

ACADEMIC SENATE MINUTES

DATE: February 5, 2026

PRESENT: Suzette Nynas
Joseph Bryan
Debra Schoenfeld
Mel Walker
John Pannell
Melissa Boehm
Tami Haaland (ex-officio)
Melanie Reaves (ex-officio)
Lee Vartanian (ex-officio)
Kim Hayworth (ex-officio)

Matt Queen
Jen Lynn
Heather Thompson-Bahm
Kari Dahle-Huff
Christine Whitlatch
Alexandra Slade (student)
Susan Gilbertz (ex-officio)
Vern Gagnon (ex-officio)
Leslie Weldon (ex-officio)
Eileen Wright (ex-officio)

ABSENT: Sue Balter-Reitz*
Kurt Toenjes (ex-officio)*
* *excused*

Elijah Sneigoski (student)
Sam Boerboom (ex-officio)

GUESTS: Christina Wulf
Joann Stryker

Kathleen Thatcher
Bre Griffin

PRESIDING: Suzette Nynas, Chair

Suzette Nynas called the meeting to order at 3:38 p.m. in the Chancellor's Conference Room.

I. ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Senate welcomed Joseph Bryan, who will be filling in as a representative for CLASS this semester.

The RSVP date for Faculty Excellence is February 13.

II. ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES

The minutes of January 22 were accepted as presented.

III. PROVOST & VICE CHANCELLOR REPORTS

Lee Vartanian, Provost & Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs

The Provost offered several shout-outs:

- Jennifer Lynn, Professor of History, facilitated a talk from the son of a holocaust survivor, Andrew Laszlo, Jr., last Tuesday.
- Precious McKenzie, Associate Director at the Academic Support Center, was elected to the board of Humanities Montana for a 3-year term.
- Jenna Jones, Instructor for City College Rad Tech program, was appointed to the Montana Board of Allied Health Care Professionals by Governor Gianforte. The Mayo Clinic also reached out to Ms. Jones regarding the quality of students graduated from the Rad Tech program, and requested more graduates be sent their way!

Dr. Vartanian mentioned that there has been an ongoing water leak at City College, but the cleanup is going well. He thanked those involved for their flexibility.

The Jazz Festival begins tomorrow, February 6.

Dr. Vartanian also sent out a message this week regarding law enforcement in classrooms.

Leslie Weldon, Vice Chancellor for Administration & Finance

Vice Chancellor Weldon noted that Business Services is preparing the tuition and fee tables for the new fiscal year for the Summer 2026 semester. Jacket Success training is coming for Spring. Administration & Finance is reviewing the structure of Facilities Services as they search for a new director. The budget workbooks will be out in March. April 14-15 is the Spring Wellcheck. The workers comp program has been moved back to the Montana State Fund.

Kim Hayworth, Vice Chancellor for Student Access & Success

Dr. Hayworth noted that RA applications are due this Friday. The housing application is also open. A reminder that the Golden Merit (note: each college determines their own nomination process through the Dean) and Outstanding Undergraduate Student Leadership, as well as other student leadership nominations are open through March 9. Summer registration opens February 17.

The Native American Achievement Center's Elder in Residence, Thomas Christian, will wrap up tomorrow. Next is Janice Wilson February 23-27.

City College will be holding their Spring Expos on February 19 and March 12.

Dr. Hayworth also gave a brief enrollment report.

- Headcount for Dual Enrollment is 1,285, which is an all-time high.
- MSUB total headcount is up 153 over last Spring.

- FTE is 2,615, which is up about 60 over last Spring.
- Fall to Spring retention is at 82.8%, which is up 4.9% from last year.

The Senate congratulated everyone on their efforts to increase retention.

IV. OTHER REPORTS

None

V. DISCUSSION/ACTION ITEMS

A. Edify Discussion

Guests Cheri Johannes, Registrar; Joann Stryker, Director of Institutional Research

Dr. Johannes noted that Edify is another product by the same company (EAB) that offers Navigate. Bozeman has chosen Edify to create a data warehouse. Just like Navigate, Edify can pull data from the LMS, Canvas. While the discussions are in early stages, we need to know what kinds of data should and should not be pulled from Canvas, since it is essentially a virtual version of the classroom. She and Joann Stryker are meeting with faculty unions as well as many other areas of campus to get feedback and create a map forward for Edify.

The question was raised as to who owns the data. Dr. Johannes noted that there are multi-page legal agreements confirming that the institution owns the data and there are guidelines for how it is used.

It was noted that nothing with Navigate is going to change. Some of that same data used in Navigate, as well as more data points, will flow to Edify. Any concerns can be directed to Dr. Johannes.

Separate from the Edify discussion, it was noted that there are definite problems with the Canvas email system. Students are not receiving emails faculty send through Canvas, so some faculty have refused to use the Canvas email. Instead, they are emailing students by using the class roster in Banner. There is clearly an issue with the Canvas email.

B. TCE Rollout for Fall

Matt Queen, Chair of the TCE Committee, noted they are working hard to make the process more official. They hope to get the call for course proposals out tomorrow, having those applications due February 20. The new application will require faculty to work with their Department Chair to pick a time for the offering. A course heat map is included as part of the application. The Committee has agreed to rollback the requirement that instructors teach a full 3 credits of their proposed course. The Committee will prioritize faculty who can teach 3 credits, but will be happy to review proposals for 1 or 2 credits. Finally, the application also asks for faculty to indicate they are willing to teach the course not only in 2026-27, but also in 2027-28.

The Committee will likely offer an additional section for Spring 2027—right now there are 3 sections for Spring 2026—mainly for student athletes who can't get the course in Fall. The Committee is continuing to discuss what to do about Dual Enrollment students who are completing an associate's degree, but will likely grant some exemptions. It was noted that a second online section may be needed in Spring as well.

It was noted that the course is already set up for assessment. The TCE Committee will work to assess the course as part of the Gen Ed program.

It was noted that Rita will create a DocuSign form which faculty will complete.

VI. OLD BUSINESS

Provost Vartanian's message this week basically boils down to always call University Police. Faculty and staff are not qualified to ascertain whether the officers have legal standing to be on campus, only University Police are able to. The message for faculty is to ask the officer to wait *outside* the classroom until University Police arrive.

The question was raised as to what happens when a City of Billings officer enters a classroom, which recently happened at City College. It was noted that University Police have a great relationship with City and County officers, but Chief of University Police Brandon Gatlin definitely wants to know about an officer on campus they were unaware of.

Further, faculty and staff need training for when officers appear on campus and *do not* politely wait while University Police come to the scene. That is what's currently happening with ICE officers. City College is also not regularly staffed by a University Police officer, so that may be a 20-minute wait. Even if we have great relationships with local law enforcement, that doesn't mean that ICE officers will honor those relationships. Faculty need training on "immigration safe zones" and everyone on campus should know their rights.

It was noted that, through the Native American Achievement Center, we could offer help and information on tribal IDs. Many Native Americans are now regularly carrying their tribal IDs across the country. Kim Hayworth said she would contact the Native American Achievement Center with this idea.

University Police Chief Brandon Gatlin will be asked to a future Senate meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 4:50 p.m.

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