



**‘Jacket Leadership Team Meeting Minutes  
August 13, 2024 2:00 – 3:30 p.m.**

*Please share all information from today’s meeting with the stakeholder group you represent.*

**Announcements**

Dean of Student Engagement Kathy Kotecki introduced Codie Wahrman, the new Associate Dean of Student Engagement.

Chancellor Hicswa asked that everyone attend the State of the University Address on August 22, at 8:30 a.m. in person in Petro Theatre.

Chief Information Officer Brett Weisz provided an overview of new cybersecurity issues, introduced the new IT procedures page, and mandatory annual Know B4 Training which will become available on August 20. He also announced that the four MSU campuses will be removing local administration rights from all university-issued laptop and desktop computers.

**Updates**

Provost Eskandari announced Academic Affairs leadership transitions. Dr. Melanie Reaves is interim dean of the College of Education. Dr. Jana Marcette will be working on institution-wide projects as Interim Director of Strategic Academic Initiatives. Austin Bennett is the new faculty director of the Honors Program. Dr. Sam Boerboom is the new faculty director of the Office of Graduate Studies.

Provost Eskandari reported on the Commissioner’s Directive on Transcript Withholding. MUS institutions can no longer hold transcripts even if students owe a balance. *See Directive and FAQ*

Director of Facilities Justin Rife announced that parking lots will be closed on a rotating schedule for new paint striping. The water main replacement has been completed. Sidewalk replacements around the administration building are planned for mid-September.

Director of Human Resources Paula Highlander explained the new federal threshold for overtime exempt employees. To comply, supervisors will need to evaluate if employees will be in overtime exempt position or if there is a need to increase their salary. The federal regulation is currently stalled by litigation.

Director of Assessment and Accreditation Kathleen Thatcher announced that MSUB and other institutions accredited by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU) are required to evaluate student learning for co-curricular programs that support academic programming but are not academic in nature.

**Information**

Director of TRIO and Educational Opportunities Grant Laura Gittings-Carlson provided an overview of the five grant-funded TRIO programs at MSUB. They are all being combined into one office called the Office of TRIO Programs. To serve students as a one-stop shop, a single email address and phone number for the programs housed by this office will be distributed.

Chief of University Police Brandon Gatlin announced the revision of the building manager position to the Building Safety and Maintenance Manager. Some buildings will have multiple individuals fulfilling this role. The manager and/or their designee will serve on the Safety Committee and serve as a single point of contact to coordinate with facility needs. They will assist in creating and annually update emergency response plans based on templates provided by Chief Gatlin.

## **Policy**

**Non-Allowable Expenditures Policy** (second reading) Vice Chancellor for Administration and Finance Leslie Weldon led discussion of changes to policy. Discussion followed. Chancellor Hicswa asked that Directors shepherding policy research the proposed changes to ensure state law applicability and compliance. *See Policy Draft: Non-Allowable Expenditures Policy*

## **Discussion Items**

### **Shared Governance**

Chancellor Hicswa expressed a renewed focus on shared governance, especially in 'Jacket Leadership Team. The group will be asked to consider various models for shared governance and give input.

### **Future Meetings**

Discussion followed on ideas for changing format of future meetings to make 'Jacket Leadership Team more effective.

## **Announcements**

Chancellor Hicswa shared Brandon Irby's email announcing his resignation. A search will be upcoming for a new Communications and Marketing Director.

Chancellor Hicswa shared MSU President Cruzado's retirement announcement.

**Meeting adjourned at 3:30 pm**



# Montana University System

## Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education

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### **MONTANA UNIVERSITY SYSTEM | COMMISSIONER'S DIRECTIVE**

**RE: Transcript Withholding**

**EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2024**

In October 2023, the US Department of Education announced that the practice of withholding transcripts of students in specific situations would be prohibited for institutions that participate in Title IV financial aid. This new rule will go into effect on July 1, 2024, and applies only to students who have used federal financial aid to pay for their education.

In light of the new regulations, the Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education directs the following procedural adjustments be made at the campus level:

- Montana University System institutions will no longer hold a current or former student's transcript because the student owes a debt to the institution, regardless of whether or not the student used federal financial aid.
- Institutions may prohibit a student from registering for classes if an account balance is unmet.
- Institutions may continue to refer unresolved student debt cases to collections and/or other financial processes when an unpaid balance remains.
- OCHE encourages campuses to allow students to register if the balance due is less than \$500, and the student has agreed to a payment plan.

While the new rule will go into effect on July 1, 2024, the US Department of Education will release further guidance on the regulation in June 2024. Should the new guidance conflict with this directive, new Montana University System guidance will be issued.

Clayton T. Christian  
Commissioner of Higher Education

*Commissioner's directives are official interpretations and guidance issued by the Commissioner of Higher Education; they remain in effect as system directives until withdrawn or revised by the Commissioner or superseded by action of the Board of Regents.*

## **Transcript Withholding FAQs:**

### *If there is a payment plan in place, can an institution hold a transcript?*

The regulation states that if Title IV funds were received for the payment period in question, the transcript must be released. In Montana, transcripts will no longer be held regardless of whether a payment plan is in place.

### *Can we release only a partial transcript?*

No. While the regulation does allow for institutions to release partial transcripts, many MUS institutions do not have the capacity to reliably track and determine which part of a transcript should be released and/or do not have the capability to provide a partial transcript.

### *Does this regulation and guidance apply to transcript holds only after July 1, 2024, or is it retroactive?*

While the Department of Education has not released answers to timing specifically, Montana will choose to release all transcripts regardless of when the student attended or when the hold was placed.

### *Can we include information on a transcript that indicates that a balance is due to the institution?*

Not at this time. The regulation does not currently address transcript notations. As more information is released, OCHE may provide additional guidance.

### *When can an institution use other negative actions to try and recover the balance owed by the Title IV recipient?*

The Department of Education indicated in the regulation, “we have limited the applicability of the regulation that prevents institutions from taking ‘any negative action’ to only occasions where the balance owed is the result of institutional error, fraud, or misconduct.”

### *What is the definition of institutional error?*

The Department of Education has not released a shared definition for, or examples of, institutional error.

## **Resources:**

1. AACRAO Guidance: [https://www.aacrao.org/docs/default-source/advocacy-docs/aacrao-response-to-proposed-transcript-withholding-regs.pdf?sfvrsn=fce27394\\_0#:~:text=The%20language%20in%20668.14\(b,fraud%20or%20misconduct%20by%20the](https://www.aacrao.org/docs/default-source/advocacy-docs/aacrao-response-to-proposed-transcript-withholding-regs.pdf?sfvrsn=fce27394_0#:~:text=The%20language%20in%20668.14(b,fraud%20or%20misconduct%20by%20the)

**Policy Number: 205.0**  
**Policy: Non-Allowable Expenditures**  
**Effective Date: 3/2013**  
**Revision Date: 3/2013**  
**Approved by: Business Services Director**

**POLICY:**

- I. Personal or Other Expenses:
  - A. The University Purchasing Manual (<https://www.msubillings.edu/intranet/boffice/pdf/PurchasingCardManualCardholders 11-2022.pdf>) states that "... purchases for personal use are not allowed." Personal expenditures are not allowable for reimbursement, regardless of the funding source. Below are some examples that University Business Services considers to be personal or other unallowable departmental expenditures, and as such are not reimbursable.
    1. Cash
      - a. Cash may not be charged to the University Purchasing Card and transferred to a personal One Card.
    2. Gifts, ~~Gift Cards~~, or Awards
      - a. Gifts given for graduations, birthdays, leaving MSUB employment, service of work completed, ~~Secretary-s Week~~Administrative Assistants' Week, awards to students outside the Financial Aid process, weddings, showers, etc.  
~~Gift Cards~~  
~~University funds, including those held in agency accounts, may not be used to purchase gift cards to compensate individuals for work or services, for reimbursement of expenses, or as gifts. All payments for work or services must be paid through Payroll or Accounts Payable, as applicable.~~
    3. Flowers
      - a. Given as a gift, for a funeral, or for office. Purchase of flowers may be allowable if they are business related with approval from University Business Services.
    4. Cards
      - a. Purchased for greetings, birthday, wedding, "going away" or retirement, funeral, etc.
    5. Parking Decal and personal fines
      - a. Parking Decal is a personal expense as discussed in MSUB's Parking Regulations at <https://www.msubillings.edu/parking/>. Fines incurred are also considered personal expenses.
      - b. The purchase of temporary parking hangtags may be allowed if they are for a visitor from another state agency, candidate for a position, workshop attendees, visiting dignitaries, etc.
    6. Graduation Regalia and other clothing (non-uniform)
      - a. Graduation regalia—cap, gown, and hood—are all personal expenses

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- whether they are for a student or ~~Faculty~~-staff. Faculty regalia are provided by the Provost's Office.
- b. Certain clothing may be purchased if it will be consumed in the course of completing a research project or is protective personal equipment (PPE), such as a lab coat, safety eye protection, hearing protection, protective footwear, hardhat, knee protectors, fall harness, (etc.), such PPE is the property of MSUB and not the individual.
7. Office treats
    - a. Purchase of treats for office personnel is not an allowable expenditure.
    - b. Retirement, Going Away, or other personal office events.
  8. Office Supplies
    - a. Coffee, plates, napkins, tissue, etc. Any items consumed by employees are not allowed.
  9. Donations
    - a. Donations are not allowed to any organization including charitable organizations.
    - b. Exceptions are donations from student club accounts.
  10. Drugs and Alcohol
    - a. Purchase of drugs and alcohol or any substance, material or service, which violates policy, law or regulations pertaining to ~~Montana State University~~MSUB is not allowed with the following exceptions: Drugs may be purchased for medical purposes through the Student Health Service or for a sponsored research project. Alcohol may be purchased for approved events through the Foundation or other funding if the prior approval was received through the Alcohol Request Form has been completed and approved. See the MSUB Alcohol Policy at <https://www.msubillings.edu/geninfo/alcohol-policy.htm>

**11. Clothing**

- a. Clothing purchases are considered income per IRS guidelines and are subject to tax rules. To truly be classified as a uniform two conditions must be met to avoid taxation:
- b.
- c. Must be worn as a condition of employment
- d. Not suitable for everyday wear
- e.
- f. Examples of allowable clothing purchases include University Police or Facilities Services uniforms.
- g. Generally, purchasing clothing for faculty, staff, and students is not allowable. Shirts (i.e. polos, t-shirts, etc.) containing the MSUB logo worn as a uniform for a specific event(s), recruiting events, or other activities requiring program identity would be allowable from sources other than restricted funds. These clothing items should not be worn

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- outside of the specific event(s) for which they are purchased.
- h. When making purchases for clothing, the Business Office/Payroll Office will require the following supporting documentation to substantiate the expense:
  - i. Business Purpose/Justification, clearly indicating how the purchase qualifies as a uniform
  - j. Uniform Tracking Form under “Other Payroll Forms” on the Payroll Intranet
  - k. Complete list of recipients and dollar value of item(s)
  - l. Purchases should be charged to the account code 62203
  - m. Clothing purchases that do not qualify as a uniform will be considered a gift and therefore taxable to the recipient. Contact the Payroll Services Office.

II. Gift Cards or Gift Certificates

- A. University funds, including those held in agency accounts, may not be used to purchase gift cards or gift certificates.
- B. If University funds are used in any fashion even with being reimbursed by Foundation etc. documentation is required.
- C. All payments for work or services must be paid through Payroll or Accounts Payable, as applicable.
- D. Gift Cards or Gift Certificates for Research or Survey Participants are allowed, however, are subject to the requirements below:
  - 1. Payments to participants of MSUB-related research or survey projects may be compensated with cash or a gift card; however, such compensation may be taxable income to the recipient.
  - 2. The use of cash or gift cards as incentives or awards for external or university-sponsored project participants must have approval through the Grants & Sponsored Programs Office.
  - 3. The department or Principal Investigator (PI) must document all compensation received by such individuals.
    - i. The Gift Card Form must be completed and attached to the P-card expense in Chrome River, as applicable, and the department must collect a W-9 form at the time of gift card distribution if there is any indication that an individual might receive over \$600 in gift cards during the year.
    - ii. If the total gift card amount exceeds \$600 within a calendar year for any individual, the department must collect a W-9 from that individual and report this information to the Business Services Office for Form 1099 reporting.
    - iii. For researchers who need to ensure the anonymity of study participants, the signature of two MSUB employees can replace the signature and name of the study participant on the Gift Card Form.
    - iv. Where anonymous participation is considered vital to the study, staff should document the nature of the study in detail and ensure an adequate audit trail is documented for how payments were utilized.

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- E. Research participants who are also university employees
1. Such individuals will be treated the same as non-employees provided all the following conditions are met:
    - i. The employee's participation is voluntary and not part of the employee's official university duties.
    - ii. The employee's participation is on the employee's own time.
    - iii. The employee does not perform any service while participating in the research study that would be performed during the employee's regular university responsibilities.
    - iv. The employee is not receiving additional benefits when compared to the other participants.
    - v. If all four conditions are not met, any payments to the employee must be reported to the Payroll Office so that these payments will be included on the employee's W-2 and applicable taxes will be withheld.
- F. Control of Gift Cards
1. Gift Cards shall be kept under lock and key and accounted for at all times to ensure proper physical security and to protect from theft and loss. Access to the gift cards and keys to the secure areas should be limited to the individual(s) responsible for the safekeeping of the gift cards.
  2. Gift Cards should be distributed to the recipients within 30 days of purchase.
  3. It is not permissible to charge the university for gift cards that have not been used for the project.
  4. When unused cards exist, the department should try to return the gift cards to the vendor and obtain a refund.
  5. If Gift Cards are provided by outside source to any department of MSUB, MSUB must follow the Gift Card policy. Refer to outside vendor if documentation is required.

\*\*\*Non-Allowable reimbursements are not limited to this list.