

MONTANA TECH FACULTY SENATE

Thursday, April 26, 2012

MINUTES OF THE MEETING

Members present: Laurie Battle, Hugo Bertite-Aguirre, Jon Chesbro, Chris Danielson, Jerry Downey (Chair), Gretchen Geller, Bill Good, Katie Hailer, Scott Juskiewicz, Mike Miller, Tom Moon, Mary North-Abbott, John Nugent, Shane Parrow, Vicki Petritz, Bill Ryan, Celia Schahczenski, Heather Shearer (Vice Chair), Rita Spear (representing Charie Faught), Kirk Waren

Members absent: Merle Benedict, Charie Faught (represented by Rita Spear), Rajendra Kasinath, Glenn Shaw, Miriam Young

Attending without vote: Doug Abbott, Don Blackketter, Jennifer Simon

The meeting was called to order just after 7:00 am

Review and Approval of Minutes from the March 29, 2012 Meeting

The minutes for the March 29, 2012 meeting were approved.

Administration

- **Announcements**

Chancellor Don Blackketter provided some updates and discussion on a number of topics. He publically thanks the Montana Tech faculty and staff for contributing to a favorable first year at Montana Tech and in the Butte community.

Strategic planning is a time-consuming process, but Don felt that the process is important, perhaps more so outside of the Tech campus. It is advantageous to develop an accurate mission statement that describes Montana Tech's unique role and distinctive nature in the Montana University system. The strategic plan and vision statement will be refined this summer with the help of a few faculty and department heads. Strategic action plans for departmental units will be defined, but will be subject to change as programs evolve. Don noted that departmental standards need to be completed, approved, and accepted, and that this is something that will be worked on this summer and in the fall semester.

The PhD program planning is continuing, with the initiative underway for a PhD in Material Science that can be given by Montana Tech, University of Montana, and Montana State University. The reading of the proposal may occur at the July Board of Regents meeting, and the vote may occur in the September Board of Regents meeting, which will be held in Butte.

Don provided some comments on the College Now process of re-naming the Montana Tech College of Technology, and noted that the official name is nearing resolution and should be announced in the near future.

The Chancellor's involvement in Montana Tech budget hearings has been informative. He noted that this institution is and continues to be financially sound. Don feels there are some

opportunities to optimize the use of funds on campus. There is currently a reasonable reserve of money to deal with unexpected changes in funding or expenses.

Finally, Don highlighted the importance of retention. Nationwide, student loan default rates are increasing somewhat dramatically from about 3% to about 9%, and this can be attributed largely to students not completing their degrees. Therefore, it is important to encourage students to stay on course and complete their degrees, even if it means changing their major.

Vice Chancellor Doug Abbott provided some details about the range of budget needs in various departments, and some clarifications about the PhD program's split between Montana Tech, University of Montana, and Montana State University. This spawned a further discussion and descriptions of graduate programs among Montana universities. The PhD program will be a collaborative program.

- **Moodle upgrade**

Jennifer Simon, Director of Information services notes that the upgrade of Moodle from Version 1.9 to Version 2.0 will occur in the summer of 2013. Campus Technology services continues to operate a help desk, and they are now asking for a temporary, one-year full-time staff member to help with the transition to Moodle 2. This person, to be hired around January of 2013, would proactively assist faculty members with the use of Moodle. Also, efforts are underway to develop a Moodle mentor program with representatives from departments on campus, and each department is encouraged to designate a representative.

Moodle 2 will be significantly different than Moodle 1, with changes in navigational and file structure. It will take some practice and time to learn. It is hoped that the transition will be smoother than the transition from Blackboard to Moodle 1 with the temporary staff member and Moodle mentor program in place.

Jennifer was asked to return to a faculty senate meeting early next academic year.

Action Items

- **Approval of candidates for degrees**

Chad Bushman, Director of Enrollment Management, moved that, upon successful completion of the requirements for their respective degrees, as determined by the department heads, deans, and the office of enrollment processing, that those students that have applied for graduation at the conclusion of the Spring Semester of 2012, be awarded their appropriate certificate, associate, bachelor's, or master's degree and request that the local executive board of Montana Tech of the University of Montana recommend then to the State Board of Regents for approval of their respective degrees. The motion was seconded and approved unanimously.

- **Professor Emeritus nomination**

Jerry noted that Dr. Rick Douglass has been nominated for Professor Emeritus status. To be consistent with the policy in the faculty/staff handbook and recent vote at the instructional faculty meeting for two other nominees, Jerry will put the nomination up for an email vote by the full faculty.

Discussion

1. Academic Standards and Integrity:

Course substitution policy – Jerry discussed his investigation of course substitutions and that perhaps a resolution can be drafted and eventually put to a vote of the Faculty Senate to tighten up the course substitution process.

Dual-credit courses – This topic was discussed at length. There is a committee in place evaluating resumes of Butte High School teachers that may teach dual-credit courses (high school teachers teaching college-level courses at the high school). The program has been in place for some time, and numerous other high schools in the state are already offering dual credit courses. Liberal Studies Department faculty members are reportedly concerned about the qualifications and ability of high school teachers to teach college-level courses. It was suggested that if the Board of Regents is encouraging colleges to allow high schools to offer dual credit courses, Montana Tech should engage local high schools and strive for optimal outcomes of dual-credit courses taught by high school teachers.

Jerry suggested the topic of dual-credit courses could be brought up at the next Montana University System Faculty Association Representatives (MUSFAR) meeting, that will likely occur in conjunction with the BOR meeting at Montana Tech in September, to see how other universities have handled this issue. This item will be retained on the agenda for further evaluation by the faculty senate.

2. Research

Academic Faculty Research Policy – Jerry has received comments on the policy from some individuals and two departments, and is awaiting further comments. He plans to consolidate the comments and provide them to faculty senate members.

3. Academic Calendar

Jerry has reviewed academic calendars of a variety of universities and that the length of semesters varies. With only a few exceptions, most colleges have a shorter semester than Montana Tech. This being the case, Jerry felt that if there is a reason we have a seventeen-week semester instead of a sixteen-week semester, we should understand why. Jerry asks: if there is no reason, then why are we doing it? Doug Abbott reports that he has a standing invitation for Jerry and other faculty senate members to attend the Dean's Council meeting when the next calendar will be initiated for the 2013-2014 academic year.

Scheduling of the next Faculty Senate Meeting

A last Faculty Senate meeting for this academic year is proposed to occur in May, perhaps a morning during finals week or on graduation morning.

The meeting was adjourned around 8:00 am.

Respectfully submitted,

Kirk Waren,
Secretary