

Montana Tech Faculty Senate Meeting

Wednesday, September 14, 2016 - 3:30-5pm

Senators present:

Stella Capoccia, Conor Cote, Bill Drury, Charie Faight, John Getty, Brian Koontz, Brian Kukay, Atish Mitra, Tony Patrick, Vicki Petritz, Scott Risser, Glen Southergill, Jackie Timmer, Michael Webb, George Williams, Laura Young, Miriam Young

Guests:

Matt Egloff, Darlene Voss, Erik Castle, Donna Conrad, Bruce Madigan, Nathan Huft

I. Welcome & Approval of Minutes

- Motion (John Getty; 2nd Tony Patrick): Approve minutes from August 31st with minor corrections
- Vote: Motion carried

II. Discussion of Summer Incidents – Guest Matt Egloff

- Matt Egloff gave an account of serious cases of Academic Dishonesty and Student Hostility encountered by many faculty, staff and students over the course of the summer session. A cohort of students taking classes this summer repeatedly attempted to cheat, threatening and intimidating faculty and staff when attempts were made to thwart them.
- Several staff and faculty members attending the meeting as guests attested to this behavior. Incidents included physical intimidation, smoking on campus, tripping of another student, spitting on a staff member, and rampant cheating. Matt passed documentation detailing these events, consisting of notes and correspondence from faculty and staff who encountered these issues.
- Discussion
 - i) Miriam Young asked why the students were here and how they were admitted. Were they screened? Matt Egloff responded that apparently they did have transcripts/prerequisites in order, noting there were some good students in the group.
 - ii) Stella Capoccia reminded everyone to be careful about assuming anything about the background of students when discussing these issues. She wondered why the students were allowed back in the classroom after the first case of cheating. Bruce Madigan responded that the general practice has been to allow two strikes.
 - iii) Scott Risser clarified that while this is a common practice it is not an official policy. According to the student handbook, students will be penalized with an F on the specific assignment at a *minimum*. While all violations must be reported to Provost Abbott (there is a new system online for doing this), ultimately the penalty is at the faculty member's discretion. He suggested that the Academic Dishonesty policy in the Student Handbook may need to be updated to address modern cheating methods.
 - iv) Donna Conrad said she observed well-behaved students whose learning experience was jeopardized by these students' behavior.
 - v) Bruce Madigan said that over his tenure these policies have never been tested to this extent. He feels that faculty took appropriate action given the policies at hand. They documented cheating with the expectation that the problem would be addressed. The view of administration was to try and work through the issues, but the problems persisted. Given the extent to which the policies were tested in this case, they may need to be revised.
 - vi) Brian Kukay said that the tense situations were confined to exam days. Having proctors for each row during exams was one strategy that worked well. Students were very bold about cheating and would make attempts to cheat if they were not closely watched.
 - vii) George Williams asked whether the college knew this was coming. Should we have been aware that these students might pose problems based on prior behavior?

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- viii) Scott Risser noted that the WAP Committee reviews transcripts for students that have prior records of Academic Dishonesty. None of these students were sent to the WAP Committee indicating that they did not have anything on record of this nature.
- ix) Stella Capoccia asked Matt Egloff how, going back, this should have been handled? Matt said that faculty felt overwhelmed, unprepared to handle mass cheating at this scale. He said he would alter the syllabus to throw out students immediately after one offense.
- x) Erik Castle reported that 911 was called in one instance and some students had to be escorted off campus.
- xi) Glen Southergill thanked security for their efforts. He asked Erik if security has the resources they require. Erik said has a lot of experience, but reports that the situation this summer was a very serious situation, and had the potential to become an even bigger problem. Erik said that the lack of a campus police department is a concern, and that relying on the Butte Police Department is not enough.
- Recommendations
 - i) Based on this experience, there are several steps that the campus could take to address the problems that arose this summer. Matt Egloff provided a list of recommended actions to address this behavior (see handout for details). Matt reviewed each of these recommendations with the Senate.
 - ii) Scott Risser suggested that the Senate should meet to discuss these recommendations, discuss whether it agrees, and whether they require Faculty Senate action or if they should be handled by other bodies.
 - iii) Charie Faught said this is a very serious issue; and one that be taken beyond just the Senate. The Staff Senate, ASMT, and the administration should all be involved in this discussion as well. She suggested that in addition to the recommendations provided by General Engineering, there should be resources available from the International Center for Academic Integrity, as Montana Tech is a member. Glen Southergill suggested meeting next week rather than waiting two weeks to discuss this again.
 - iv) Motion (Glen Southergill; 2nd John Getty): Senate meet next week to discuss the issues being raised and to review the recommendations brought forth.
 - v) Vote: Motion carried.

III. Final Tally of 17/18 Calendar Vote

- Scott Risser announced the results of the vote on approving the 2017/18 Academic Calendar.
- 9 senators voted in favor, 3 opposed; the Calendar was approved by the Senate and Leslie Dickerson was notified.

IV. Online Student Evaluations

- Scott Risser asked about faculty feedback to the Online Evaluations Proposal submitted by Jennifer Simon at the last Senate meeting.
- Stella Capoccia brought the proposal to the Biology department and the faculty agreed that the paper evaluation option should be retained. Stella acknowledged that it is likely Montana Tech will move to fully online evaluations, as that is the national trend. However, faculty may need more time to prepare for this change, especially if averages are drop overall as a result. Vicki Petritz said the concerns she received related to the ability for students who stop coming to class still being able to take online evaluations. These students are more likely to give lower scores. This concern was echoed by several other departments. Charie Faught recommended that faculty utilize the Add/Drop deadlines so that students who don't come to class are withdrawn from the course.

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- Brian Kukay reported that the General Engineering department was in favor of retaining paper evaluations, 6 votes to 2. Atish Mitra and George Williams also reported that their departments were in favor of retaining the paper option.
- Brian Koontz asked for clarification about the prompt CTS plans to implement for online evaluations, can this be bypassed? Charie Faught confirmed that it can.
- Glen Southergill reported many faculty members are not aware of the benefits of online evaluations, as demonstrated by the number of faculty who still opt not to use them. His Usability class is working with CTS to assess the usability of Online Course Evaluations. This should provide CTS useful feedback for improving online evaluations. He suggested that the issue be taken up once CTS has had more time to address faculty concerns.
- Motion (John Getty; 2nd Miriam Young): For Senate to recommend retaining the paper evaluation option.
- Vote: Motion carried, 15 in favor, 1 abstained.

V. Next Senate Meeting

- Charie Faught recommended that the Senate make a statement about the seriousness of the Academic Honesty/Student Hostility concerns brought up in this meeting.
- Scott Risser suggested that this statement could be given at the upcoming full faculty meeting. The details of the statement could be discussed at the next Senate meeting.
- Vicki Petritz stated that there are two separate issues on the table – one related to Academic Dishonesty, the other to Hostile Student Behavior; Laura Young said she was particularly concerned about faculty and staff feeling threatened and intimidated.
- John Getty would like to hear how the administration responded to these concerns; should they be asked to respond to the Senate's questions on this issue?
- Brian Kukay said that he personally felt supported by the administration over the issues that arose over the summer. John Getty asked if Brian had asked for the students to be expelled, would the administration's response have been different? Brian responded that while that is possible, the low grades many students received were self-corrective as their grades reflected their behavior. He said that there were some positives takeaways, notably how the community responded and supported one another in a time of need.
- Laura Young suggested that both issues of student behavior (Academic Dishonesty and Hostility) should be discussed at the next meeting and they be given equal time but discussed separately.
- Glen Southergill acknowledged that for him the safety issues were a blind spot. He would want to refer to experts on the status of safety on campus. He suggested coming up with a list of questions that the faculty have about safety and determine who can answer them.
- Miriam Young said the Senate needs to meet and discuss this issue first before approaching outside groups. John Getty suggested the Senate postpone scheduling the Full Faculty meeting until the next meeting where the Senate can come up with an action plan.
- The Senate will meet in one week (September 21st) to address these concerns and the recommendations that have put forth to address them. Scott Risser will send out an agenda this week.

VI. Adjourn

- Meeting adjourned