

**Montana Tech Faculty Senate Meeting**  
**Wednesday, March 5, 2014**  
**7:00-8:00 a.m.**

**Location: Pintler Room (Student Union Building)**

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**MEETING MINUTES**

**Senators present:**

Hugo Bertete-Aguirre, Sally Bardsley, Laurie Battle, Tom Camm, Rhonda Coguill, Chris Danielson (V. Chair), Bill Drury, Jerry Downey (Chair), Bill Good, Scott Juskiewicz, Mary North Abbott, Vicki Petritz, James Rose, Celia Schahczenski (Sec.), Jack Skinner, Rita Spear, Miriam Young

**Senators absent:** Gretchen Geller, Katie Hailer, Tim Kober, John Nugent, Chad Okrusch, Bill Ryan, Glenn Shaw

**Vacant senate seat:**

Electrical Engineering

**Guests:**

Hank Pratte, Association of Students at Montana Tech, ASMT, President

**Call to Order (7:00 a.m.):** Jerry Downey, Chair

**Roll Call:** Celia Schahczenski, Secretary

**I. Senate Business (7:00)**

A. Review and approval of minutes from the 4-Feb-14 Senate meeting

Minutes were approved unanimously.

B. February 2014 Senate actions:

1. Outcome of vote on proposed modifications to the Faculty/Staff Handbook
  - Reduce years of faculty service for sabbatical eligibility from seven to six (11-3)
  - Text pertaining to Graduate Council Function (13-0)

A third item, whether to post the results of the Faculty Opinion & Satisfaction Survey and abbreviated comments on the Faculty Senate webpage, was voted on and passed 14-0.

2. Discussion of March 3, 2014 Instructional Faculty Meeting

Only 24 faculty members and 7 administrators attended the Instructional Faculty Meeting. After some announcements, Downey addressed survey comments concerning the Faculty Senate. Chancellor Blacketter, followed by Provost Abbott, addressed other survey results. Faculty members responded with a few questions and comments. Minutes from the meeting will be

posted onto the Senate website once they have been reviewed and approved at the April Faculty Senate meeting.

### 3. Completion of Nov 2013 Faculty Survey & Plans for future Faculty Surveys

Downey reported meeting with Chancellor Blackletter and Provost Abbott on Feb. 26<sup>th</sup>, the Thursday before the Instructional Faculty Meeting. They discussed the survey results. They plan to meet again March 19<sup>th</sup> or 20<sup>th</sup>. It was suggested that administrators could be asked if they have any questions they would like to see on the follow-up survey.

It was suggested that the other Faculty Senate Officers, or other senators, join Downey at the next meeting. This will bring a broader perspective to the administrators, and also back to the Senate. It is hoped that three senators, including Downey, will attend the next meeting. Downey will email an announcement of exactly when the meeting will take place. Let him know if you are interested in attending. *{Chair Note: the meeting date was changed to Wednesday, March 12; three senators attended the meeting; details will be provided at the April Senate meeting.}*

Discussion regarding survey results and the research climate:

- Senator expressed concern over the raising bar on research.
- The bar can't be arbitrarily raised and faculty members just expected to meet it.
- If faculty members are teaching 9 credits per semester, they should not be compared with faculty members who are teaching 3-6 credits per semester.
- It takes considerable time and effort to get a research program started.
- Getting a research project up and running is harder than it needs to be. It seems as if each project is being started for the first time. The paperwork for proposals should be streamlined, with PIs completing a form, but administrative staff filling in the details.
- Faculty members can write their own proposals and do the work, but faculty members could accomplish do more if they were given administrative support to manage budgets and other details. Budget sheets come out monthly but are out of date. This forces PIs to duplicate the budgeting work. Similarly, help could be given on other items. Faculty would have more time to do research if some of the work was offloaded.

Other survey issues:

- Senators expressed disappointment that no administrator addressed the low result concerning administrative respect for faculty.
- Additionally, the Provost stated that he can't respond to faculty opinions, but this was an "opinion" and "satisfaction" survey. Responses to opinions are needed.
- Faculty members in some departments are required to respond to faculty evaluation results which fall below a certain number. It would be reasonable for the administration to do the same.
- MTFA (Montana Tech Faculty Association) administered a satisfaction survey earlier. The results of that survey seemed to be higher than this one. It would be interesting to see if there is a trend going up or down.
- After the administration has an opportunity to digest and respond to the survey, Downey will send it, with all comments, on to President Engstrom.

Next year's Opinion & Satisfaction survey:

- Add a preamble to the survey which states that comments may be publicized, to please make comments constructive, and that the Senate reserves the right to remove unsavory and/or unhelpful comments.
- The survey was not out long enough. Faculty members should be given more time to complete it, and a number of reminders should be sent out.
- Faculty members with clinical obligations need to be off-campus for consecutive days. Some faculty members didn't even get a chance to see the survey before it was closed.

Spring follow-up survey:

- A follow-up survey is needed to gain insight as to why Tech's environment is not seen as conducive to the development and sustenance of a research program.
- In that survey, ideas can be solicited on how to improve the research environment.
- Additionally, follow-up is needed about the lack of administrative respect for faculty.

Action Item: Schahczenski will collect questions for a follow-up survey. These should be written so that a "strongly agree" result is positive. The questions submitted will be discussed at the April meeting.

## II. Topics for Senate Consideration (7:25)

### A. PFSC recommendations

Downey updated senators on the developing performance based standards. Montana campuses are divided into three groups: flagship institutions, non-flagship four year institutions, and two year institutions. Each group is developing their own standards which will then be shared and compared with the other groups. Once a stable set of standards are developed, Downey plans to bring them to the Faculty Senate for endorsement.

### B. ASMT desire to play a more active role in providing input for faculty tenure applications.

Hank Pratte, President of the Association of Students at Montana Tech (ASMT), attended the Senate meeting. In addition, Downey and Danielson met with Pratte previous to this meeting to discuss this proposal. Overall responses to the proposal were negative. Faculty would like the students to play a more active role, but maybe it could be by reviewing the current Faculty Evaluation forms.

Discussion:

- In many departments student representatives serve on faculty search committees. Additionally, students are invited to attend candidate presentations.
- One department chair, however, doesn't want students involved in personnel decisions. In that department, students do not serve on search committees. That department chair is strongly against this proposal.
- Professor Ziegler, who has served as President of the Collegiate Evaluation Committee (CEC) for at least the last two years, reported that there is plenty of student input in the recommendation of the CEC. He reported that the results of course evaluations play a large part in the recommendation of the CEC.

- In addition, the Deans make a recommendation before the CEC's recommendation. The Deans take course evaluations into account.
- It doesn't make sense to solicit input regarding tenure and promotion of a faculty member from students who has never take a class from that faculty member.
- Pratte asked if senators felt that the evaluations are helpful since he knows that some students are just trying to get out of the room as quickly as possible when course evaluations are administered.
- Over time, the belief is that course evaluation results do reflect the performance of the faculty member. A pattern can be seen over time.
- Small Group Instructional Diagnostics (SGIDs) also give useful input.
- The response rates on the course evaluations are very low when the surveys are done on-line.
- General Engineering has a requirement that the response rate needs to be 80% in order for the data to be used in promotion and tenure packets. *{Secretary Note: This comes from the Faculty and Staff handbook and applies to all departments. See Section 206.4.3 (1c), p. III – 11 of the Faculty and Staff Handbook.}*
- What was the need for this proposal? Is there a feeling that faculty are getting tenure and being promoted when they shouldn't be? (Response, not really. It was just thought that many students don't take course evaluations seriously and that there should be another method for student input.)
- Being involved in re-vamping the course evaluation questions is a way to be involved in the tenure and promotion process.

Action Item: Downey and Pratte will meet to discuss re-vamping the course evaluation survey questions so that the students find them more useful.

### **III. Summary of Academic Items for upcoming Electronic Vote (7:35).**

#### **A. CRC Recommendations (February 6, 2014)**

A course name change was made since the Feb. 6<sup>th</sup> CRC meeting. Downey suggests that this can be a friendly amendment to the recommendations of the CRC meeting.

Action item: It was moved that Senate approval of the CRC recommendations, along with the friendly amendment, be placed onto an email ballot. This was seconded and approved unanimously.

#### **B. Endorsement of Honorary Doctorate Nominee**

A nomination has been made for an honorary doctorate degree, as was mentioned at the last meeting. Downey discussed the candidate. The packet is still available for senators to look over.

Action item: It was moved that Senate endorsement of conferring an honorary doctorate on this nominee be placed onto an email ballot. This was seconded and approved unanimously.

**IV. Other Business (7:45)**

Upcoming senator term expirations and officer nominations

Those departments/areas in with finishing senate terms, see the Faculty Senate web page, should hold elections. Both the senator and the senator-elect can attend the last senate meetings.

Nominations for senate officers will be taken at the next meeting.

**V. Adjournment (7:55)**

The meeting adjourned at 8 am.

**Reminder:** The next Senate meeting is scheduled to take place from 7:00 to 8:00 a.m. on Thursday, April 3 in the Kelley-Steward Room.