

ACADEMIC SENATE MINUTES

DATE: April 28, 2005

PRESENT: Audrey ConnerRosberg
Keith Edgerton
Bruce Brumley
Craig McKenzie
Tasneem Khaleel (ex-officio)
Janie Park (ex-officio)

Mary Susan Fishbaugh
Randall Gloege
Noreen Lee
Matt Redinger
John Cech (ex-officio)

ABSENT: Alan Davis
Mark Hardt – *excused*
Sandie Rietz – *excused*
Amanda Mears (student) – *excused*
Emily Valenzuela (student)
Joe Michels (ex-officio)
Randy Rhine (ex-officio)
Curt Kochner (ex-officio)

Lorrie Steerey – *excused*
Paul Bauer – *excused*

Carl Hanson (ex-officio)
George White (ex-officio)
Terrie Iverson (ex-officio)

GUESTS: Ronald Sexton

PRESIDING: Keith Edgerton, Chair

Keith Edgerton called the meeting to order at 3:49 p.m. in room B57 at the College of Technology.

The minutes of April 21 were accepted as presented.

I. SEATING OF NEW SENATOR

The Senate welcomed Mr. Craig McKenzie, new at-large member.

II. DISCUSSION/ACTION ITEMS

A. Discussion with Chancellor Sexton

Keith Edgerton opened the discussion by stating the faculty are concerned about some issues, but we do not want to discuss the budget or recent legislative action. The first concern is the Chancellor's vision and mission of the University: is it random, or is there a plan that we are just unaware of?

Chancellor Ron Sexton stated that we are not doing anything that is not in our Strategic Plan, set in motion in 1999. We also developed, with the help of many campus groups, new directions for the Strategic Plan last fall (August, 2004). Although others may not have even looked at those plans, Dr. Sexton stated that he uses it all the time. He stated that two major components of the Strategic Plan are a strong commitment to two-year education and distance learning. We are also looking to expand the University for more resources for research and faculty development. Everything we are doing now is centered around those things. Dr. Sexton noted that his vision of where we are going is not different from the Strategic Plan or faculty goals. What changes is how new directions manifest themselves. Back when the Vo-Techs were converted by the Board of Regents into colleges of technology, the BOR had plans for the COTs being more than technical schools.

On the proposed medical school: Senator Cory Stapleton began that idea, not us. In fact, it came as somewhat of a surprise. Although the bill did not make it through the legislature, Senator Stapleton will be making a presentation to the BOR at the May meeting here at the MSU-Billings College of Technology about the medical school.

On men's baseball: the program has been on the drawing board for 10 years, along with women's softball which we recently started. We are interested in baseball for a number of reasons: it will be the only intercollegiate program above the two-year level in Montana, it will bring younger students to MSU-Billings (our average student age continues to rise), and it will bring men in (our percentage of men continues to fall). Dr. Sexton anticipates at least 40 more full-time FTE will be raised through this program. In general, our student-athletes have a 3.0 GPA or better and they tend to stay here all four years *and* graduate from here.

We have already contracted with the City of Billings to use Cobb Field for baseball games and Stewart Park for practice, so there is no investment for us. We also have \$50,000 in support from private sources for the baseball program. As part of the agreement with the City, the Scarlets and Royals do get to use our facilities in the P.E. Building when they do not conflict with MSU-Billings activities. It was noted that the faculty paid to have new equipment for a faculty fitness center, and now we have to pay to use it. Dr. Sexton stated that the equipment that the faculty paid for is no longer

usable—it's sitting in the hallway outside the current fitness center. Since funding from the Wellness program was shrinking, MSU-Billings took out a loan to buy new fitness equipment and then used student fees to pay that loan back; hence faculty pay a fee to use it now.

The question was raised as to why we are trying to recruit traditional-aged students when Billings' major growth area is people aged 40 to 60. Dr. Sexton stated that in many states, two-year education is the starting place for people out of high school. This is not true of Montana because it was not set up that way. Montana has one of the lowest rates of high school graduates who go on to higher education. What will happen if that trend continues? Those people won't be able to get jobs good enough to support themselves and their families above the poverty level. The Montana University System units are all set up with an infrastructure based on full-time students: dorms, student union buildings, etc. Many of our students at MSU-Billings are part-time and drop in/drop out students. Balancing traditional, full-time students with those others is very difficult and we seem to do it quite well.

Dr. Sexton also noted that the big discussion behind the Online Program is will we be able to generate new FTE. We still don't know the answer.

It was stated that although we may not need to build a new baseball field for the men's baseball program, that program will need other things like locker room space. What else will we have to sacrifice to make room for new programs? It was further noted that since we are starting a new baseball program, the perception of the faculty is that baseball is more important than them. A similar problem may exist with the public: we are raising tuition to pay for the new baseball program. Although these may not be true, the public especially and the faculty may not know how the funding system works.

Dr. Sexton remarked that the MUS has been in a privatization mode for many years now. We have to find things the private sector is willing to fund, because they are the donors and they decide where their money goes. Currently in the Capital Campaign, all the major gifts are in endowments for the academic programs and colleges, and we will have to rely on those more and more because the general fund monies and tuition are not keeping up with our costs. The problem with private funding is that they fund what they are interested in, such as baseball and healthcare. We can try to pitch other traditional academic areas to them, but if they aren't interested, they just aren't. You fund where you get the donations in order to fund the places that really need it. Unfortunately, we have to wait our turn to get the things funded that need funding, like new science labs.

Dr. Sexton noted that ultimately, we are stuck with the awful funding model based on FTE counts. He and Vice Chancellor Iverson have been trying to change it for five years, and all that happens is we get cut out of the discussions. They won't even let us use three-year rolling averages—it's a year to year struggle for survival. Retention is a big part of how well we do on the FTE counts. The Academic Support Center has started to improve our retention, which is up 2%. That is huge!

Dr. Sexton stated that the administration never forgets about programs that need funding. We just can't control when the money comes and where it gets used. Some better communication is needed between the Chancellor and the faculty, perhaps a monthly meeting to let everyone know what's going on across campus. Dr. Sexton invited a Senator to regularly attend his Cabinet meetings, which is where everything gets integrated among the various areas of campus.

It was observed that President Gamble has stated that Bozeman has a cap, a number of students that they don't want to grow beyond. Do we have one? Dr. Sexton responded that we do. Our basic headcount target is 6800 students, which does not include online students.

Dr. Sexton agreed to return, if he can, next week for a half-hour wrap-up discussion.

The meeting adjourned at 5:15 p.m.

rjrm