

Montana Tech Faculty Senate Meeting
Wed March 25, 2015
3-5pm, Pintler (SUB)

Call to Order: Chad Okrusch

Roll Call: Chad Okrusch

Senate members present:

Chad Okrusch, Larry Hunter, Miriam Young, Conor Cote, Amy Kuenzi, Rick Rossi, Rita Spear, Bill Drury, Vicki Petritz, Gretchen Geller, James Rose, Sue Schrader, Celia Schahczenski, Courtney Young, Julie Hart

Senate members absent:

Scott Rosenthal, Bill Ryan, Glenn Shaw, Tim Kober, Rhonda Coguill, Chris Danielson, Katie Hailer

Guests

Doug Abbott (Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, VCAA)
Matt Egloff

- Review and approval of the January meeting minutes
- Motion to approve: Larry Hunter; Second: Miriam Young; approved unanimously

I. Ongoing Business & Reports

a. Core Retention Plan Vote

- At the last Faculty Senate meeting the CORE retention plan was brought to Senate by Dr. Vath for review and response. Senate agreed to respond at this meeting.
- Chad said that the Retention Committee responded to Scott Rosenthal's suggestion last meeting to the change order of the fiscal benefits section in the report. Courtney Young thought the report was well laid out and prepared. Sue Schrader asked if anyone had heard any pushback. Chad Okrusch mentioned there was some concern about stopping late registration, but many faculty members felt that this would be a positive change. Overall support for the retention plan.
- Motion to make a statement of support for the CORE retention plan as presented: Courtney Young; Second: Larry Hunter; approved unanimously.

b. Q&A with VC Abbott Regarding MSU's Thwarting of Montana Tech's Civil and Mechanical Engineering Programs at the Board of Regents Meeting

- Vice Chancellor Abbott and Chancellor Blacketter were invited to meet with the Faculty Senate to answer questions regarding this issue. Courtney Young and Larry Hunter prepared questions.
- Larry asked if there was a timeline as Provost Potvin's letter indicated that there was none. Doug said that this starts with the five year journey to approve the MatSci PhD. program. There may be an opinion that Montana Tech should be satisfied that it was able to approve that program. However, the Civil and Mechanical Eng. degrees were brought forward during that same time. This proposal has been part of Montana Tech's degree planning agenda for the past 2-3 years. The final proposal was completed six months ago. Montana Tech was initially asked to hold off by President Engstrom, but after some lobbying he was on board. After the proposal was submitted, MSU Provost Martha Potvin objected during a phone call. Subsequently her email, which included factual errors, followed. This was the email that was shown to the Faculty Senate last meeting. Two days later the degrees were pulled from the agenda for the Board of Regents meeting. Provost Potvin also objected to the new UM Neuroscience degree during that phone call, but that item was not pulled from the agenda. Today Chancellor Blacketter is meeting with President Engstrom, Commissioner Christians, and the deans of the UM affiliate schools. The Civil and Mech Eng. programs are primary items for discussion at the meeting. Doug expects this meeting to go favorably and hopes that a meeting with President Engstrom, Chancellor Blacketter and President Cruzado will follow.
- Larry asked if Martha Potvin was the only objectioner. Doug said there is general support from the Eng. Faculty and Deans at MSU. However, the Provost and the higher Administration appear to be against it.
- James Rose asked Doug if he had any sense they might object. Doug said he thought it was a possibility. Of the other Montana Tech proposals on the table, the Civil and Mechanical programs were the most contentious. Doug has reached out to Provost Potvin regarding MSU's needs from Montana Tech, but has yet to receive a reply.
- Larry asked who made the decision to pull the proposal from the agenda. Doug said that the BOR meetings are typically not contentious, so it was probably removed because it would be contentious. However, it is Chancellor Blacketter and Doug's priority to it bring back for discussion at the May BOR meeting.
- Miriam Young suggested that the student voice and opinion was being lost in this debate and there was agreement from other members of the Senate on this point.

- Larry asked if there would be any repercussions for the factual errors presented in the email. Doug said MSU has yet to see his response to the email so that is unclear.
- Courtney asked if part of the concern from MSU was the fear that competition would cause them to lose students and therefore performance-based funding. Matt Egloff suggested that competition makes programs stronger.
- Larry asked Doug if the Faculty Senate could view Doug's response. Doug's letter was passed around for the Faculty Senate to review during the meeting.
- Gretchen Gellar asked if there was any sense that MSU was looking to bargain. Doug replied that MSU has an Environmental Eng. option under their Civil Eng. major. MSU may be seeking to pursue a stand-alone Env. Eng. program. Doug asked Bill Drury if he would be concerned about a stand-alone Env. Eng. Program at MSU. Bill said he wouldn't personally object because he doubts Montana Tech's enrollment would be greatly effected due to the differences between our programs and students and MSU's.
- Doug asked the Faculty Senate to stay tuned. Unclear what the plan would be if MSU sticks to their guns. Doug and Chancellor Blacketter may have to make the case to the Board to let it go to a contested vote.
- Chad asked how the Faculty Senate should respond. Doug Abbott suggested that the Faculty Senate keep the idea of a strongly worded letter in its back pocket. It could be a future tool to push the proposal forward, but the Senate should wait to hear if the proposal will be considered at the May BOR meeting first.

c. FOSS Report Update

- Chad met with Chancellor Blacketter and provided him the complete data from the Faculty Opinion & Satisfaction Survey. Chad explained the purposes, aims and methodology, as well as a summarized list of key findings from the Faculty Senate. The meeting was productive and the Chancellor took the suggestions seriously. Next Chad will schedule meetings with other key subjects of the survey.
- Chad is compiling a final report for faculty & interested public (40% complete). The Faculty Senate will present President Engstrom with the complete survey responses on Monday, March 30th.
- Chad presented a new plan for handling the survey data: (a) export data and strip-out information that might allow identification of people with their responses; (b) delete all data from existing Survey Monkey so that the survey can be used next year.
- Chad was asked about the response rate for the survey. The overall response rate was 81 faculty members. Last year there were 55 responses. There was a good distribution between schools and departments, including Highlands, as

well as between tenured and non-tenured faculty. There was a low response rate from non-instructional faculty.

- Chad asked how the data should be presented to the rest of the faculty. Celia Schahczenski said that last year the results were presented at the instructional faculty meeting. Celia posted the edited comments on the website. Chad asked Conor Cote to help him review the comments. Any patterns that arise will be presented in the executive summary.

d. President Engstrom's Visit; Monday March 30, 1:45-2:30pm; **Copper Lounge**

- Chad asked all Faculty Senate members to make an effort to attend, as this is an opportunity to convey to President Engstrom what is important to the faculty.
- Matt asked if there was any concern that UM's financial issues will have an effect on Montana Tech. Montana Tech is growing but MUS as a whole is losing money. Doug said that the legislature gives the Commissioner's Office a budget, which is divided between the UM and MSU systems. There is a possibility that the division will favor MSU this year and that could filter down. However there is a formula for allocating funds among the UM units, and he is not aware of any plans by UM to try to balance the budget on Montana Tech's back.
- Chad said he will provide Engstrom a single page white sheet summarizing the results and findings of the survey.

e. Spring Semester Survey

- Chad reminded the Senate that last year the Senate sent out a follow up survey for faculty in the Spring. How should the Senate proceed this year?
- Julie Hart replied that faculty is surveyed out. Last year there were questions that needed verification or to be followed up on and that is why the second survey was distributed. Chad agreed that this year the fall survey was constructed to try to address these issues. The Senate consensus was that a spring survey would not be necessary.
- Rick Rossi suggested that next year the Senate send out the survey in the spring rather than the fall, so that faculty have a whole academic year to draw from. Celia suggested the middle of the spring in order to leave enough time to analyze and respond to the results.

f. Spring Instructional Faculty Meeting

- The Faculty Senate needs to determine the agenda the Spring Instructional Faculty Meeting. The FOSS results will be presented, both edited as a presentation as well as the full data. Plan to report on the Faculty Senate's progress over the past year. Faculty Senate now meets for two hours in the afternoon. Overall this change has been positive.

- Rick asked how the Chancellor responded to the FOSS results. Chad said that he pointed out the disparity between tenured and non-tenured faculty to the Chancellor and that there was fairly even demographic distribution. The Chancellor didn't mention anything that he was specifically concerned about. Chad hammered emphasized the concerns about lack of communication and transparency, fear of retribution, and shared governance. Chancellor Blacketter said he would like to see more investment and action from the Faculty Senate. The Chancellor said he would have welcomed a strong letter regarding the fate of the Civil and Mechanical Eng. Programs, and that he is supportive of a stronger faculty voice.
- Larry suggested that the Faculty Senate draft a letter to address the errors in Provost Potvin's letter in case the issue is not resolved at the May Board of Regents meeting. Julie Hart acknowledged that some the factual errors were addressed in Doug Abbott's letter, specifically the fact that the Elec. Eng. degree was not objected to. Matt said that the Faculty Senate needs to be sure that any response sent is factually sound. Larry, Matt and Courtney will draft a response and circulate it for the Faculty Senate to review for the next meeting. This way, if the proposal not on the May agenda, the Faculty Senate will have a response prepared. James said that we should also bring the issue up with President Engstrom. Chad will send an email soliciting thoughts about what to discuss with President Engstrom.
- An open discussion of the efficacy of the Faculty Senate followed. Rick said that the Senate must focus on the needs of the faculty, and hold open faculty meetings with open votes. Celia suggested that action items be typed up and ready to go out to constituents immediately following meetings. There needs to be better communication with minutes/new agenda items posted on the website (at least in draft form) following the meetings. Courtney mentioned that not all departments are represented due to lack of participation/low attendance from some department representatives. Several senators expressed that the Faculty Senate needs to communicate better with constituents and meet more often in order to be effective. Sue mentioned that even when the Senate puts out a statement to faculty, it is a not priority because there is a sense among the rest of the faculty that we are not effective. Rick expressed the need for open faculty meetings, along with open votes on important issues. In the past, the Chancellor and Vice Chancellor attended and were given the opportunity to respond to faculty concerns and questions. One of the powers of the Faculty Senate is to call general meetings of the faculty. Calling meetings is effective, brings up different perspectives, and allows for lively debate. Chad supported this idea and suggested that at the Spring Instructional Faculty Meeting the Senate call a vote on an issue important to the faculty.

Rick said that faculty should be asking senators questions, and setting the agenda of what the Senate should address, and this type of feedback should be solicited at the meeting.

- Chad asked for suggestions for the meeting time and place. Celia suggested that the meeting take place before that last Senate meeting so that the Senate can follow up. Courtney suggested a Friday in coordination with TGIF might draw people. Several senators said that it would be difficult to get a good turnout on a Friday.
- The Senate decided to hold the Spring Instructional Faculty meeting at 3pm on Wednesday April 22nd and push the last Senate meeting of the year to the following week on April 29th.
- At the Instructional Faculty meeting the faculty will approve graduates, emeritus status, and honorary PhDs. Will present the results of the FOSS. Will invite the Chancellor and Vice Chancellor to attend.

g. Final Senate Meeting

- i. April 29th, 3pm-5pm
- ii. The Senate will reconcile the roster, nominate and elect next year's officers, discuss CRC and Graduate council items, and respond to issues brought up at the Spring Instruction Faculty meeting.

II. Adjourn

- a. Motion to adjourn: Celia; Second: Miriam;
- b. Meeting adjourned.