



Friday, December 5, 2014

Dear Colleagues and Friends,

During the University Convocation I announced we would be creating a *Student Success Committee* to help us identify ways to achieve our goals of helping all students achieve their educational, professional, and personal life goals.

The committee is being asked to review and assess a broad range of student-centered programs nationally demonstrated to be best practices for assuring that students are able to meet their goals.

The committee represents a diverse mix of campus constituents as well as a local community member. The team will be led by vice provost for academic affairs, Matt Redinger.

Committee members are as follows:

Division of Administrative Affairs – Barb Shafer, Director of Business Services

Athletics – Rob Bishop, Head Baseball Coach

College Dean – Mary Susan Fishbaugh, College of Education

Students –

- Susan Hayes
- Joseph Wyatt

Division of Student Affairs –

- Jenny Howie, Computer Systems Analyst
- Tammi Watson, Director New Student and Retention Services
- Stephanie Cowen, Associate Director Student Services, City College
- Jeff Rosenberry, Interim Associate Dean of Students

Faculty –

- Cindy Dell, Assistant Professor, Education Foundations
- Joy Barber, Instructor, General Education/Writing, City College

- Lynn Fitzgerald, Assistant Professor, Health and Human Performance
- Tom Nurmi, Assistant Professor, English
- Kathryn Plymesser, Assistant Professor, Engineering
- Debbie Johnson, Dept. Chair; Associate Professor, Accounting/Business Law

Community Member – Alex Tyson, Billings Chamber and CVB

Vice Provost Redinger and I will provide a formal charge to the committee later this month.

Thank you all for your time and the work you each do to support our students and each other.

Sincerely,



Mark Nook, Chancellor
Montana State University Billings



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December 17, 2014

To: Student Success Committee Members

From: Mark A. Nook

Re: Committee Charge



Dear Student Success Committee Member;

Thank you for agreeing to make this commitment of service to Montana State University Billings. In my email inviting you to participate on this committee I asked the Student Success Committee to investigate and recommend programs, processes, and services that would help MSUB better serve its students and thereby improve our measures of student success. This charge letter to the committee is meant to provide a deeper explanation of what is being asked of the committee.

Charge:

The Student Success Committee is charged to investigate and recommend programs, processes, and services that would help MSU Billings better serve and support all of its student in attaining their educational, professional, and personal life goals and thereby improve our measures of student success. The committee is asked to provide recommendations to the University not later than October 1, 2015. In completing these tasks:

- Focus on our mission and motto of Access and Excellence. As a university we provide broad access to higher education and seek to deliver an excellent education to all committed to reaching their educational goals.
- Take into account the diverse nature of the students we serve. Research best practices in serving traditional students (18 to 24 years of age), adult students (over 24 years of age), at risk populations including underrepresented minorities, international students, first-generation students, low-income students, full- and part-time students, etc.
- Keep the university community informed about your work through presentations to governance, union, and administrative groups. Each of you represents specific groups that you will need to engage and educate.
- Seek opportunities to educate yourselves through reading, attendance at conferences, workshops, webinars, etc.

- Research best practices in supporting students so that they persist to graduation, these include:
 - Best practices in student transitions from high school or from another higher educational institution to a university including, but are not limited to, requiring new entering freshmen to live in the residence halls for their first and/or second years, freshmen interest groups (FIGs), learning/living communities, freshmen seminars, freshmen or university-wide common reading projects, peer mentoring, at-risk student monitoring, etc.
 - Best practices aimed at increasing both new and returning students including, but not limited to, holistic and/or intrusive advising, developing learning outcomes and syllabi for advising at different stages in a student's academic career, early warning systems, etc
 - Best practices aimed at improving student success in key academic courses that have high rates of students dropping out or receiving grades of D or F.
- Research the implementation of High Impact Practices in each major and the general education curriculum as a way to improve student engagement and participation.
<http://www.aacu.org/leap/hips>

There are numerous resources available to the committee both on campus and through national organizations. Please feel free to contact people on campus that have specific training and knowledge of key student success areas or who have data that you may need. I recommend that each of you become familiar with the following organizations

- National Resource Center for the First Year Experience and Students in Transition, University of South Carolina, <http://www.sc.edu/fye/>
- The John N. Gardner Institute for Excellence in Undergraduate Education, <http://www.jngi.org/>

In your final report, I ask that you address the following two questions:

1. What are the major areas in which our university could make the biggest gains in improving the success of our students?
2. What are the programs, processes, and cultural changes we could implement that would have the biggest positive impact on the success of our students and university?

Additionally, please provide information on the programs and processes you considered and the strengths and weaknesses of them.

While it is easy to look at the metrics and say we should do better, it is more important to make the commitment to continually find ways to better educate and serve the students we enroll at MSU Billings. As you can see, this is a major undertaking that won't be easy. You will ask questions and make recommendations that will challenge and encourage our university to aim higher, while continuing our commitment to be an open access university. Your work is essential to the long range future of our university.

Thank you again for your commitment to making MSU Billings a great place to learn, work, and live.