

Montana Tech Faculty Senate
Meeting Minutes
October 1st, 2025 • Mill 201 • 2:00 p.m.

Senators Present: Scott Risser, Scott Juskiewicz, Janet Cornish, Foued Badrouchi, Brahma Pramanik, Dave Gilkey, Andrew Traut, Chris Roos, Matt Egloff, Charie Faught, Courtney Young, Atish Mitra, Glen Southergill, Bryce Hill, Sebastian Perduss, Doug Galarus and Alan English. Guests attending the meeting included Chancellor Johnny MacLean, Dr. Hilary Risser and Provost Elgrin.

I. Welcome and Approval of the Minutes – The meeting commenced at 2:00 p.m. and a quorum was established. Senator Risser reminded all who were present that the Faculty Senate was open to all and welcomed all ideas put forth. While the Senate is not a consensus body and we do not always agree on individual items, we always maintain our professionalism. Senator Gilkey moved, and Senator Traut seconded a motion to approve the minutes of the September 17th, 2025 meeting. The motion carried.

II. Policy review

- a. Formulation and Issuance of University Policies
- b. Hazing
- c. Student Code of Conduct

These policies were included as part of the meeting agenda. Senator Southergill moved, and Senator Perduss seconded a motion to adopt the policies as presented and submit them to the Chancellor's Cabinet. The motion carried.

III. Curriculum Review Process – Dr. Hilary Risser, who is Montana Tech's liaison with the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU), which is the accrediting agency for institutions of higher learning in our region, presented the following:

The NWCCU has revised its policies regarding programmatic additions and changes Dr. Risser explained how the forms pertaining to these change requests were to be completed, acknowledging that this process was still being refined and that she would be happy to provide additional assistance to faculty members. Adequate time should be allotted for any changes that would require catalogue updates. Changes presented to the NWCCU take approximately 60 days to process. This is in addition to any prior approvals required by the Faculty Senate and the Office of the Commission of Higher Education. The NWCCU Accreditation team is not available during April and October of each year, when the team is traveling to campuses across the region.

Dr. Risser also discussed the Curriculum Review form types, which fall into three categories.

- a. Course level requests
- b. Program level requests – This type of request must go the Board of Regents for approval and should be made no later than February 11, 2026 for this academic year.

c. Ad Hoc requests (primarily editorial and name changing requests)

The specific forms were part of the agenda for this meeting and Dr. Risser asked that everyone use the forms electronically, rather than downloading and printing them instead. The electronic version enables the use of links and embedded explanations.

IV. Feedback on Montana Tech Culture Statement – Chancellor MacLean expressed his interest in learning how members of the Faculty Senate responded to the draft Culture Statement presented at our September 3rd, 2025 meeting and sought our input.

Senator Traut asked how the statement will be used. Chancellor MacLean responded that it would be used to align our efforts when interacting with each other, to avoid differing ideas as to how we interact. There should be a shared view/common understanding of how we communicate and that it is important that we work together to foster this culture. The statement will likely appear on the Chancellor's website and be made available on handouts to campus groups and organizations. The statement expresses an over-arching concept which might have an action plan beneath it. The Chancellor further suggested that the Faculty Senate might want to participate in drafting such a plan.

Senator Mitra shared that the Math Department thought the statement was vague and that it was not clear whether there was an accountability/discipline component. Chancellor MacLean explained that an action plan would provide specifics and that no, there was no disciplinary component; rather the statement was a guide to create a common understanding.

Senator English noted that the Montana Bureau of Mines and Geology had provided four comments ranging from noting that the statement was "inspirational" to saying it was "just words". One comment suggested that the statement be framed as a mission statement and another thought that the words "create a common understanding" should be added.

There was some discussion that concern for safety and health be incorporated into the statement. Senator Perduss noted that the Business Department had no comments and recognized that the statement was not a policy, but rather a broad statement about how we interact.

Senator Badrouchi suggested that the concept of "diversity" be included in the statement and Senator Cornish offered to compose a draft that reflected this addition and send it to the Chancellor.

Senator Roos noted that previous strategic planning efforts might make this effort redundant and/or overlapping. Chancellor McClean stated that this effort had a different purpose.

Senator Faught discussed the Nursing Program's responses to the Culture Statement, which emphasized that the spirit of the statement was to convey a "positive intention" and to foster inclusiveness and shared governance. Chancellor McClean agreed.

Senator Egloff noted that the culture at Montana Tech had changed over the last 12 years, and that there had been significant turnover in the Civil Engineering Department. He stated that

people were not feeling valued and that differing opinions were not tolerated. The Culture Statement is a good first step in addressing this.

V. Feedback on Dream Big Priorities – Following the Faculty Senate meeting on September 17th, Senator Southergill provided the following input on the Dream Big Priorities presented:

“Was I surprised by any high scores, and why?”

Respectfully, not many of the ideas hit me as "Dreaming Big" or advancing Tech's capabilities (or mission) significantly. So, I wish to focus on items I list below as deserving higher scores (or at least a deeper dive than I felt the scores indicated).

Was I surprised by any low scores, and why?

A research park may not be in our present budget, but it felt like the biggest dream listed. Given how much entities like the Bureau and Ripple offer, a research park could elevate Montana Tech's reputation and offerings. A well-endowed one could offer faculty buy-outs and a host of other contributions to our university culture. Perhaps a research park at the intersection of AI or intelligent computing with healthcare, energy, and environmental studies (with a better acronym) especially warrants further review.

I was surprised also that the Author's Reception scored so low given how Butte maintains an impressive number of noteworthy cultural venues (Mother Lode, Clark Chateau, Covellite Theater, Cultural Heritage Center, Archives, IRBC to name a few) with which this concept can connect. It would certainly promote scholarly activity. Thinking bigger, this idea may fit with an author residency or within a revitalized Honors program just off the top of my head. Or perhaps adding some form of award or recognition program to further celebrate especially significant contributions would add the requisite splash factor. Also, maybe this suggestion just needs more proverbial oomph than the less-than-jaw dropping "Reception" moniker and it will get a bit more traction as a bigger dream. In any event, I think this can go a bit further with development.

Otherwise, I'd call attention to international agreements, research mentorship, endowed faculty, and transformative publishing agreements as especially promising (in other words: prudent but not "dreamy" per se).

Was there anything omitted that I'd suggest adding?

We have fantastic access to the Big Butte and the paved trail system. It's not really a "big dream," but anything that promotes responsible use of these spaces either for recruitment or work-life balance (of students or professionals) deserves a deeper dive.”

Chancellor McClean spoke to the Senate, explaining that the process is open to more suggestions on an ongoing basis. However, rather than using surveys to collect information, department-specific ideas should be submitted through the Faculty Senate and the Provost. It is important to

hear from all the stakeholders. Lack of funding should not be a deterrent because at some point the Legislature and the Montana Tech Foundation might be able to make more resources available (e.g. for a PhD in Energy). There are also shorter-term priorities that can be addressed sooner, such as efforts to become a "paperless" operation. Provost Elgrin noted that the Montana Tech Foundation is engaged in a major capital campaign to raise \$100 million, of which \$60 million has already been secured. In light of cuts to Federal funding programs, the Foundation's role will become more important. Currently Foundation funding is primarily directed to scholarships, but the Dream Big priority list can be matched with donors who might have specific interests in the ideas put forth. The Provost also noted that while it is difficult to raise funds for brick-and-mortar projects, interest is growing in renovating/rehabilitating existing structures rather than in building new ones. The Provost also mentioned the facility plan, which identified housing and parking needs.

Senator Egloff noted that we should value our "bread and butter", our four-year degree programs, which have produced outstanding graduates who have given back to the University. Senator Roos hoped that our Dream Big proposals would not fall on deaf ears as similar efforts had in the past.

Given the time, Senator Gilkey moved, and Senator Southergill seconded a motion to skip to the Good of the Order and Items VI – Canvas and online summer courses, and VII – Plan to establish a new PhD in Energy would be addressed at our October 15th meeting. The motion carried. Senator Faught requested that we discuss the April 2026 deadline regarding document accessibility at our next meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:00 p.m.