

ACADEMIC SENATE MINUTES**DATE:** April 23, 2026

PRESENT:	Suzette Nynas	Matt Queen
	Joseph Bryan	Jen Lynn
	Heather Thompson-Bahm	Cody Dayley
	Christine Whitlatch	Melissa Boehm
	Sue Balter-Reitz	Alexandra Slade (student)
	Kurt Toenjes (ex-officio)	Tami Haaland (ex-officio)
	Susan Gilbertz (ex-officio)	Lee Vartanian (ex-officio)
	Eileen Wright (ex-officio)	
 ABSENT:	Debra Schoenfeld*	Mel Walker*
	Kari Dahle-Huff*	Melanie Reaves (ex-officio)
	Vern Gagnon (ex-officio)*	Leslie Weldon (ex-officio)*
	Kim Hayworth (ex-officio)*	Sam Boerboom (ex-officio)
	* <i>excused</i>	

GUESTS:	Cheri Johannes	Kathleen Thatcher
	Christina Wulf	Bre Griffin

PRESIDING: Suzette Nynas, Chair

Suzette Nynas called the meeting to order at 3:39 p.m. in the Chancellor's Conference Room.

I. ANNOUNCEMENTS

The CIO interviews are wrapping up today. There will be two Vice Chancellor for Administration & Finance candidates next week.

II. ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES

The minutes of March 19 were accepted as presented.

III. WELCOME NEW SENATORS

- Debra Schoenfeld, COB
- Kari Dahle-Huff, COE
- Cody Dayley, City College
- Joseph Bryan, CLASS

IV. ELECTION OF OFFICERS FOR 2026-2027

Secretary

⇒ Sue Balter-Reitz nominated Melissa Boehm for Secretary.

Dr. Boehm accepted. There were no other nominations.

⇒ Melissa Boehm was elected by unanimous consent.

Three Vice Chairs

Dr. Nynas noted that Paul Pope is on sabbatical, but nominated himself for Vice Chair.

⇒ Sue Balter-Reitz nominated Matt Queen for Vice Chair.

⇒ Jennifer Lynn nominated Sue Balter-Reitz for Vice Chair.

Dr. Queen and Dr. Balter-Reitz accepted. There were no other nominations.

⇒ Paul Pope, Matt Queen, and Sue Balter-Reitz were elected by unanimous consent.

V. PROVOST & VICE CHANCELLOR REPORTS

Vice Chancellors Weldon and Hayworth were unable to attend today's meeting. Their reports are attached to these minutes.

Lee Vartanian, Provost & Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs

Dr. Vartanian expressed his thanks for a great first year at MSUB. He offered several shout-outs:

- Kameron Nelson, Assistant Professor of Psychology, is President-Elect of the Montana Psychological Association.
- Dean Vern Gagnon has been appointed to the Montana Fish & Wildlife Commission by Governor Gianforte, from among 80 nominations.
- Chairsty Stewart invited Dr. Vartanian to her class where the students participated in an "escape room." The students had to solve math problems to get the combination for lock boxes.

Provost Vartanian also thanked those who participated in the Process Reimagine and Redesign. There will be a survey out to faculty soon, regarding advising. Over the summer, he would like to have a small group of faculty to work on advising with the PRR team.

VI. OTHER REPORTS

Cheri Johannes, Registrar, noted that along with the redesign of MyMSUB and rolling out Canvas, DegreeWorks will also be updated. MSUB was behind on Banner updates, and DegreeWorks updates follow Banner. The rollout of the DegreeWorks updates has not yet been decided among the four MSU campuses, but will be either this summer or fall. There will be added functions and it will look very different, but should work basically the same.

VII. DISCUSSION/ACTION ITEMS

Class 8 Dual credit Postsecondary Faculty Licensure

This item will be discussed in the future. Evidently, so many Class 8 licensure applications were submitted that the Office of Public Instruction (OPI) decided to completely revise the process. At this time, it appears that all applications have been deleted. Dr. Vartanian noted that any MSUB faculty who incurred costs related to fingerprinting will be taken care of. He hopes that OPI will move toward Provosts affirming the qualifications of faculty, rather than having all faculty apply for the Class 8 license.

Dr. Johannes thanked all the faculty who have applied. Under the current rules (which will likely be changed) high school students taking courses are not able to be awarded credit, not even elective credit, if the instructor does not have the appropriate licensure.

At this point, we wait to hear more.

MUS Program Review Metrics Update

It was noted that the 7-year program reviews required by OCHE were not very helpful for the Board of Regents/OCHE, and were often very inconsistent among the campuses in the system. Also, right now, several states are moving toward legislating enrollment floors for programs. OCHE is proposing to modify the current program review policy by changing the criteria for the 7-year program review and adding an annual program review that will be based on metrics for program viability.

Provost Vartanian noted that the current draft policy states that metrics (such as enrollment floors) that flag programs for review will be set by the Commissioner. The numbers are not built into the policy. Metrics will be developed by a task force this summer, and the 2026-27 academic year will be a pilot for the new review process using these metrics. Programs that are flagged will have a year-long process before any action

is taken. There are opportunities, if a program is flagged, to appeal. Appeals can include that a program is fundamental to a campus, or that the campus believes enrollment can be increased.

It was stated programs are under the purview of the Montana University System, to ensure that campus resources are not being unduly taxed by programs with low enrollment and graduation numbers. However, curriculum is the purview of the faculty.

Kathleen Thatcher, Director of Assessment & Accreditation, noted that our internal reviews are more than these annual reports, and incorporate meaningful conversations about what we want our programs to be. This will be a nice opportunity to combine efforts and create meaningful reports for ourselves, OCHE, and NWCCU.

VIII. NEW BUSINESS

Christine Whitlatch congratulated Alexandra Slade on her election as President of the Associated Students of Montana State University Billings.

The Senate thanked Jennifer Lynn for serving as interim Senator this semester.

Dean Kurt Toenjes noted that Matt Queen is doing several Atomic Circus shows over the next days, with new content added.

The meeting adjourned at 4:45 p.m.

rjrm

Good afternoon.

I will not be able to participate in the upcoming meeting. We have one of our CIO candidates on campus so I will be out at City College. Attached is an update from the Division of Administration and Finance. The other two attachments are from Business Services. Barb would like Academic Senate to be thinking about Fee Requests through the summer as the requests are due to Barb by October 1st. (Attached email to JLT.) Also, Business Services would like to share that MSUB is moving to a Service Fee for Tuition payments, starting August 10th. Attached is an email that went to students. Business Services placed notices on the web and in their statements that will be sent April – July.

Please let me know if you have any questions. Wishing you the best as the semester ends.

Cheers!

Leslie Weldon
Vice Chancellor for Administration and Finance
McMullen Hall Room 208
Billings, MT 59101
(406)657-2155

Afternoon JLT,

It is time to review the current inventory of student fees and, when appropriate and justified, request changes, additions and deletions for the next biennium. The Chancellor and Vice Chancellors should meet with their divisions to discuss fees prior to any submission. To accommodate the process and timeline, all requests for changes, additions or deletions to new or current student fee must be submitted to the Business Services Director no later than **October 1st, 2026**.

General guidelines for the Board of Regents (BOR) policy 940.12.1 can be found at <https://mus.edu/borpol/bor900/940-12-1.pdf> and <https://mus.edu/borpol/bor900/940-3.pdf>. Tuition and fees are approved by the BORs every other year for the biennium. Please take the time to review and analyze the fees currently being assessed and determine if updates or new fees are necessary. **All fees charged to students must be listed on the [tuition and mandatory fee tables](#) or in the [inventory of fees](#) (also attached in excel) and approved by the BOR. If fees are not listed on the inventory, they are not authorized.**

There are three categories of student fees.

The first category of fees is “Mandatory Fees”. These are fees that are charged to every student enrolled at MSU Billings.

The second category of fees is miscellaneous fees. These are fees that are charged to students based on use by students. Examples of such fees are testing fees, recreational fees, parking fees, etc.

The third category of fees is course fees. To qualify as a course fee, one of the following criteria must be met:

- Specialized activities or equipment charges, where the payment is made to a business.
- Field trips
- Study abroad programs
- Pass through of fees for certifications, insurance, etc.
- Laboratory consumables, excluding computer supplies and paper products
- Material used by students to create a product that becomes the students’ property after use in the course.

All [fee request forms](#) must be vetted and approved by the respective Vice Chancellor prior to submission. The form and supporting documentation must be submitted to the Business Services Director no later than **October 1st 2026**. Per BOR policy 940.12.1, ASMSUB will be sent notification of the proposed fee changes and provide formal presentation to ASMSUB Student Government. Final University approval will be provided by the Chancellor before being

submitted to the BOR. Any fee proposal for a new fee or to increase a current fee greater than 2% must be well justified and documented. Mandatory Fees are held strictly to an aggregated 3% increase, and the University may determine the need across the Mandatory Fees and adjust as needed. Tuition increases are determined for the MUS system as a whole.

If you or anyone on your team has questions contact barb.burows@msubillings.edu.

Expected Timeline

- University Request Forms Due Internally October 1st, 2026
- MSU Bozeman President & MSUB Chancellor Review December 2026-February 2027
- OCHE Review January-March 2027
- ASMSUB Notification & Presentation February 2027
- BOR Initial Meeting Review March-April 2027
- BOR Final Review/Approval May 2027
 - 1st Year Biennium Fees in effect Fall 2027-Spring 2028
 - 2nd year Biennium Fees in effect Summer 2028, Fall 2028, Spring 2029 & Summer 2029

**In response to MSU and OCHE review, the University Executive Team may adjust any requests made up until BOR approval in May 2027*

Barb Burows

Director Business Services

(o) 406.657.1710 (f) 406.657.2051

1500 University Drive

McMullen Hall

Billings, MT 59101

<https://www.msubillings.edu/boffice/>

Dear Students,

Beginning August 10, 2026, the University will be transitioning to a service-fee credit card processing model for student tuition payments.

Under this change:

- Payments made by credit/debit card will include a service fee, which will be paid by the cardholder at the time of payment.
- The service fee is assessed by the credit card processor and is separate from University charges.
- Alternative payment methods, such as ACH/e-check, wire, cash, or check, will continue to be available without a service fee.

This update allows the University to manage rising payment processing costs while continuing to offer secure and convenient payment options.

We encourage students and payers to review available payment methods in advance of the August transition.

Additional details and instructions will be available on the Student Accounts website (<https://www.msubillings.edu/boffice/students.htm>).

If you have questions, please contact Student Accounts at businessoffice@msubillings.edu or 406-657-2140.

Thank you for your understanding.

Student Accounts
Montana State University Billings

Kathy Kotecki
Dean of Student Engagement
Montana State University Billings
SUB 223
(406) 657-1696

Administration and Finance Division Updates

April 23, 2026

BOR Approvals

Art Building (Sculpture and Ceramic Studio)

- Board of Regents approved spending up to \$1.65 million on planning and design for the new building. The Foundation has raised \$3.4 million towards the building.
- RVU Lease approved for lab space

Business Services

- OBBB - Changes impacts Student Account process – collaborating with Financial Aid, Advising, and the rest of campus to address
- MSUB is moving to a Service Fee for Tuition payments starting August 10th
- Catering Update – Payments will be paid with PCards. Too often Business Services is chasing down payments and incurring late charges with Sodexo
- Preparation for Fall 2027 Student Fee Change Requests is underway. It's time for departments to begin planning any student fee change requests for Fall 2027. Please work with your respective Vice Chancellor from now through the summer to review potential changes and prepare your proposals. The formal collection and submission process for fee change requests will begin in late September or early October 2026. The student fee guidelines—including fee types, timelines, and the full process—are available on the Business Services Tuition page.

https://www.msubillings.edu/intranet/boffice/Fee_Guidelines.htm

Facilities

Construction Season

- Water Main Upgrade – 2nd phase of our water main project (1st phase completed in the fall of 24) will begin this May. Timelines will be shared once State A&E has selected vendor
- Working on RFQ for Motorcycle Safety Course at City College (this is funded by the legislature through Helena College)
- State A&E selected Cushing Terrell for Cisel Hall HVAC project (funded in the last legislative session coordinated in the LRBP process)
- Working with State A&E on elevator upgrades and roof upgrades (these will take several months and cross fiscal years)
- Installing and repairing sidewalks on the University Campus and the City College Campus
- Recent walkaround by State Insurance
 - Concerns about trees and tennis court

Parking

- Working with Layton/IH regarding additional parking opportunities on campus

Financial Services

Budget

- The Budget Office has moved from McMullen 212 to McMullen 308.
- Working on the Fiscal Year 27 budget development.

Finance

- Working on Fiscal Year 26 closing.

Payroll

- Payroll processing and payroll quarterlies.

Human Resources

- Annual enrollment begins April 27 – May 15.

Information Technology

- Two candidates for Executive Director of IT/CIO will be on campus this week. UCAM will send out schedule for the open forum and resumes.
- Questions for IT, reach out to the IT Service Desk at servicedesk@msubillings.edu
- As a reminder, Brett's responsibilities have been distributed among Leslie Weldon, Jared Kerr, Rick Whitaker, and Darrel Williams. If you encounter any issues or need assistance, please reach out to the IT Service Desk at servicedesk@msubillings.edu. They will either resolve the matter directly or route it to the appropriate person.

Suzette,

I also have a conflict due to a Process Reimagine and Redesign meeting and will not be able to attend this week's Academic Senate meeting. Attached is the SAS update and an additional attachment referenced in the update.

Thank you,

Kim

Kim Hayworth, Ph.D.

Vice Chancellor

Student Access and Success

(o) 406.657.2307 (m) 406.794.2349

ACADEMIC SENATE UPDATE
VICE CHANCELLOR FOR STUDENT ACCESS AND SUCCESS
SUBMITTED BY KIM HAYWORTH

April 23, 2026

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITY

Dare to Lead, May 18-19, in the Glacier Room, cost is \$400 for two-day workshop. Contact Kim Hayworth for more information.

ONE BIG BEAUTIFUL BILL (OB3) WORKSHOP

A virtual OB3 workshop will be held on Thursday, May 21 from 9-10 am. Reach out to Kim Hayworth if you would like to be invited. The workshop will be recorded.

MT 10 GOALS & STOLE'S GRADUATION LUNCHEON

MSUB will be celebrating City College and University Campus MT 10 graduates at a luncheon from 11:30-1:30 pm on April 30, 2026, in the Glacier Room. Contact Julie Pettitt if you would like to attend all or a portion of the celebration.

FINANCIAL AID

1200 students were notified of their fall 2026 **financial aid offers** on March 27, 2026. This is four days earlier than 2025! Announcing aid offers is a strategic recruitment and retention priority for the Office of Financial Aid and Scholarships. Well done, Team FA!

MONGOOSE TEXTING PLATFORM

Student Access and Success in collaboration with IT and approved by the Executive Team, has developed a set of Mongoose Platform Usage Guidelines (see attachment). These guidelines will help maintain best practice use of the texting platform as well as effectively steward the limited number of area user permissions. The platform offers the ability to send texts to prospective and current students. A Mongoose Workshop for new, prospective, and current users was held on April 15, 2026. Each college dean now has access to this texting platform that can be used to text prospective and current students from a PC.

ADMISSIONS

Spring Preview Day was Friday, March 27 on both City College and University Campuses. We welcomed over 300 prospective students and guests. THANK YOU to the entire campus community for rolling out the red carpet for our guests. Guests had over 30 sessions to “choose their own adventure” according to their interests and needs.

BPS Ninth Grade Day – on March 31, 2026, Admissions hosted the first of two BPS ninth grade days. Students enjoyed demos from Dr. Matt Queen and Dr. Dan Wilhem, drone demos,

and at City College they toured the Tech Building where faculty hosted demos from Rad Tech, business, and industry programs.

Also on March 31, 2026, City College hosted approximately 300 students and teachers in conjunction with **Future Health Professionals (HOSA) MT chapter**. Students participated in demos and tours of the City College health programs.

Fall 2026 Registration and Orientation dates are on the calendar and RSVP platforms are live!

NATIVE AMERICAN ACHIEVEMENT CENTER

The final **Elder in Residence program** was April 13-17, 2026. A big thank you to Dr. Cody Patton for his role as the NAAC faculty liaison for the 25-26 academic year.

2026 Governor's Tribal Relations Report, Call for Submissions:

MSU Billings is preparing its contribution to the 2026 Governor's Tribal Relations Report. This report highlights efforts supporting American Indian student success and strengthening relationships with tribal nations and will be shared with Governor Greg Gianforte, statewide leaders, and the Montana University System. Submissions should be limited to one paragraph (4–5 sentences) and focus on tribal partnerships, collaboration with tribal colleges or communities, and any laws, policies, or procedural changes impacting Native students. Contributors are asked to submit entries in a Word document (no PDFs), clearly labeled, and to include high-resolution photos with captions if available. Contact Sunny Day Real Bird if you would like to contribute to this annual report.

DISABILITY SUPPORT SERVICES

Disability Support Specialist, Greg Gerard, will retire from MSUB effective April 24, 2026. Director, Tracy McLuskie, will search for a new team member and have them in place by fall 2026. Please direct all needs to Tracy at tracy.mcluskie@msubillings.edu.

STUDENT HEALTH SERVICES

The next Mental Health First Aid training is scheduled for the afternoons of May 12-13, 2026, in SUB Beartooth. 1:00-5:00 pm both days. Email RSVP Jerr Girard if interested.

The search for a new SHS Counseling Director will be launched soon. Please feel free to reach out to Jerry Girard or Medical Director, Emilee Kidd if you have questions, comments, or feedback.

FALL 2026 vs FALL 2025 ENROLLMENT, April 17, 2026, WEEKLY REPORT

Early fall registration reports look positive. Thank you for reaching out to students before they are off for the summer to make sure they register for classes and sign up for housing.

Measure	Fall 2026	Fall 2025	Difference
Total Headcount	1570	1458	+112 (+7.7%)
Regular UG Headcount	1402	1271	+131 (+10.3%)
High School Headcount	61	70	-9 (-12.9%)
GR Headcount	107	117	-10 (-8.5%)

Mongoose Usage Guidelines

Mongoose is a texting platform that can be used to communicate with prospective and current students. Because MSUB has a limited number of access channels, below is brief set of guidelines for areas interested in requesting access. These guidelines are intended to help ensure the platform is used effectively, consistently, and in ways that meaningfully support student engagement, and align with institutional goals.

Best practices for Mongoose use:

- Texting should be used **regularly** (monthly or ongoing) as part of an engagement or communication strategy, not solely for one-time, semesterly, or bi-annual messages.
 - If an area does not need to send regular messages, temporary use of another areas' channel can be arranged for special messaging campaigns.
- Messages should be timely, relevant, and actionable, supporting nudges, reminders, and two-way communication rather than duplicating long-form email content.
- Texting should complement and reinforce—not replace—existing communication channels.
- Messages in the platform should be considered high priority and responses should be timely as it offers opportunity for two-way messaging vs a one-way notification.

Appropriate target audiences:

- Mongoose is best suited for communications with current students, prospective students, and other audiences who have opted in and benefit from short, time-sensitive outreach.
- Use with faculty or staff should be limited and intentional, aligned with operational or engagement needs.

Ownership and management expectations:

- Any department, college, administrative unit, or individual requesting a Mongoose texting line must designate a clearly identified owner responsible for:
 - Managing user access to the phone number
 - Ensuring staff are trained in appropriate use
 - Monitoring activity and maintaining continuity when staffing changes occur

- Importing contacts and training staff/faculty within the department how to use the platform

Clear ownership is essential to maintain message quality, compliance, and a positive recipient experience.