



Chancellor's Cabinet Meeting Minutes

July 18, 2023

Meeting began at 2:00 pm

In Attendance: Chancellor Stefani Hicswa, Provost Sep Eskandari, Dr. Kim Hayworth, Paula Highlander, Kathy Kotecki, Mike Bazemore, Kathleen Thatcher, Dr. Jen Lynn, Krista Montague, and Natalie Preston

Absent: Leslie Weldon

Welcome Kathleen Thatcher:

Chancellor Hicswa welcomed Director of Assessment and Accreditation Kathleen Thatcher to the Chancellor's Cabinet. Kathleen brings years of experience to the group and her specific expertise will be helpful with our accreditation work and as MSUB drafts a new strategic plan.

FY 24 Budget:

Dr. Hicswa provided an overview of funding and expense changes to the biennium budget including tuition increases. Assistant Vice Chancellor of Finance Heather Hanna is working to determine how these factors will affect MSUB's budget.

Board of Regents Meeting:

Dr. Hicswa reported that Governor Gianforte's Education Policy Advisor, Dylan Klapmeier, outlined the Governor's investment in education during the July Board of Regents meeting. He stated that Gov. Gianforte has made a record investment in education in terms of infrastructure, operations and employees. MSUB committed to provide the same raise to employees whose positions are funded by auxiliary or grant funding rather than the general fund.

Long Range Building Plan:

MSUB was provided funding for items in the Long Range Building Plan (LRBP) including the water project and the roof of the Physical Education building. Previous legislation appropriated funds for the HVAC system in the art annex, which MSUB received permission to use toward the building's demolition instead. A plan for the adjacent Poly Building continues to be in the works. The Space Analysis Task Force is working to find a long term solution for replacing the art annex.

Cancellation of Student Loan Debt:

In a recent ruling, the Supreme Court rejected President Biden's student debt repayment plan, so the President is working to improve the existing debt repayment structure. The new plan lowers the percentage of borrowers' income required for calculating repayment rate. Borrowers can apply for newly structured income-driven repayment plans this summer.

The House of Representatives spending bill proposes the elimination of work study and SEOG grants which would result in a \$2 Billion reduction in aid. The bill does not propose an increase to Pell grants.

Supreme Court Decision on Affirmative Action in Higher Education:

Vice Chancellor for Student Access and Success Kim Hayworth spoke on the Supreme Court decision on Affirmative Action. She stated that the decision will impact elite and legacy institutions more than open-enrollment universities like MSUB. It is possible however that underserved populations and minorities will be discouraged from applying to college by the decision. Provost Sep Eskandari expressed concern that professions with historically low percentages of workers from underrepresented populations may have more trouble educating a diverse workforce as a result of this decision.

McDonald Hall Update:

Dr. Eskandari updated the group on changes underway regarding McDonald Hall. The building which has housed the College of Business (COB) for many years, and is owned by the MSUB Foundation, was found to be underutilized. The Space Analysis Task Force presented a proposal to relocate the COB to the north side of the second floor of the College of Education (COE) building. This move is in progress and scheduled to be complete by July 31st. Dr. Eskandari announced a plan to assemble a committee to propose a new name for the COE building, which will require approval by the Board of Regents. Chancellor Hicswa added that this is a tremendous opportunity for synergy between the two colleges. Foundation CEO Krista Montague reported that NAI Business Properties has partnered with the Foundation to lease the building and it has already generated some promising interest. Additionally, the Foundation is in touch with the McDonald family who donated the building to maintain the family's intentions through the use of the building.

Parking:

Chancellor Hicswa announced that Leslie Weldon is working with community partners who would like to rent parking spaces on campus. This may impact parking availability in certain lots.

Signage Project Update:

Chancellor Hicswa addressed the lack of consistency that resulted when Sign Pro installed new interior building signs. The new signs are not similar in size and color to existing interior signs. She also continues to work with City College on branding efforts, so their signage has not all been replaced yet. Exterior wayfinding signage has not yet been installed. Mural installation is in progress in the Glacier Room.

News Releases:

While University Communications and Marketing is without a Director, Marketing and Communications Operations Manager Shiloh Skillen-Robison will be producing at least one news release weekly. Please send ideas to Shiloh for press releases.

Foundation Consultant:

Krista reported that the Foundation contracted with fundraising consultant, Jason McNeal from Gonser Gerber. Jason will work to enhance current operation at the Foundation and complete a feasibility study to assess campaign readiness for a fundraising effort in conjunction with MSUB's centennial celebration.

Fall Semester Opening Activities:

Provost Eskandari announced that the fall convocation calendar is almost complete. All college and department events are listed with the exception of the College of Education whose new Dean, Dr. Ann Beste-Guldborg, has just begun July 1st. The calendar link is on the Provost's page of the website. Vice Chancellor Hayworth announced that the welcome week calendar is nearly complete as well due to cooperation between Dean of Students Kathy Kotecki and Director of the Center for Engagement Dillon Deffinbaugh. Executive Director of Undergraduate New Student Services Julie Pettitt has been working to bring more faculty and students together on new student day in hopes of easing students' transition into college life.

State of the University Address and Reception:

The Chancellor announced that she will deliver the annual State of the University Address on Thursday August 24th in Petro Theater. It is important for all employees to attend in person. Refreshments will be provided from 8:30 to 9:00 am in the theater lobby, the address will begin at 9:00, and will be followed by the "Where in the Hive" campus information fair. Vice Chancellor Hayworth announced that the "Know the Nest" virtual event will take place from 2:00 to 3:00 pm. Chancellor Hicswa will host an all-campus open house at her residence from 4:00 to 6:00 pm to which all employees and their families are invited.

Information Dissemination:

The Chancellor's Office has received feedback that information is not reaching all staff members following 'Jacket Leadership Team ('JLT) meetings. Natalie Preston will commit to completing and posting meeting minutes for 'JLT and Chancellor's Cabinet within two weeks of each meeting taking place. Discussion followed as to how to effectively remind and encourage 'JLT members to disseminate information to their employees.

Cabinet Retreat:

The Chancellor's Cabinet will gather July 31st and August 1st for the retreat at the Rock 31 headquarters at the corner of Broadway and 2nd Avenue North. Natalie Preston will gather Clifton Strength Finder results from everyone leading up to the retreat, and provide the assessment instrument to those who have requested it.

Department Updates:

Dr. Sep Eskandari:

Dr. Eskandari announced that a faculty forum will be held this fall. Each Dean will introduce new faculty members; this academic year features the largest cohort ever of new faculty. The Center for Teaching and Learning is working on onboarding for new faculty. Dr. Ann Beste-Guldborg, the new Dean of the College of Education, began in her role July 1st.

Kathleen Thatcher:

Kathleen announced that her office is working with campus partners to prepare for the Year Six visit of the seven-year accreditation cycle with MSUB's accrediting body the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU). NWCCU will focus on Standard Two as revised in 2020, which includes Policies, Regulations, and Financial Review, and this will be part of our comprehensive visit in Fall 2025. The report will be submitted to NWCCU in August or September of 2024. MSUB's strategic plan is current through 2026. Much of the plan's framework has been operationalized.

Kathy Kotecki:

Kathy's office is working with the MSU legal team to update the campus alcohol policy for events. A digital u-card scanner has been installed in Stinger's Café. Scanners will be added to all campus dining locations if the technology pilots successfully. Maintenance and cosmetic improvements are underway in the two residence halls; this will contribute to a positive student experience. Training for resident assistants and other preparations for the upcoming academic year are ongoing.

Paula Highlander:

Paula thanked everyone for submitting performance reviews and updated position descriptions. Her office continues to work with employee unions on several contract negotiations, and has completed the approval process for some. Human Resources (HR) is conducting interviews for the vacant position of the HR Assistant and Recruitment Specialist. The Federal Government is longer remotely processing I-9 documents which sets back the process of converting all new-hire paperwork for electronic processing.

Leslie Weldon:

In Vice Chancellor Weldon's absence, Chancellor Hicswa announced that Leslie hired Justin Rife to be interim facilities director. A search for a permanent director will be held at a later date.

Dr. Kim Hayworth:

Vice Chancellor Hayworth provided an update on enrollment. Currently MSUB is behind 2022 by 2.8% which represents 78 students. Most of the gap from the previous year is due to graduate student enrollment being low, but this matches current national trends. New student enrollment is up 2.5% compared to last year. The current retention rate for fall to fall is at 54%, just under the goal of 58%. The retention goal will be met if 31 additional students enroll for fall semester.

Mike Bazemore:

Mike reported that Athletics is preparing for the upcoming academic year. August 14th is the first practice date for fall sports. The Rimrock Rivalry competition opens with a double-header soccer game vs. Rocky Mountain College on August 19th. Work is ongoing on the floor in Alterowitz Gym. Athletics has had some personnel changes among coaches and staff.

Natalie Preston:

Natalie is working to plan the upcoming Cabinet Retreat. She will be sending out the Clifton Strength Finder assessment to Cabinet members who requested it. Plans are also underway for the State of the University Address and other semester-opening activities.

Dr. Jen Lynn:

Dr. Lynn announced that the Academic Senate will have a joint retreat with Provost Council this fall. Additionally, the new faculty forum will feature discussion from faculty members about their ongoing projects. As recommended among best practices, and included in the Retention and Graduation Plan, the General Education Committee is implementing a first year experience one credit course that will be required for all freshmen and will focus on teaching essential skills.

Krista Montague:

Krista announced that Foundation Board of Directors added two new members. Mike Monson and Ty Elkin are both MSUB alumni. The Foundation will host its Alumni Celebration August 8th. The event will include a viewing party for Kim Kaiser who will be featured on ESPN, and the announcement of the upcoming class of Outstanding Alumni in anticipation of the awards ceremony October 7th.

Meeting concluded at 4:07 pm

Minutes by Natalie Preston