Montana Tech Faculty Senate Meeting
Friday March 24th, 2017
Pinter Room - noon-1:30pm

Senators present: Tony Patrick, Atish Mitra, Vicki Petritz, Abhishek Choudhury, John Getty, Conor Cote, Scott Risser, Miriam Young, Laura Young, Brian Kukay, Glen Southergill, Tim Kober, Stella Capoccia, Bill Gleason

Guests: Jerry Downey, Matt Egloff, Doug Abbott

Welcome & Minutes

I. Welcome and Minutes
   I. Found online at http://www.mtech.edu/about/facultysenate/minutes/index.htm
   II. *Motion to approve minutes without amendment.*
   III. *Motion passed.*

Action Items

II. Recommendation from the Senate Seat sub-committee for revising Article III of the Senate Bylaws – Senator Cote chair
   I. The Senate Seat sub-committee was tasked with reviewing current Senate representation outlined in Article III of the Senate Bylaws in light of a request last semester from the General Studies department of Highlands College for Senate representation.
   II. After discussion with the Highlands College departments, the committee recommends removing the "Other Programs" seat from the Senate Bylaws under Highlands College and adding both "Health Programs" and "General Studies." This will increase the total Senate seats by a net of 1 to a total of 26.
   III. Suggestion to add more seats for Research Faculty. Currently there are two seats for Research Faculty. The bylaws do not technically state where these seats come from, but traditionally they have come from MBMG and CAMP. The CAMP seat is currently vacant. The Senate Seats sub-committee will look into filling this seat for next year.
   IV. *Motion to bring this amendment to Article III of the Senate Bylaws (removing "Other Programs" under Highlands College and adding seats for "Health Programs" and "General Studies") to the Full Faculty to vote on at the next Full Faculty meeting.*
   V. *Motion passed.*

Informational Items

III. The NWCCU Accreditation visit (April 18th-20th)
   I. Doug Abbott said accreditors will hold an open meeting for all faculty as well as a separate meeting with the Faculty Senate. These meetings still need to be scheduled but will likely occur Tuesday or Wednesday in the afternoon. The Senate suggested 2pm on Wednesday as the best meeting time for officers.

IV. New Building Display Proposal from Matt Egloff

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I. Matt Egloff presented a proposal to move older equipment to display in the lobby of the new Natural Resource Research Center (NRRC) building. These displays would be much like the equipment currently on display in the new NorthWest Energy building.

II. Specifically, Matt Egloff proposed moving the Tinius Olsen machine, which still works and is currently in the Science & Engineering Building, to the new building. Matt presented pictures of the machine and explained its history and use. It is one of only six in the world that still operate.

III. The Senate supported this proposal and asked if any action was needed from the Senate. Matt Egloff said that the Foundation will be asked to fund this proposal in a few weeks and asks that the faculty support this request.

<div style="background:black;color:white;text-align:right;font-weight:bold;">Discussion Items</div>

V. Response from UM Legal Counsel on proposed Limited English Proficiency (LEP) resolution

    I. Abhishek Choudhury reviewed questions he prepared in response to the UM Legal Counsel's advice about the LEP resolution that was proposed and tabled at the last Senate meeting:

        i. What is the metric for determining Limited English Language deficiency? There are currently no specific metrics to determine LEP.

        ii. Are students required to take ESL courses if they come from a non-English speaking background? Doug Abbott clarified that it is not a requirement for Montana Tech students from a non-English speaking background to take an ESL course upon admittance, though many choose to do so.

        iii. Students must meet TOEFL, but several senators felt the TOEFL is a poor test of English proficiency.

        iv. What prevents students from faking LEP status? Even if LEP status is determined, what are the expectations for accommodating students?

        v. Are the accommodations up to each instructor? This is the current practice.

        vi. If subjective, can the student force another instructor to provide the same accommodation if they received in a different class? Several senators said no, just as individual test requirements in one class don't transfer to another.

        vii. If a student is LEP, then why are instructors being made aware of it only when a test comes up? Several senators expressed that students should have already made the instructor aware of the issue prior to test. Suggestions for handling this included a policy on the syllabus indicating that students must make the instructor aware of LEP at the start of the semester.

        viii. The Senate Chair summarized the issue at hand: Currently there is no existing LEP policy on record at Montana Tech. What, if anything does the Senate want to do about this fact in light of the UM legal counsel's response? In general, there seems to be a need for more education on this topic, given the number of open questions.

        ix. Miriam Young shared an example from her experience and indicated there are no formal guidelines for LEP and therefore it is up to the individual instructor and student to decide on the details.

        x. Senators discussed whether LEP is considered a disability and therefore subject to the same scrutiny.

        xi. Several senators expressed concern about the practical details of handling these types of requests.

xii. Doug Abbott clarified that LEP is not considered a disability. Essentially LEP is considered an educational barrier, and faculty may work with students to make reasonable efforts to remove this barrier. These efforts will vary by course. He offered to provide the contact information of the head of the English Language Institute in Missoula, who may be able to provide the Senate and faculty practical guidance for how to handle these types of issues.

VI. Senate Committee on Course Evaluations update – Senator Southergill chair

    I. The Senate sub-committee on Course Evaluations (Glen Southergill, Brian Kukay, Abhishek Choudhury) invited Jerry Downey (former Senate chair) to summarize previous work done in 2013-14 towards revising Course Evaluations.

    II. Jerry Downey presented the revised evaluation form previously proposed to the current Senate. Glen Southergill passed out additional comments made by the Director of Student Success Carrie Vath.

    III. Abhishek Choudhury said the Jennifer Simon and Campus Technology Services said would be able to implement this new form electronically. Students could also complete the form on their phone during class time.

    IV. Brian Kukay presented a suggested workflow for a shift in timing and focus of course evaluations. Rather than a summative approach as is currently practiced, with evaluations happening at the end of the semester, the committee suggests sending an anonymous survey to students early to the middle of the semester. This could be done in parallel with SGIDs. Faculty would receive feedback near the middle of semester, and end of semester evaluations would specifically address the effectiveness of actions taken in response to the earlier feedback. This would allow instructors to adjust courses based on feedback during the semester, rather than waiting a full year to make changes the next time the course is taught.

    V. The Senate expressed general support for the updated evaluation form and revised timeline.

    VI. Miriam Young suggested adding a question about the course textbook and/or learning materials, i.e. were they helpful?

    VII. Jerry Downey noted that the new form allows for the addition of up to ten departmental questions for increased customization.

    VIII. Stella Capoccia suggested revising the form structure to reflect the evolution of course processes. For example, keeping self-reflective questions, such as expected grade, anticipated grade, anticipated outcomes, etc. together.

    IX. Bill Gleason suggested differentiating questions related to evaluation vs. course improvement, and adding more structure to the questions.

    X. The committee asked senators to take this proposal back to departments, and talk to colleagues. Bringing feedback to the next meeting, the Senate will discuss actions going forward.

VII. 2017 Faculty Satisfaction Survey

    I. Discussion of faculty survey. No suggestions were given about changing the survey from last year.

    II. Several senators expressed concern about the low response rate, how can that be improved? Some senators suggested that faculty are wary that their responses could be tracked back to them.

III.   Suggestion to use a paper form, having each senator collect and destroy responses for their department. Several senators suggested this could decrease anonymity rather than increase it. Suggestion to contact a third party to administrate survey.

IV.   Scott Risser expressed that Qualtics is about as secure as we could hope to achieve. He is the only person with a login to the survey results.

V.   Given the low response rate, is the survey needed? Several senators expressed yes, as in the past some changes have been made directly in response to the survey.

VI.   Bill Gleason suggested distributing the survey at the Full Faculty meeting, given that response rates are low electronically.

VII.   Scott Risser asked senators to ask their departments for feedback about the Faculty Satisfaction survey and bring it to the next meeting in two weeks. A final plan for this year's survey will need to be determined by then.

VIII.   Adjourn

I.   Motion to adjourn. Meeting adjourned.