

ACADEMIC SENATE MINUTES

DATE: March 28, 2019

PRESENT: Jim Barron
Kelly McCoy
Vern Gagnon
Paul Pope
Rachael Waller
Christine Shearer (ex-officio)
Vicki Trier (ex-officio)
Sue Balter-Reitz (ex-officio)

Scott Butterfield
Keith Edgerton
Kelly Shumway
Jennifer Lynn
Joy Honea (ex-officio)
Mary Susan Fishbaugh (ex-officio)
Melinda Arnold (ex-officio)
Darlene Hert (ex-officio)

ABSENT: Suzette Nynas*
Heather Thompson-Bahm*
Halle Keltner (student)
Ed Garding (ex-officio)*

Cindy Dell*
Sarah Keller*
John Dorr (ex-officio)*
Trudy Collins (ex-officio)

* *excused*

GUEST: Melinda Tilton

PRESIDING: Jim Barron, Chair

Jim Barron called the meeting to order at 3:40 p.m. in the Chancellor's Conference Room.

I. ANNOUNCEMENTS

None

II. ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES

The minutes of February 21 were accepted as revised. The minutes of March 14 were accepted as presented.

III. PROVOST REPORT

Dr. Arnold stated that the program alignment process is now in phase two: meeting with departments to work through next steps. There have been good, meaningful discussions. Phase three will be deciding what to add to grow our enrollment.

Strategic planning consultant Steve Meredith is on campus today, working with the Strategic Planning Committee. They are developing indicators and benchmarks that are meaningful. Each subcommittee will create action plans for each metric in the strategic plan.

A question was raised as to the data from the program alignment process. Vice Provost Sue Balter-Reitz stated that it would be a great idea to share the information with faculty in programs, as well as other faculty, to move forward with integration initiatives and perhaps stimulate new integration ideas.

Dr. Arnold noted that summer enrollment is down. We will need to have some discussions about what we offer in summer. Next year we will implement a new budgeting procedure. Colleges will control their budgets, not the Provost's Office.

IV. ITEMS – FIRST READING

Item 58 Revised General Education Learning Outcomes. Submitted by the Gen Ed Committee.

⇒ Motion by Paul Pope, seconded by Kelly Shumway to **approve Item 58 on first reading.**

Melinda Tilton, Co-Chair of the Gen Ed Committee, noted that they have been thrilled to receive so much feedback from chairs and faculty on the proposed outcomes. One outcome (Fine Arts point 3) will need a bit of revision, as an error was just noticed.

In the future the GEC would like to institute a policy requiring that syllabi for Gen Ed courses list not only the course learning outcomes, but also the Gen Ed learning outcomes.

⇒ Motion carried.

It was agreed second reading will be held after the Fine Arts outcome is revised.

Dr. Barron will work with Ms. Tilton to craft a policy requiring Gen Ed outcomes on syllabi.

V. DISCUSSION/ACTION ITEMS

A. Annual Review of Administrators by Faculty: Ad Hoc Committee

Jennifer Lynn reported that the Senate last evaluated administrators in the mid-1990s. The main issue with these evaluations was that the results were not made public and there was no way to address problems. It was also quite complicated and there was no set schedule of people/positions to be evaluated. Things just fizzled out. There have been some evaluations done since 2000, using the 360 evaluation model.

It was agreed that the committee will likely start as ad hoc before being formalized as a standing committee of the Senate. The group will be just four or five tenured faculty, from both campuses. We need to have faculty experienced in survey writing on the committee. It was also suggested that either an administrator sit on the committee, or the group should meet extensively with administrators to discuss job expectations and job descriptions, so that the results be useful to those evaluated. This will be a collaborative effort. The results of the surveys should not be presented as raw comments.

Members for the ad hoc committee can be nominated by a Senator, a Dean, or self-nominated after membership criteria is created. One member should be a Senator. Dr. Barron will work with Joy Honea, Associate Dean & Professor of Sociology, to create criteria for membership.

B. Response to NWCCU Revision of Accreditation Standards: Academic Freedom

Dr. Barron stated that the chair of the Bozeman faculty senate brought it to the Senate Chairs group that the proposed revised accreditation standards include no reference to academic freedom in Standard 2 (see attached). NWCCU is making an effort to tighten up the language in the standards so we have to meet fewer benchmarks and can write shorter reports. They are taking comments through the end of March, which is this weekend.

It was noted that academic freedom does not exist at MSUB because NWCCU has a policy or standard. The Board of Regents have a policy ensuring academic freedom for all units in the System. NWCCU wishes to ensure we follow policy; they do not ensure academic freedom.

Darlene Hert, Director of the Library, noted that the Library sent NWCCU just today a response to the proposed changes to the Standards related to the Library. Dr. Balter-Reitz noted that NWCCU need to hear from faculty on these changes. It was noted that the standards revisions have not been well publicized.

⇒ Motion by Vern Gagnon, seconded by Paul Pope to **send a version of the letter below to NWCCU.**

⇒ Motion carried with 1 abstention.

DRAFT

The Academic Senate of Montana State University Billings supports the inclusion of the existing standards (2.A.27-2.A.29) pertaining to Academic Freedom into the new draft standards for NWCCU for 2020. Explicit support for the ideals of academic freedom by NWCCU is important to ensure that faculty can participate fully and without restriction in a shared-governance structure. Removal of these standards in the DRAFT document poses a threat to faculty participation in decision making. Thus, the Academic Senate of MSU Billings strongly urges you to reintroduce the standards pertaining to academic freedom.

The meeting adjourned at 4:31 p.m.

rjrm

Current Standard:

Academic Freedom

2.A.27 The institution publishes and adheres to policies, approved by its governing board, regarding academic freedom and responsibility that protect its constituencies from inappropriate internal and external influences, pressures, and harassment.

2.A.28 Within the context of its mission, core themes, and values, the institution defines and actively promotes an environment that supports independent thought in the pursuit and dissemination of knowledge. It affirms the freedom of faculty, staff, administrators, and students to share their scholarship and reasoned conclusions with others. While the institution and individuals within the institution may hold to a particular personal, social, or religious philosophy, its constituencies are intellectually free to examine thought, reason, and perspectives of truth. Moreover, they allow others the freedom to do the same.

2.A.29 Individuals with teaching responsibilities present scholarship fairly, accurately, and objectively. Derivative scholarship acknowledges the source of intellectual property, and personal views, beliefs, and opinions are identified as such.

Proposed MSU Faculty Response:

We, the Faculty Senate of Montana State University, write to you with a request to amend the draft 2020 Standards for Accreditation to reintroduce standards pertaining to academic freedom and those that support institutional bodies and practices of shared governance. Academic freedom is the foundation of any institution that promises robust intellectual, artistic, and scientific inquiry and growth. Free thought is essential to a free society. Indeed, the Montana Board of Regents endorse the 1940 AAUP statement on the principles of academic freedom and tenure and this statement's language has been included by Faculty at Montana State University within their Faculty Handbook. The erasure of these standards poses a threat to faculty participation in decision making across the region. The inclusion of a shared-governance model that gives faculty important, though not exclusive, authority over academic matters is an essential component of academic freedom. The Faculty Senate of Montana State University strongly urge you to explicitly include faculty participation in the standards pertaining to institutional governance and reintroduce the standards pertaining to academic freedom.

Individual ways to comment:

- Website: <https://www.tfaforms.com/4719938>
- Email: standards@nwccu.org
- Email NWCCU Leadership:

Sonny Ramaswamy (Pres), sonny@nwccu.org,

Les Steele (Sr. VP), lsteel@nwccu.org,

Pamela Goad (Sr. VP), pgoad@nwccu.org,

Valerie W. Martinez (VP), vwmartinez@nwccu.org,

Mac Powell, mpowell@nwccu.org,

Ruth S. Bedford (Executive Assistant to the President) ruthb@nwccu.org