

ACADEMIC SENATE MINUTES

DATE: October 13, 2005

PRESENT:	Agnes Samples	Lorrie Steerey
	Paul Bauer	Audrey ConnerRosberg
	Ben Marschke	Keith Edgerton
	Randall Gloege	Bruce Brumley
	Craig McKenzie	Lewis Rife (student)
	Brittany Lane (student)	David Garloff (ex-officio)
	Tasneem Khaleel (ex-officio)	George White (ex-officio)
	Mary Susan Fishbaugh (ex-officio)	Curt Kochner (ex-officio)

ABSENT:	Mark Hardt – <i>excused</i>	Sandie Rietz – <i>excused</i>
	Noreen Lee – <i>excused</i>	Matt Redinger – <i>excused</i>
	Joe Michels (ex-officio)	John Cech (ex-officio)
	Kirk Lacy (ex-officio)	Terrie Iverson (ex-officio)

GUESTS:	Curtis Sherrodd (student)	Dan Hansen (student)
	Ron Sexton	

PRESIDING: Keith Edgerton, Chair

Keith Edgerton called the meeting to order at 3:39 p.m. in the Missouri room of the SUB.

The minutes of October 6 were accepted as presented.

I. DISCUSSION/ACTION ITEMS

A. Sabbatical Committee Nominees

The following list has been assembled:

- Brian Dillon
- Adrian Heidenreich
- Neil Jussila
- St. John Robinson
- Sue Barfield

Peter Warren
Oliver Chen
James Nowlin
Judy McEnany
Gershon Bulgatz
Randall Gloege
Walt Utroske
Michael Dennis
Brian Cast
John Pollock
Deb Schaffer (only if committee members are hard to come by)

⇒ The Senate approved the list of names to go to the Provost by acclamation.

B. Class Size, Qualified Faculty, and Hiring Priorities

Keith Edgerton stated that faculty and students have both voiced concerns about the size of classes and therefore the quality of the education we are providing. The Spring 2005 student/faculty ratios are up (Dr. Edgerton distributed a list of the ratios since 1996 which did not include the COT, provided by the Office of Institutional Research.). Chancellor Ron Sexton noted that the ratio is a result of taking the entire faculty FTE for the main campus and dividing it by the student FTE to get the average. Also the faculty FTE is full-time and part-time combined (full-time equivalent).

There were questions asked such as: Do we want to lower our ratio? If yes, how? What would be a good average class size that would give our students a quality education?

It was noted that with the prevalence of Lecturers and part-time faculty, they have become permanent faculty and in some cases are the sole person guiding a program. It was also noted that it doesn't matter the size of the class if the course isn't offered—some courses are only offered every third semester. How do we implement new programs, such as those on last week's "wish list," if we can't staff the ones we have now? It was observed that if needed classes were offered more often, that would boost FTE because students could take them when they needed them. It was answered that probably wouldn't help because only five or six students will take the new section. Many of our students already know what classes are only offered in spring or fall.

It was cited that the problem with part-time faculty is that we don't know if we will have funding from one year to the next to pay those people to teach. At least with tenured and tenure-track faculty, we know they will be here.

It was observed that the situation does arise where an unqualified part-time instructor is hired just so the department will have someone to teach a section. Often these are general education courses, and it only takes one bad experience—one bad instructor—to turn a student off from a subject for the rest of their university career. Conversely, it only takes one wonderful instructor to pique a student's interest in a previously unknown field. It is worth the money, which goes up every year, to have a good instructor.

It was noted that this semester there seems to be more classes with higher than normal numbers of students. They are just packed into the classrooms.

It was cited that the dilemma departments face is that large classes are bad, but the large general education sections help pay for the smaller upper level courses. Dean Tasneem Khaleel noted that some general education courses in Bozeman have 75 students, and that's after attrition.

Dr. Sexton stated that we can't identify quality based on student/faculty ratios. It's very risky. What we are seeing is what nearly all public and many private institutions are dealing with: how do you balance quality with affordability. In Montana, tuition has gone up 52% over the last four years, with no big change in per capita income. A student graduating with a two-year degree will earn almost \$10,000 less than the national average, and that disparity grows with higher degrees. Twenty years ago was the beginning of the state reducing funding for the University System. Back then, students paid 16% of their education costs. Now students pay 52.5%. Most likely those dollars will never be replaced. To counteract the deficit, we have to offer services as money makers to underwrite the upper level courses. Dr. Sexton also noted that course availability is based on student demand and the timing of that demand.

Dr. Sexton also noted the budget cutting suggestions the Senate provided last year we appreciated, but some were inappropriate. Last year, due to missing our FTE target, we had to cut \$2 million. He used our large enrollment reserve to mitigate that cut. However, he is keeping a smaller reserve this time. Everyone is now feeling the drop in enrollments. Bozeman actually had to give money back because they missed their FTE target for the first time. The trend we see here at MSU-Billings is more part-time students. This results in a larger head count but FTE remains the same, which means more part-time faculty to teach the larger number of students without generating any additional FTE. If we decide not to grow our FTE, we will very shortly run out of funding. We have to either raise tuition like crazy or grow FTE. It was observed that given the statistics the Chancellor has given us, we need to work at retaining our students.

It was cited that one main reason that students come here and stay here is the quality instructors they have had, both part- and full-time. We should do our best to make sure those students who have chosen to stick with MSU-Billings will continue to have quality instructors.

It was stated that we seem to have no hiring priorities for this year. Will we hire anyone? Dr. Sexton responded that we have no funding to hire additional faculty. The question was also raised as to why we have started a new baseball program when we have no funding. Dr. Sexton responded that the baseball program has brought, as of this fall, 60 full-time students to the University. There are not many other programs out there that can do something like that.

Dr. Sexton stated that he would like to quickly respond to the suggested cuts in the letter from the Senate last spring.

Reform enrollment targets.

Dr. Sexton stated that we set our enrollment goal at 1% and we barely met that. However, that 1% increase will not sustain us. It did result in less money having to be cut from the budget and returned to the legislature.

Stop attempting to acquire land around the main campus and in Red Lodge.

Dr. Sexton stated that they will not stop trying to acquire land, and he will discuss that with the Senate later if necessary. We are attempting to buy land by the COT to put the new building on.

Grow faculty FTE.

We are trying to grow the faculty, but it's tied in with department and student interest. There are waiting lists for some programs, especially the medical programs.

Cut the \$200,000 funding to the Comprehensive Capital Campaign.

There is no reason to do this because that money goes directly to scholarships and endowments.

Cut the COT Fast-Track program.

This was funded by a grant and will not be renewed, but it could not be removed last year because we had to fulfill our obligation.

Cut the funding to hire a new western Montana recruiter.

We don't recruit at all in western Montana and would could have some success there, as we have had recruiting in Wyoming.

Reduce the enrollment reserve and reallocate those funds to Academic Affairs.

We did move \$740,000 to Academic Affairs. However, the enrollment reserve is now smaller and that is worrisome.

It was noted that we should change the status quo in some way to retain all those students we lose from fall to spring. It was cited that we don't do enough to keep those students here. Dr. Sexton noted that there are many of our students who are working more than one part-time job as well as taking 15 credits. They are getting burnt out.

Dr. Edgerton stated that the Senate will formulate some recommendations that they will forward to the Chancellor.

The meeting adjourned at 5:07 p.m.

rjrm