

Montana Tech Faculty Senate
Meeting Minutes
March 11, 2026 • HPER 138 • 9:00 a.m.

Attendees

Senators in attendance included Scott Risser, Janet Cornish, Scott Juskiewicz, Sudhakar Vadiraja, Dave Gilkey, Foued Badrouchi, Doug Galarus, Chris Gammons, Matt Egloff, Andrew Traut, Gary Wyss, Bryce Hill, Chris Roos, Brian StClair, Alan English, Jason Herndon and Naim Rashid. Guests attending the meeting included Johnny MacLean, Chancellor; Tim Elgren, Provost; Joe Cooper, Vice Provost for Student Success and Dean of Students; and Sarah North Wolfe, Executive Director of Student Success

- I. **Welcome and Minutes** – The meeting commenced at 9:00 a.m. and a quorum was established. Senator Wyss moved, and Senator Traut seconded a motion to adopt the minutes of the February 27th, 2026 Faculty Senate meeting. The motion carried.
- II. **Reserved (CRC, GERC, GC)** – Senator Risser noted that the CRC recommendation was reviewed at the February 27th meeting and that there was no other business under this item.
- III. **Senator Elections for Business, Chemistry, Interdisciplinary Arts and Sciences, Business and Industry, Health Programs, Trades, Computer Science, Electrical, Geological, Metallurgical and Materials, and Mechanical** – Senator Risser explained that the departments listed in this section have either open or expiring representation on the Faculty Senate. Departments are encouraged to report their plans for filling these positions to the Senate. Senator Hill noted that the Electrical Engineering Department has voted to retain him as the Department representative on the Senate. On March 27th, the term will begin for new Senators.
- IV. **Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU) – Ad Hoc report in response to accreditation team recommendations** – Dr. Hilary Risser reported that the ad hoc committee of the NWCCU would be at Montana Tech on April 6th, 2026. The NWCCU conducts an Evaluation of Institutional Effectiveness (EIE) on a seven-year cycle. During the last seven year review, the Commission noted that Montana Tech lacks a strategic plan. That plan has now been completed. The previous EIE also revealed that the academic program review determined that the programs were of uneven quality. We are now in the second year of the new seven-year cycle, and the ad hoc committee will likely want to interview members of the faculty, particularly those who are involved with curriculum evaluations. Dr. Risser encourages all faculty to read the report and to be available to meet if needed for the April 6th ad hoc committee visit. Senator Risser noted that the report for the ad hoc committee is available in the Faculty Senate Teams Folder and through One Drive.
- V. **Advising Task Force** – Sarah North Wolfe, Executive Director of Student Success, discussed the creation of the Advising Task Force, which has received a grant to develop innovative projects, focusing on understanding student satisfaction vs. student experience. The Task Force will work with people who have been identified as good advisors. An assessment

survey of staff and students will be conducted to assess the current advising program. The results will lead to the preparation of a strategic plan that addresses both the theoretical and practical aspects of a good advising system. The survey may incorporate a focus group element in order to hear from a wider range of respondents. Students will also be surveyed to learn more about their advising experience. The goal is to complete the data collection by June of this year and to make recommendations in the fall.

Senator Gilkey asked whether there would be a shift to more professional staff advisors to relieve pressure on the faculty. Ms. North Wolfe said yes, that would be considered. Senator Egloff noted that persistent “tweaking” of curriculums made it difficult for students to complete their degrees, making the advising process more challenging. Senator Risser noted that this issue should be brought to the Curriculum Review Committee (CRC). Senator Roos stated that the Lance College of Mining and Engineering (LMCE) needed more continuity in its advising program. Senator Cornish discussed the difficulty students have in making up work that is missed as a result of weeks-long school related travel.

Provost Elgren noted that the college was losing \$3.5 million per year because of lack of retention and that a consistent student advising program was key. Senator Egloff noted problems with the “Degree Works” program, particularly in relationship to students’ understanding of what classes are important “gateways” and which are “dead ends”. Senator Hill disagreed and enthusiastically supports the “Degree Works” program. Ms. North Wolfe pointed out that the lack of curriculum mapping related to prerequisites lengthens matriculation. Senator Hill suggested that all departments need flow charts to help students navigate degree requirements and pathways and would be happy to share his. The Student Success office can help in this effort through advising and in conjunction with the class registration process. Dr. Risser noted that there is software available to assist with course mapping. Senator Roos noted that while there are some students that must work hard to complete all of the prerequisites, more advanced students may need more options and perhaps could simultaneously earn additional certificates.

VI. **Budget Committee** – Scott Rosenthal was not present to share this information. Provost Elgren noted that the University will be considering staffing position requests by March 17th, 2026. The Budget Committee report will be placed on the March 27th Faculty Senate agenda.

VII. **Faculty Satisfaction Survey** – Senator Risser presented the 2024 results of the “Great Places to Work” Survey, which may not be the best instrument. Senators should reach out to faculty to learn what type of assessment we want to use. Senator Egloff noted that continuity was important in order to observe trends but thought the addition of focus groups would be worthwhile considering. Dr. Risser noted that accreditors measure mission fulfillment so a consistent format over time is helpful.

Chancellor MacLean noted that, since he was new to Tech, he would like to know more about the next steps to be taken once the satisfaction survey was complete. In other words, he would like to understand the process for sharing recommendations for and implementation strategies to address needed improvements identified in the survey. Senator Risser explained that yes, recommendations have been made to management in

the past, including the creation of the Employee Relations Committee (ERC), but noted that we have “dropped the ball” in following through. Chancellor MacClean is open to suggestions. Provost Elgren agreed that consistency was important but that a new tool was needed. Senator Risser agreed. Senator Egloff requested samples of surveys from the Provost. Senator Roos commented that it may be too late for this year. This item will be placed on a future agenda.

VIII. For the Good of the Order – Senator Risser explained that the change in bylaws vote would have to be delayed until after Spring Break to meet the one-week notification requirement for faculty votes.

Senator Gilkey moved, and Senator Herndon seconded a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:55 a.m. The motion carried.