

**ACADEMIC SENATE MINUTES**

**DATE:** September 12, 2024

**PRESENT:** Suzette Nynas  
Josh Hill  
Debra Schoenfeld  
Susan Gregory  
John Pannell  
Paul Pope  
Sarah Keller  
Vikash Kumar (student)  
Tami Haaland (ex-officio)  
Vern Gagnon (ex-officio)  
Sue Balter-Reitz (ex-officio)  
Eileen Wright (ex-officio)

Matt Queen  
Jennifer Scroggins  
Heather Thompson-Bahm  
Kari Dahle-Huff  
Austin Bennett  
Melissa Boehm  
Lamiya Husen (student)  
Kurt Toenjes (ex-officio)  
Susan Gilbertz (ex-officio)  
Sep Eskandari (ex-officio)  
Leslie Weldon (ex-officio)

**ABSENT:** Kim Hayworth (ex-officio)\*  
\* *excused*

Sam Boerboom (ex-officio)

**GUESTS:** Daniel Charlton  
Connie Haan  
Don Larsen  
Cheri Johannes

Joann Stryker  
Kathleen Thatcher  
Alisa Batchelor  
Jana Marcette

**PRESIDING:** Suzette Nynas, Chair

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

**I. ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Board of Regents meet on campus next week. Please attend the opening remarks at 8:30 a.m. Wednesday, if you can. The Chancellor also asks that everyone wear their name badges and school colors.

A reminder to please complete the cybersecurity training.

Congratulations to Kathleen Thatcher for finalizing and submitting the PRFR Report to NWCCU!

## II. ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES

The minutes of April 18 and August 22 were accepted as presented.

## III. PROVOST & VICE CHANCELLOR REPORTS

### **Provost Report**

Dr. Eskandari welcomed the Senators back to another year. It's so exciting to have students on campus again.

He noted that the Chancellor will give a welcome at next week's BOR meeting, so please do attend.

There have been a few leadership changes in Academic Affairs:

- Melanie Reaves is the Interim Dean for COE for the 2024-2025 fiscal year.
- Jana Marcette is now Interim Director of Strategic Academic Initiatives. She will be leading a number of big, cross-functional projects.
- Austin Bennett is now Faculty Director of the University Honors Program. He will be maintaining and expanding the program, including City College students.
- Sam Boerboom is now the Faculty Director of Graduate Studies.

The search for the COE Dean will be launching soon. The City College Dean search is wrapping up and finalists will be announced soon.

Provost Eskandari noted there are many faculty funding opportunities upcoming. The Professional Development Grants application is now open. These grants really bring fresh ideas to the classroom. The CARE Grants and PTSE Grants will have deadlines soon. The Sabbatical application deadline will also be soon.

As for the budget, we will continue to invest in faculty lines that become tenured.

The Provost also congratulated Kathleen Thatcher on the PRFR Report. If you want to know what's happening at MSUB, read that report!

### **Vice Chancellor for Administration & Finance**

Ms. Weldon noted that Administration & Finance covers a number of areas, including Human Resources, Financial Services & Payroll, I.T., Facilities Services, Business Services, as well as contracted services for the campus store and dining.

There are many, many construction projects happening across both campuses. We have been approved by the legislature for a new roof for the P.E. Building, but that won't happen until next summer. We also have authorization for demolition of the Art Annex,

and approval from the BOR for temporary classrooms for art classes while we build a new building.

Last year Ms. Weldon had discussed negotiations with Intermountain Health for parking on campus, and that contract has still not been finalized.

Please do the cybersecurity training—we also get a discount on our insurance if everyone participates.

The RFP for campus food services will be going out, to begin new service in 2025. If you are interested in participating in this process, please let her know.

### **Vice Chancellor for Student Access & Success**

Dr. Hayworth could not attend today, but her report is attached to these minutes.

## **IV. OTHER REPORTS**

### **Faculty Data Scholars: Daniel Charlton and Connie Haan**

Joann Stryker, Director of Institutional Research, noted that NWCCU mentioned we have data but no one is using it. They began their work with the data for Academic Program Reviews, making it easier to understand and use.

Connie Haan noted they worked this past year to create a culture of data literacy. They put together a survey with meaningful, open-ended questions so they could learn what faculty need and how to use it.

Daniel Charlton noted they discussed major trends across campus, especially related to student-centered approaches. In partnership with the Center for Teaching & Learning, they hope to better our own practices but also be more targeted with those practices. The survey also took place during the budgeting process, so there was feedback about clarity and transparency, as well.

Ms. Haan noted that the faculty who did the survey really care about students. Not only do they want data to help their current students, but also to help those students before they even get into a faculty member's classroom.

Ms. Stryker noted that the faculty data guide is on the IR intranet page. In Spring 2025, they will have another round of faculty data scholars. They have been delayed because the federal government's implementation of the Financial Value Transparency and Gainful Employment took up much of the IR team's time this semester.

V. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

Title	Status	Received	Request Type
Library Committee Report 2023-2024	Added	8/30/2024	Report
Undergraduate Curriculum Committee Report 2023-2024	Added	8/30/2024	Report
Commencement Committee Report 2023-2024	Added	8/30/2024	Report
Request to Plan a Master of Science in Criminal Justice	Added	9/4/2024	RTP

⇒ The items were accepted by consensus.

VI. ACTION ITEMS

Title	Status	Received	Request Type
Banking Certificate Moratorium	Added	8/30/2024	Place a program on moratorium

⇒ Motion by Paul Pope, seconded by Matt Queen to **approve the Banking Certificate moratorium.**

It was noted that due to the economy in general, there have been fewer loans being written, and therefore demand for this program dropped off. There is one student still in this program, and they will be able to finish this semester.

The question was raised as to the campus requirements for certificates. It was noted there is no particular coursework required for a certificate, only that it be under 30 credits. However, Cheri Johannes, Registrar, noted that certificates that are not coupled with a degree program often cause issues with those students receiving financial aid. Further, “certificates of completion” are not transcribed or published to the clearing house. Only certificates that go through the Senate/OCHE process are published to the clearing house. Provost Eskandari also noted that we now do more research for viability, student demand, and workforce demand before new programs are implemented. Also, OCHE’s new policy specifies that, if a new program does not meet the enrollment goals set out in the paperwork, it is immediately placed into moratorium.

⇒ Motion carried.

VII. DISCUSSION/ACTION ITEMS

**A. Gen Ed Course Substitutions**

There are processes in place for both MSUB-started students and transfer students. Dr. Johannes noted that course substitutions for students who started at MSUB are fairly

simple and follow the CBA-mandated policy. For transfer students, they use TES, which is an electronic catalog system that includes most of the institutions in the U.S. Using TES, each transfer course is individually approved by a faculty member. We also honor block transfers, such as AA and AS degrees, as well as the MUS Core. The Common Course Numbering database also helps clarify transfer within the MUS.

Substituting courses is the faculty's decision. If a faculty advisor wants to substitute a different Gen Ed course, that faculty advisor must contact the Department Chair of the course being replaced. Advisors cannot substitute courses without Chair approval. Also, Gen Ed substitutions do not go to the Gen Ed Committee for approval.

### **B. Emeriti Policy Review**

The policy and the rights/privileges should be two separate documents. We also need clarification on what qualifies for "exemplary," especially for Lecturers. Now that Lecturers have ranks, that may need to be included in the policy as well. The eligibility section seems to have conflicting language, so it should be revised. We could certainly look at other universities' policies for guidance as well. Provost Eskandari noted that he can be a resource for what benefits we are able to offer emeriti faculty.

The Senate Executive Committee will take up this task.

## **VIII. OLD BUSINESS**

The question was raised about the re-naming of buildings, if there are any developments. Provost Eskandari noted that OCHE created a state-wide committee to discuss the issue, but there have been no updates he is aware of. He will follow up.

The meeting adjourned at 4:43 p.m.

rjrm

## Student Access and Success Academic Senate September 12, 2024 Update

### Enrollment

Census is September 24, 2024 and until that date, enrollment will remain a moving target. As of 9-11-24, overall student headcount is +147 but FTE is -2. Now that classes have started, student support areas, and likely some faculty, are working individually with students through the payment plan and confirming attendance process. Some students have been hampered by the late launch and changes in the FAFSA. The Office of Financial Aid and Scholarships along with Business Services will do all they can to work with students on an individual basis if the FAFSA Individualized Student Information Report (ISIR) is in process. Please direct students to Financial Aid, Business Services or TRIO for assistance.

### **Strategic Resource Alignment (SRA)**

In the spirit of SRA, over the summer Student Access and Success restructured two departments including the following areas. This restructuring eliminated two director-level roles and created on new Executive Director role.

#### **Office of Admissions**

To better align with higher education practice, MSUB transitioned the name of the Office of New Student Services to the Office of Admissions. Dr. Julie Pettitt is now the Executive Director of Admissions leading most activities and team members related to undergraduate recruitment (excluding international students) and admissions (application processing) for undergraduates. Graduate admissions processes will continue to be a partnership between the Office of Admissions and the Office of Graduate Studies. To ensure a seamless transition from admission to enrollment, the Office of Admissions collaborates with the Center for Engagement and other areas across campus to offer a dynamic and effective orientation experience for new undergraduate students.

Dr. Pettitt arrived at MSUB three years ago, and since then, has made significant contributions to the creation of the 2022-2027 Retention and Graduation Plan, launching the MT 10 Scholars Program, and leading New Student Services for the University and City College campuses for the last two years.

#### **Office of TRIO Programs**

To increase collaboration and unite efforts, all MSUB TRIO programs will be under the leadership of Executive Director for TRIO Programs, Laura Gittings-Carlson. Laura has served in this role on an interim basis since December 1, 2023.

Working with a dedicated team of highly talented, committed, and compassionate individuals, Laura directs the administrative, budgetary, and personnel operations of MSUB's five federally funded educational programs including TRIO Upward Bound (UB), TRIO Talent Search (TS), TRIO Educational Opportunity Centers (EOC), and both TRIO SSS offices on the University and City College campuses. In addition to TRIO, Laura will continue to co-lead Montana 10 on the University and City College campuses. Each year, these programs serve over 2000 individuals from middle school age on up with grants and funds totaling over \$2M per fiscal year. In addition to TRIO programs, in May 2024, Laura wrote a successful \$250,000 grant offered through the Department of Education to help increase the number of Montanan's residing in Eastern Montana completing the FAFSA between June-September 2024.

Laura joined MSUB in 2013 and has held several leadership roles in student support including Director of TRIO SSS Programs since 2018. Laura is known to be a tireless advocate for underrepresented individuals and a highly successful grant writer.

**Native American Achievement Center (NAAC) receives EmpowerEd Futures: Bridging the Native American Achievement Gap two-year grant.**

The EmpowerEd Futures: Bridging the Native American Achievement Gap grant. The NAAC wrote a successful grant aimed at offering MSUB the opportunity to host an Elder-in-Residence Program (EIRP) eight times during the 24-25 academic year. The EIRP enriches the educational experience for American Indian students by integrating cultural traditions. Throughout the academic year, the program fosters belonging, connection, and success through active engagement with respected Elders. By emphasizing language revitalization, addressing intergenerational trauma, and promoting well-being, the program bridges traditional knowledge with academic pursuits, creating a supportive environment that empowers students throughout their educational journey. See the NAAC webpage for the schedule and contact Dr. Elaine Westbrook if you would like to schedule an Elder as a guest lecturer or meeting.

Dr. Elaine Westbrook is the 24-25 NAAC Faculty Liaison. The mission of this position is to foster an inclusive and culturally enriched academic environment that prioritizes the success and well-being of Native students at MSUB. The Faculty Liaison role is sponsored through the EmpowerEd grant.

The EmpowerEd grant also allows for MSUB to locate a Native Student Financial Navigator, Marlynn Cloud, in the Financial Aid and Scholarships Office. Marlynn's focus is to assist Native students in accessing, maximizing, and stewarding the financial assistance available to them through Federal, Tribal, State, community, and MSUB resources.



## Report from the 2023–24 IR Faculty Data Scholars

Data gathered from faculty across both campuses, from all colleges and types of faculty as well as intervals of time at MSUB.

Several themes emerged from the faculty responses about what would promote greater faculty engagement with data:

- Ease of data accessibility
- Faculty training on data access and data literacy
- Greater in–depth information regarding student performance
- Budget and cost information

Data scholars recommendations from the faculty input:

- **Data accessibility improvements**
  - Improvement of organization of data information and sources—e.g., standardized institutional naming conventions
  - Greater ease of finding information with MSUB website and intranet
  - Implementation of a single sign–on data access wherever possible
- **More systematic approach to faculty training in tiers, in collaboration with IR and CTL, with regard to:**
  - Data sources
  - Access to data sources and subanalysis for decision–making and student support
  - Data utilization
  - Greater transparency with budget and finance information
  - Greater opportunities for current and future data systems to empower faculty to access and use data for improvement of student advising and success

**BOTTOM LINE:** Faculty expressed great interest in data use to enable them to provide improvement of student advising and success, as well as for instruction and curriculum improvements.

*The full 2023–24 IR Faculty Data Scholars Report can be found on IR intranet page within the Faculty Data Scholars topic: <https://www.msubillings.edu/intranet/ir/facultyDataScholars.htm>*

*A listing of MSUB data systems/applications can be found on IR intranet page within the Faculty Guide topic: <https://www.msubillings.edu/intranet/ir/facultyGuide.htm>*