

ACADEMIC SENATE MINUTES**DATE:** September 17, 2026

PRESENT: Suzette Nynas
Joseph Bryan
Heather Thompson-Bahm
Kari Dahle-Huff
Paul Pope
Sue Balter-Reitz
Kurt Toenjes (ex-officio)
Susan Gilbertz (ex-officio)
Lee Vartanian (ex-officio)
Kim Hayworth (ex-officio)
Eileen Wright (ex-officio)

Matt Queen
Debra Schoenfeld
Mel Walker
Christine Whitlatch
Melissa Boehm
Alexandra Slade (student)
Tami Haaland (ex-officio)
Vern Gagnon (ex-officio)
Tia Brown (ex-officio)
Sam Boerboom (ex-officio)

ABSENT: Cody Dayley*
Ted Purinton (ex-officio)*
* *excused*

GUESTS: Christina Wulf
Bre Griffin
Joann Stryker

Cheri Johannes
Kathleen Thatcher

PRESIDING: Suzette Nynas, Chair

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

I. ANNOUNCEMENTS

The nomination end date for the CLASS Senator position has passed without being filled. Please encourage colleagues to nominate themselves.

II. ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES

The minutes of April 23 and August 26 were accepted as presented.

III. ELECTION OF CHAIR ELECT

The Chair Elect is chosen from the three vice chairs: Matt Queen, Paul Pope, and Sue Balter-Reitz.

⇒ Paul Pope nominated Sue Balter-Reitz.

There were no other nominations. Dr. Balter-Reitz was elected by unanimous consent.

IV. PROVOST & VICE CHANCELLOR REPORTS

Lee Vartanian, Provost & Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs

The Provost reported that the new BOR policy for percentage of credits in a BA and BS major has been approved and will go into effect next year. Changes will roll out with annual program reviews, which are on a seven-year cycle.

Dr. Vartanian noted that we have a number of approaches across campus for student-faculty research. We need more coordination and awareness of these efforts, as well as a discussion about paying students, as well as paying for their travel. Christine Whitlatch noted that the ASMSUB is seeing more requests for matching funds for student research.

Tia Brown, Vice Chancellor for Administration & Finance

Ms. Brown reported:

- The WellCheck is October 21-22.
- IT is partnering with the Provost's Office and the CTL for AI resources.
 - Also working on classroom tech upgrades and refreshing devices.
- Business Services notes that the fee request deadline is October 1.
 - We are required by OCHE to limit liability, so P-card holders have had their credit limit reduced. Upcoming travel warrants a request for a temporary lift of that limit.
- Financial Services will offer Jacket Success training October 20-21.
 - The BOR will approve our budget next week.
- Facilities reports that the water main project is almost finished, as well as the MSUB Seal mounted in the sidewalk north of the clocktower building.

Kim Hayworth, Vice Chancellor for Student Access & Success

Dr. Hayworth thanked the faculty for participating in the kick off and welcome week activities, as well as the workshops offered on One Big Beautiful Bill and from Disability Support Services.

Dr. Hayworth noted that our TRiO programs have been funded for another five years. They annually serve 800 individuals from 19 counties in Montana. However, the Talent Search program was not funded and is currently being sunsetted. The Talent Search staff are being retained and moved to other programs.

Next Tuesday, September 22, will be the College & Career Fair with hundreds of local high school students coming to campus.

Enrollment is up 1.4%, not including Dual Enrollment, as of last Friday. Census day is September 29.

Dr. Hayworth thanked faculty for continuing to use the Navigate alerts. Please keep sending those in, especially for missing students who are registered for a course.

V. ITEMS FOR APPROVAL

Item 1		
Earth Science Minor	Deleted	9/10/2026

⇒ Motion by Paul Pope, seconded by Matt Queen to **approve Item 1.**

It was noted that the programs are not fully inactivated until we receive OCHE approval.

⇒ Motion carried.

Item 2		
Psychology Bachelor of Arts Degree	Deleted	9/10/2026

⇒ Motion by Sue Balter-Reitz, seconded by Paul Pope to **approve Item 2.**

⇒ Motion carried.

Item 3		
Programs on Moratorium which will reach 3-year mark this year (26-27)	Added	9/10/2026

⇒ Motion by Paul Pope, seconded by Matt Queen to **approve Item 3.**

It was noted that this should have been an information item. Nothing is being deleted or placed on moratorium; this is only a notice.

⇒ Motion carried.

Group 4		
Graduate Committee Report 2025-2026	Added	9/9/2026
UCC Report 2025-2026	Added	9/9/2026
Commencement Committee Report 2025-2026	Added	9/9/2026
GEC Report 2025-2026	Added	9/9/2026
Honors Curriculum Committee Report 2025-2026	Added	9/9/2026

Library Committee Report 2025-2026	Added	9/9/2026
Academic Standards & Scholastic Standing Committee Report 2025-2026	Added	9/9/2026

⇒ Motion by Christine Whitlatch, seconded by Matt Queen to **approve Group 4.**

The question was raised as to the notification strategies used when the Library makes the decision to end a subscription to a database. Eileen Wright, Director of the Library, noted that cost increases for databases, often 20% or more, happen at any time throughout the year. They make an effort to contact regular users of databases to offer alternatives when possible, and alternatives are often available. However, sometimes users are missed. Provost Vartanian noted that his office can assist with emails to all faculty about Library database changes.

It was noted that some reports from committees were quite short. The bylaws should be updated to include criteria for these reports.

⇒ Motion carried.

VI. DISCUSSION/ACTION ITEMS

A. OCHE Annual Review Process

Over the summer OCHE crafted this process. The metrics for “flagging” a program were released in July. Then, in August, we received our first report of flagged programs, for this first, test year. We will be offering feedback to OCHE on the process. We have six programs flagged and we have until September 30 to petition to have those flags re-evaluated because of inconsistent data or relation to the core areas served by the institution. Then, we must report plans for the non-petitioned programs by January. Kathleen Thatcher, OCHE Liaison, noted that she has feedback from MSUB to offer at a BOR meeting next week.

B. BAS & BSLS Review

Since these programs do not belong to one department or college, the Senate will be doing the Academic Program Review, starting in October. Suzette Nynas, Sue Balter-Reitz, and Heather Thompson-Bahm will be working on this project. The Provost will work with the Deans to determine which Dean will assist with these reviews.

It was noted that the BAS is one of the programs red-flagged by OCHE. We will petition to exclude it since it is a degree completion program. It was noted that the Deans will be asked to write that exemption as well as the Action Plan for both the BAS and BSLS.

C. Catalog Clean Up of Courses Not Offered in 6 Years

The Senate will request a report of courses not offered in six years, hopefully get courses cleaned up.

D. Graduate Courses for Credentialing Dual Enrollment Educators

The Senate will be putting a hold on any new proposals for graduate courses intended for instructors of Dual Enrollment courses.

E. Dual Enrollment Subcommittee of Academic Senate

Before any new graduate course intended for instructors of Dual Enrollment can be approved, the Senate will create a new standing committee for Dual Enrollment. Dr. Nynas will draft bylaws for the group with representation from each College and some at large positions, perhaps from high-volume Dual Enrollment areas like math and communication. Precious McKenzie, Associate Dean at City College, will be an ex-officio member, along with Assessment & Accreditation, the Registrar's Office, and Graduate Studies. Institutional Research will also be included as needed.

F. Proposing New Graduate Courses Policy

A new policy barring new graduate courses that are not associated with a program has been considered. However, many 500-level 90s courses already exist, and have been used for some time as Dual Enrollment courses, as well as other uses.

VIII. NEW BUSINESS

AP Scores

Apparently, OCHE has worked out credit equivalencies for AP high school courses and college credit for the whole system. This has led to incoming students intending to skip or get credit for the first year of some programs.

Cheri Johannes, Registrar, noted that OCHE put out these credit equivalencies because the K-12 schools needed them for STARS Act funding. There is a graduated credit system, but the University is still the decision-maker for what credit students receive for their work.

The meeting adjourned at 5:01 p.m.

rjrm