on the Process Reimagine and Redesign (PRR) being conducted with CampusWorks. The team from CampusWorks is conducting meetings on the fourth of four categories, Academic Advising and Student Success. Draft reports from the three categories of meetings and workshops which have been completed have been shared with campus on the [PRR intranet webpage](#).

Enrollment Update

Kim Hayworth, Vice Chancellor for Student Access and Success, reported on current enrollment. Without dual enrollment (DE), enrollment is up from same week last year.

Retention Update

Vice Chancellor Hayworth reported that retention of the freshman and transfer cohort is also up slightly over the same week in Summer 2025. Last year ended at 56.6%. Each additional 9 students retained = 1%.

Centennial Update

Dan Carter, Director of University Communications and Marketing (UCAM), announced that plans are moving forward for the Centennial kick-off celebration on August 26, as well as the

year-long celebratory events. The theme of the Centennial Celebration is “A legacy of access, a lifetime of impact.” The centennial-themed resource and media kit are available for use on the Intranet page. Centennial-themed merchandise is being distributed to local businesses.

MSUB Foundation and Alumni Centennial Logos

Krista Montague shared the approved Centennial logos for general and alumni-specific use. They were designed to honor alumni of Eastern Montana Normal School and Eastern Montana College, and will be printed on SWAG distributed during alumni events.

Facilities Update

Leslie Weldon, Vice Chancellor for Administration and Finance, announced that the water main project is going well, as are the multiple projects underway campus-wide. All projects are focused on improving accessibility and addressing longstanding problems. Leslie complimented the Facilities Services team for doing a great job, and the UCAM office for keeping campus informed with regular updates.

Cabinet Retreat August 3-4 (Group reading *Strong Ground*)

Adjourned at 3:22

UPDATES

Natalie Preston, Executive Assistant to the Chancellor

Planning for the September Board of Regents Meeting is underway. This September 24, MSU Billings will host the Commissioner of Higher Education and staff and the Montana Board of Regents, as well as administrators and leaders from the MUS. Wear yellow and blue and be ready to show your Yellowjacket pride as we welcome these important guests to campus.

On Wednesday, July 29, we will celebrate Leslie Weldon’s retirement. Please stop by the second level of the SUB between 2:00 and 4:00 to enjoy refreshments and thank Leslie for her years and countless contributions to MSU Billings.

Leslie Weldon, Vice Chancellor for Administration and Finance

BOR Approvals

Art Building (Sculpture and Ceramic Studio)

- Board of Regents approved spending up to \$1.65 million on planning and design for the new building. The Foundation has raised \$3.4 million towards the building.
- State A&E selected Mosaic Architects for the design phase.

Business Services

- Review Fall 2026 Course Fee
- Links to the tuition and fee tables and fee inventory guidelines:
<https://www.msubillings.edu/boffice/students.htm>
https://www.msubillings.edu/intranet/boffice/Fee_Guidelines.htm
- OBBB - Changes impacts Student Account process – collaborating with Financial Aid, Advising, and the rest of campus to address

- Due to the OB3 updates we (VCSAS/FinAid/Business Services, etc.) have met and worked on a new refund process that will affect some students. Students who have confirmed attendance and are enrolled in UG 12+ credits and all credit levels for Graduate will be in the refund process we start Friday before classes begin. All other credit levels will be in the refund process Tuesday before classes begin. This is a change from the past where we refunded all confirmed students at credit levels starting Thursday/Friday before classes begin.
- Communication with students accepting their fees is changing and this may affect the drop for non-payment lists/numbers. We are updating this communication to students that are possibly on a wait list to not confirm until they are fully registered as is may potentially affect the awarded Federal Loans.
- MSUB is moving to a Service Fee for Tuition payments starting August 10th - Probably keep this in the update
- Process for Fall 2026 Assessment of Tuition and Fees will start August 5th

Facilities

Construction Season

- Water Main Upgrade – 2nd phase of our water main project (1st phase completed in the fall of 24). Work started at the end of May and we anticipate completion before the end of August
- Recent walkaround by State Insurance
 - Concerns about trees and tennis court
 - Tennis courts will be locked and unavailable for use as tennis courts
- Tennis courts will be used for staging for next phase for water main upgrade



- Sanbell beginning design work for the Motorcycle Safety Course at City College (this is funded by the legislature through Helena College)
- State A&E selected Cushing Terrell for Cisel Hall HVAC project (funded in the last legislative session coordinated in the LRBP process)
- Working with State A&E on elevator upgrades and roof upgrades (these will take several months and cross fiscal years)
- State selected HGF Architects for the remodel design for City College food service
- Finishing the McMullen Stabilization project - Landscaping around the building
- Residence Hall room remodel (9 rooms) on track to be completed at the end of July

- McMullen Hall redundant HVAC project - unit has arrived and expect an Aug/Sept completion

Parking

- Working with Intermountain Health to explore additional parking opportunities on campus

Financial Services

Budget

- FYE 27 Operating Budget and budget reports. Due to OCHE on August 10

Finance:

- FYE 26 closing

Payroll:

- Raises are in Banner and will be reflected on the 7/22 paycheck.
- Faculty raises will be effective on the September 2 paycheck.

Human Resources

Continue to work with MSU on organizational structure

- Determined vacant role was needed – funded with budget from vacant roles
- HR Roles:
 - **Dawn Morris, Interim Executive Director of Human Resources** – Oversees HR operations, labor/employee relations, Title IX Coordinator, policy development, compliance, data governance, conflict of interest, and campus-wide HR communications.
 - **Paula Highlander, Director of Talent Management and Compensation** – Oversees compensation programs, performance management, employee development and training, wellness initiatives, position descriptions, new employee orientation, reporting, and talent management processes.
 - **Anthony Zilch, HR Business Analyst** – Manages recruitment and hiring processes, HRIS transactions, reporting and audits, budget and payroll support, background checks, compliance reporting, ACA administration, and employee data management.
 - **Connie Hoffman, HR Generalist** – Administers employee benefits, retirement, leave programs (FMLA/ADA), workers' compensation, unemployment claims, employment verifications and general HR administrative support.
- Performance Evaluation follow-up and completion rates to follow.
- Processing faculty and part time faculty new hires for AY 26-27.
- Benefit rates and plan changes will be reflected on July 22, 2026, paycheck.
- Well check July 23-24th, at Billings Hotel and Convention Center. Please refer to Admin General email from July 7, 2026, for further information.

Information Technology

- Installing redundant HVAC cooling system in the Datacenter
- Working with UCAM to deploy new digital signage system
- CBORD renewal and reviewing possible move to cloud

- Upgrading remaining windows 10 systems as well as pushing out latest windows 11 version

Kathy Kotecki, Dean of Student Engagement

Student Health Services:

We interviewed two candidates for the Director of Counseling position last week and hope to have a hire made early next week.

Housing:

-Occupancy Numbers:

As of July 15th, we have 378 completed applications and 22 started with no deposit (228 new students and 172 returners.) This week last year we had 344 completed and 24 started and not completed (222 new and 146 returners.)

Other Data:

225 exemption requests

128 approved

94 pending

3 denied (2 athletes)

-Shelby Holsapple, former Rimrock Hall Director, has been hired as the Assistant Director of Housing and Event Support position (a newly created position with the resignation of Colton Adams as a way to continue to blend the CFE and Housing teams and roles).

-Rimrock Hall Director: the vacant position is currently posted and the hope is to bring successful candidates to campus the last week in July.

University Police:

Officer Murphy officially retired on July 7th. There is currently a search underway to hire for his position.

Dan Carter, Director of University Communications and Marketing

MSU is moving forward with plans for rolling out a new Content Management System. The old Campus Works platform will be replaced by a product by Statamic. A campuswide communication will be sent out the week of July 20. For Cabinet purposes, here is a look at how things will work:

- Sections will be migrated in late summer and early fall and placed in a holding area on our servers.
- Those responsible for those sections will get a note from Steve Miller that their web pages/sections are available for review.
- Those sections will be held for review for several months. It gives everyone a chance to fully review everything (links, accuracy, photos, etc.)
- Between now and then, CMS users are encouraged to go through their sites and pages to delete old information, check any links, or make edits to text as needed. We are **NOT** encouraging any innovation updates because they will run the risk of not migrating.

Krista Montague, Foundation and Alumni CEO

The Foundation closed FY26 with \$5,098,835 in cash received, reflecting a strong year of philanthropic support for MSUB. Additionally, the Next is Now Campaign has surpassed \$7 million in commitments, including approximately \$3 million designated for the Sculpture & Ceramics Studio project.

We also recently learned that Mosaic Architecture has been selected to lead the official design phase of the Sculpture & Ceramics Studio. We look forward to engaging with their team in the coming weeks and beginning the next chapter of this exciting project. On the alumni and engagement front, we mailed more than 5,500 invitations to donors and alumni for the MSUB Centennial Kickoff Celebration on August 26. In addition, a digital invitation will be sent to approximately 30,000 alumni (all those for whom we have email addresses). Attached are the logos we will be using throughout the Centennial for alumni and donor engagement.

Internally, we are pleased to announce that Lisa McKinney has been promoted to Director of Advancement Services, providing leadership for our advancement services around prospect management and data operations. We have also posted the position of Assistant Director of Annual Giving – Events & Engagement, which will play a key role in engagement events as well as our signature event of the Wine & Food Festival. Please share this opportunity with those who might be interested.

Lee Vartanian, Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs

The new College of Education Dean, Dr. Ted Purinton, starts on August 3rd.

Dr. Susan Gilbertz, Dean of the College of Business, announced her upcoming retirement. Her last day will be June 30, 2027.

We have finalized thirteen successful faculty searches. The new faculty will be on starting August 25th.

Dr. Precious McKenzie was appointed the City College Associate Dean and began her work on June 24th. Her position will help alleviate Kaili Payne's workload with Dual Enrollment, an area Dr. McKenzie has experience with.

Lucas Logan is now the Associate Director of Tutoring in the Academic Support Center. Lucas previously served as the Assistant Director of STEM in the ASC. The ASC will also be welcoming Sarah Rundle, Program Outreach Coordinator, on August 12th.

Pete Buchanan, City College Workforce Development Director, and his family are moving to Scotland. His last day is July 31st. The search for his replacement is in progress.

The convocation schedule is live and can be found at <https://www.msubillings.edu/provost/fall-convocation.htm>.