

## ACADEMIC SENATE MINUTES

**DATE:** March 21, 2024

**PRESENT:** Suzette Nynas  
Mara Pierce  
Debra Schoenfeld  
Kari Dahle-Huff  
Paul Pope  
Jim Barron (ex-officio)  
Susan Gilbertz (ex-officio)  
Vern Gagnon (ex-officio)  
Sue Balter-Reitz (ex-officio)

Matt Queen  
Jennifer Lynn  
Susan Gregory  
John Pannell  
Melissa Boehm  
Tami Haaland (ex-officio)  
Tom Manthey (ex-officio)  
Sep Eskandari (ex-officio)  
Eileen Wright (ex-officio)

**ABSENT:** Austin Bennett\*  
David Russell (student)  
Leslie Weldon (ex-officio)  
Jana Marcette (ex-officio)

Sarah Keller  
Ann Beste-Guldborg (ex-officio)  
Kim Hayworth (ex-officio)

\* *excused*

**GUESTS:** Joann Stryker  
Andrea Aebersold

Kathleen Thatcher  
Cheri Johannes

**PRESIDING:** Jennifer Lynn, Chair

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Jennifer Lynn called the meeting to order at 3:41 p.m. online and thanked everyone for attending virtually.

### I. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Please take the Faculty Fellows survey, sent out by Joann Stryker of Institutional Research, as they need data.

At the Dillon BOR meeting last week, the MUS Teaching Scholars were announced, and they have chosen our own John Pannell and Kari Dahle-Huff!

Senator nominations are due April 1.

## II. ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES

The minutes of February 15 & 29 were accepted as presented.

## III. PROVOST REPORT

Dr. Eskandari congratulated Mr. Pannell and Dr. Dahle-Huff on their selection as MUS Teaching Scholars.

The Provost reported that the COB Dean search has concluded and an announcement will be out soon. Dr. Susan Gilbertz has accepted the offer and will be the new Dean of the College of Business.

He noted that he sent out a request recently for faculty leaders for Honors and Graduate Studies. Faculty involvement in these areas is critical and the appointment will come with reassigned time and a stipend, including a summer stipend. The deadline is Monday (March 25).

## IV. DISCUSSION/ACTION ITEMS

### A. Vice Chancellor Evaluations

Dr. Lynn noted that a few faculty members approached her about extending administrator evaluations to the two other Vice Chancellors. We are already evaluating the Chancellor, Provost, and all Deans. The AAUP red book recommends evaluating all administrators.

It was noted that the original survey instrument questions were constructed in consultation with those to be evaluated, so we will need to do the same for the Vice Chancellor for Administration & Finance and the Vice Chancellor for Student Access & Success. We can probably re-use some questions.

We do have a break year in the rotation, so we could put these two Vice Chancellors in the schedule there. The first evaluation would then be in the 2026-27 year.

It was cited that the original decision to evaluate only the academic side of the house plus the Chancellor, was a result of the trepidation voiced from many prior administrators about being evaluated by the faculty.

It was noted that if Associate Deans are to continue as a position on campus, they should also be included in the evaluation process.

⇒ Motion by Suzette Nynas, seconded by Mara Pierce to **implement evaluations for the Vice Chancellor for Administration & Finance and the Vice Chancellor for Student Access & Success, as well as include any Associate Deans (if those positions stay going forward) with the regular Dean evaluation rotation.**

⇒ Motion carried.

Paul Pope agreed to chair a subcommittee and gather members to create the survey instrument for the Vice Chancellors. The survey will be created next year, ready to implement in Fall 2026.

### **B. Barnes & Noble First Day Complete**

A number of concerns were raised at the open forums this week:

- Lack of shared governance before the initial contract was signed
- Inability for faculty to choose more than one format/modality for a book
- If a student does need a different format/modality, they can get it but they have to pay extra for it, as it is outside the program
- No up-front pricing for students to purchase rather than rent (they must wait until the end of the semester to purchase)
- If books are not returned by students, holds may be placed on their accounts by MSUB
- The false statement that the faculty experience will not change, and that students will not be harmed
- Unwillingness from B&N to have an opt-in option
- Price comparisons based on new book prices, not used
- A study was cited that there are no significant differences in *academic performance* for students already in book programs like this one
- Students deferring expenses
- The email notification that will go out to students about 30 days before the start of the semester does *not* allow students to opt-out at that time
- Security for student data—Since B&N will have the class rosters, will this data be shared with third party vendors?
- Union leadership asked for a copy of the contract; we learned that B&N has the right to audit our Registrar's Office
- Someone will have to audit the links in the LMS, but who will do that?
- The non-book material packets that B&N can assemble for faculty will not be available to students who opt-out
- No answers given for issues that our veteran and military students may encounter
- B&N reserves the right to renegotiate the per credit price every year

The answer from B&N always seems to be “We’ll figure it out in implementation.” They do not seem to take our concerns seriously.

It was suggested that our book situation is never going to be perfect. We have to guide our students as best we can to find the best prices for books, which many of us are already doing.

Provost Eskandari noted that OCHE has not given a decision whether this program will be designated a fee or not. He also noted that our campus-run bookstore was losing about \$300,000 a year, so we need a solution. There is no perfect solution, especially for a

campus our size that does not have the economy of scale to support a campus store. We must address all the questions raised to get a result that is as inclusive and helpful to our students as possible.

The question was raised as to whether we can push implementation back even further. It has already been moved back from Fall 2024 to Spring 2025. Especially since we are implementing a new LMS in the Spring, it really does not make sense to basically implement the book program twice, with two different LMS. Further, even though our LMS is MSU-system-wide, the book program will not be. The LMS integration will happen with Bozeman, and our book program integration with the LMS will have to get in line with all the other requests they handle.

It was noted that there is little trust in B&N, since their answers about how a given concern will be handled vary based on who is answering. It is very disappointing, since they are trying to earn our business. We cannot commit without firmer answers on these concerns. The question was raised as to whether we can cancel this contract and perhaps find another vendor. It was argued that there likely isn't a better vendor out there. The big effort will be educating our students on opting out when that is best for them.

Dr. Eskandari agreed to recommend that we push back the launch another semester (to Fall 2025).

Dr. Lynn will put together a message to send our concerns *in writing* to B&N. They can then offer solutions in writing as well. If our concerns are not assuaged, the Senate can then recommend we cancel the contract, if needed.

The meeting adjourned at 5:02 p.m.

rjrm