



## No laughing matter

Mock visit provides a serious sense of direction as MSU Billings prepares for accreditation visit in October 2008

By Rachel Schaffer

Three very special guests arrived in Billings on Sunday, October 14, and spent the next two and a half days getting to know every nook and cranny of the MSU Billings campuses. Dr. Elizabeth Street, Chief Planning Officer, Office of the President, at Central Washington University in Ellensburg, WA; Dr. Joseph Fedock, Senior Vice Provost at MSU Bozeman; and Ms. Susan Briggs, Vice Chancellor of Fiscal Affairs at the University of Montana

Western, comprised the evaluation team who came, saw, interviewed, and wrote a detailed report on what they found, including both strengths and weaknesses, in the draft of the Institutional Report (IR), which they had read before they arrived.

During their time on campus, the evaluators met with every constituency in every college on every campus: faculty, staff, students, and administrators; Student Affairs, Library, Facilities Services, Finance Group, Staff, Academic, and Student Senates, Information Technology, Bargaining Groups, Local Executive Board, Chancellor's Leadership Team, even a conference call with a member of the Board of Regents! They asked questions designed to gauge the climate on campus and listened carefully to the responses. They were not

here to judge but to serve as mentors and make helpful suggestions to further prepare us and the IR for the actual accreditation visit in fall 2008.

The team shared their overall findings with the Chancellor and Cabinet members, COI Steering Committee, and the Provost's Council in an exit meeting on Wednesday, October 17. In encouraging, carefully considered language, Chair Elizabeth Street went through the highlights of their written report, starting with and emphasizing the many strengths they found on our campuses and in our IR. She then moved on to the delicate problem areas, making recommendations for addressing those in the IR.

See Mock Visit, Page 2

# Recruitment Task Force seeks faculty involvement

By Gary Amundson and Shelly Andersen

The Recruitment Task Force feels strongly that faculty play a key role in the recruitment of new students.

The task force is in the process of identifying a team of faculty to assist with recruitment efforts.

We plan to identify a faculty representative(s)

from each of the Colleges to coordinate consistent faculty representation at selected recruiting events and activities.

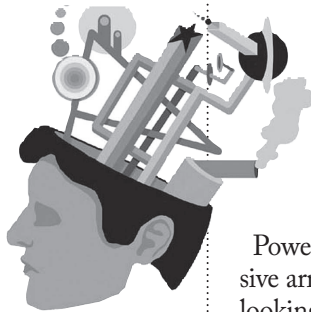
If you are a faculty member and are interested in joining this team

to assist with new student recruitment, please contact Gary Amundson or Shelly Andersen.

In addition, the Recruitment Task Force and the Office of New Student Services plans to work with each of the Colleges to develop program specific recruiting activities.

The College of Business has formed a recruiting/marketing committee under the direction of Dean Gary Young that will begin working on the College of Business New Student Recruitment Plan in 2007-2008. We hope that this will serve as a model for the other Colleges.

The Recruitment Task Force will continue to discuss additional efforts that support new student recruiting and the 2007-2008 Team 5200 initiatives.



# SOS makes a difference in our students' lives

By Rachel Schaffer

SOS could just as well stand for Save Our Students as for Student Opportunity Services, the chosen name of a Student Support Services program that has played a vital role on the MSU Billings campus since 1970.

The other part of the name, TRiO, belongs to the history of Title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965, which initially provided funding for three programs: Student Support Services, Talent Search, and Upward Bound. Thanks to this funding, colleges around the country are eligible to apply for four-year grants that allow them to offer a wide variety of services to students in greatest need of support while in school.

At MSUB, students who are first-generation college students, have a low income, or have a documented physical or learning disability are eligible to become SOS members.

Under the able leadership of Monica Powers, the staff of four offers an impressive array of services to students and is always looking for more ways to better serve its members.

There are student mentors; tutors for 100- and 200-level courses; structured learning groups for biology and statistics; workshops

on topics such as time management, note taking, and healthy life styles; Return to Learn, an ASC 101 course; financial aid information and help; grad school help and GRE prep; resume and letter writing help; resources of many kinds (books, tapes, calculators, computers, etc.); SOSAC, an activities club; and sometimes, even snacks for hungry visitors to the SOS offices. In general, SOS looks after the whole student and does so thoroughly.

There is no shortage of evidence that SOS is highly successful in strengthening student retention and helping students achieve their educational goals. The tutoring and structured learning groups are especially effective. Recent outcomes studies of SOS students enrolled in biology and statistics classes vs. their non-SOS counterparts show that much higher percentages of the SOS students earned C-'s or better in those classes than did non-SOS students.

In addition, 77% of SOS students receiving tutoring during Fall Semester, 2006, and 85% during Spring Semester, 2007, earned C-'s or better in the courses for which they received tutoring.

The numbers are clear: the right kind and amount of support makes a difference in our students' lives, and SOS provides it. SOS makes MSUB look good while it does good for its members.

## Mock Visit

Continued from Page 1

She commended us for being so far along with our preparations, the exhibit room for its resources and usefulness, and Patty Rukstad, CQI office star, for all her hard work.

One of the main recommendations from the visitors was for us to "tell our story" much more fully in the IR and give the evaluators a clearer sense of who we are, what our mission is, and how we carry it out. **They also noted two areas that we will need to address to avoid receiving recommendations from the**

**official evaluators: campus-wide attention to outcomes assessment and campus "crankiness."**

Overall, the visitors left us with a much-needed sense of direction for the work left to do in the year remaining before the official accreditation visit. To further our progress in that direction, we also invite suggestions and input from everyone on how best to address these areas of concern. Please feel free to contact anyone on the Steering Committee with your ideas.

Contact Patty Rukstad at the CQI/NWCCU Office in McMullen 308 at 247-5778 or check out [www.msubillings.edu/CQI](http://www.msubillings.edu/CQI)

## NWCCU ACCREDITATION VISIT TIMELINE

**Fall 2007:** Institutional Report (IR) revised; continue working on exhibits.

**Spring 2008:** Peer review of IR; visit arrangements finalized

**Summer 2008:** IR revised; exhibits organized

**October 13-15, 2008:** NWCCU visit

**Spring 2009:** NCATE visit