



Chancellor's Cabinet Meeting Minutes
February 18, 2025 2:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.

In Attendance: Chancellor Hicswa, Kathleen Thatcher, Suzette Nynas, Kim Hayworth, Richard Beer, Mike Bazemore, Kathy Kotecki, Dan Carter, Krista Montague, Paula Highlander, and Natalie Preston

Guests: Joann Stryker

Absent: Leslie Weldon

DISCUSSION

Student Achievement Data

Kathleen Thatcher, Director of Assessment and Accreditation, and Joann Stryker, Director of Institutional Research, presented accreditation requirements from the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU) related to utilization of student achievement data. Kathleen explained the requirements listed in Standards 1.D.2., 1.D.3., and 1.D.4. Joann introduced the [Student Achievement Webpage](#), on the public-facing Institutional Research page of the MSU Billings website. She provided a brief tour of the page, highlighting its data and data sources. Discussion followed on how to more broadly communicate the data and the use of student achievement data across campus. Chancellor Hicswa acknowledged the team's efforts in creating the data dashboards and making them available for users, with Joann noting that the reporting cycle of this data updates each summer.

INFORMATION

Chancellor Hicswa reminded everyone to await guidance from the Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education (OCHE) on recent Executive Orders. More than 50 executive orders have been handed down since January 20 and many of those that impact higher education are in the process of being litigated. She also informed Cabinet that the Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights published a "Dear Colleague" letter over the weekend "to clarify and reaffirm the nondiscrimination obligations of schools ... that receive federal financial assistance" from the department. OCHE staff were aware of the letter and they plan to provide guidance this week.

Chancellor Hicswa advised Cabinet not to pre-comply with any order until we receive guidance from OCHE. She encouraged staff and faculty to focus on our retention initiatives and serving our students.

Chancellor Hicswa announced that required Cybersecurity Awareness Training has been completed by 95% of staff and faculty.

FY 25 Budget Update

Chancellor Hicswa explained that the budget for the next fiscal year is working its way through the legislative process. The Joint Appropriations Subcommittee on Education, which considers the OCHE/MUS budget in House Bill 2 has been completed and will work its way through full appropriations process. The budget includes an increase in state appropriations with a present law adjustment to the state employee pay plan. For FY 26 budget planning, the insurance holiday will end. We will therefore need to plan for approximately \$700,000 in additional expenses.

Chancellor Hicswa transitioned to discuss the FY 25 budget status. An additional revenue shortfall of approximately \$400,000 due to a 14% enrollment drop in graduate studies is anticipated. There was robust discussion about finding ways to shore up finances ahead of the end of the fiscal year. Cabinet requested information regarding reductions made last year to get a better understanding of options to explore.

FLSA Update

Paula Highlander, Director of Human Resources, updated on the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA). On November 15, a federal judge ruled to strike down the Biden administration's Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) overtime final rule. The ruling strikes down all components of the rule, meaning both the July and January salary thresholds are no longer in effect, and the triennial automatic updates will not take place. The decision applies to all covered employers and employees under the FLSA nationwide. The salary threshold set in the 2019 regulations (\$35,568 per year or \$683 per week) will be the salary threshold employers should adhere to.

Meeting-Free Weeks

Chancellor Hicswa requested feedback on having meeting-free weeks. Discussion followed. The group determined that they would look at days bordering holidays and discuss further.

UPDATES (*Reprinted as submitted*)

Krista Montague, Foundation and Alumni CEO

Just over \$4.1 million has been raised to date (AY24-25).

The Inaugural Chancellor's Circle reception will be held on February 19. This giving society honors and thanks our donors who gave \$1000 or more in the previous fiscal year. We are excited to have 67 total RSVPs.

Helena Alumni event for the evening of March 12 at Dorothy's Lounge (downtown). [RSVP HERE](#) if you are an MSUB Alumni or MSUB employee who will be in Helena. Please help us spread the word to any Helena area alumni you know!

Jacket Giving Day is March 19 and 20 – stay tuned for more details (over 25 meaningful projects go live March 1)

Just a reminder we are welcoming volunteers for the 2025 MSUB Wine & Food Festival. Opportunities can be found here: [MSUB Foundation & Alumni](#)

Kathleen Thatcher, Director of Assessment and Accreditation

The Year 7 NWCCU visit will take place October 8-10, 2025. Please mark this on your calendars. If you receive a request for information related to the year 7 report or visit, please be timely with your response. The College of Education will host their accreditors (CAEP) virtually April 9-11, 2025. Please support the faculty and staff in COE during this important re-accreditation process.

Program assessment reports for City College (April), College of Education (March), and the College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences (March) are due this spring. Additionally, co-curricular program assessment reports for Academic Affairs and Students Access and Success are due this May. These documents will be considered during the NWCCU's Year 7 report and visit. Please use the support of the Assessment and Accreditation office in advance of these due dates to be sure your program has what it needs to be successful with your assessment efforts.

Suzette Nynas, Academic Senate Chair

The College Experience course (COLS 108) received final approval at Senate on January 23rd. This week, the Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) sent out a call for proposals to faculty who may be interested in teaching the course. The CTL is seeking faculty from each college to teach these courses, starting this fall (2025). The applications will be reviewed by The College Experience CTL committee and when chosen faculty will undergo training to offer the course.

The Senate continues its work on curriculum and academic policies. The Academic Senate Executive Committee approved the template for plans of study, and we are working with the Provost, Jana Marcette, Rita Rabe Meduna, the Registrar's office and Advising to develop a process and workflow for these plans of study. Lastly, we will be finalizing our Retirement with Distinction policy so that we can recognize and honor faculty who have significantly contributed to the university but who, due to their faculty status, would be ineligible for emeritus.

Dan Carter, Director of University Communications and Marketing

UCAM is stepping up efforts to better communicate to the campus community and various stakeholders with creativity, clarity and consistency.

- New posters developed to support the Science Expo.
- A series of digital marketing projects have been launched.
- Two chapters of The New Reality Chronicles have been published.
- Working to get proposals from sign companies on manufacturing wayfinding signs.
- Stepping up awareness of faculty and student achievement for news stories, videos and social media feeds.
- Elevating awareness of MSU Billings in the community by taking part in meetings that matter to the community.

Natalie Preston, Executive Assistant to the Chancellor

The Montana Legislative Session has completed the first thirty days of the ninety-day session. On Wednesday, February 19, the Section E Subcommittee will discuss the OCHE budget. House Bills 5 and 10 are expected to be discussed as well and may be acted upon. The hearing for the state employee pay plan has not yet been scheduled.

Leslie Weldon, Vice Chancellor for Administration and Finance

Waiting on MSU Bozeman to post RFPs for Pour Rights and Food Service

Business Services:

Preparing Tuition & Fee Schedules to submit to MSU/OCHE

Presenting Tuition & Fee Schedules to ASMSUB

Facilities:

Electricians are working to install security cameras across both campuses, they are currently working in the parking garage.

McMullen:

Contractors working to install flooring, repair walls and paint. Exterior work is complete as far as possible for now. There will be additional landscaping and cleanup as we get closer to spring. The full McMullen parking lot can now be used.

PE Building:

The roof replacement contract was awarded to Dave Loden Construction. They are the same contractor that replaced the roof in 1993. They will begin work in the spring of 2025.

Library:

The carpet on the ground floor is complete. LI 231 wall repair is underway. The flooring is scheduled for installation the week of February 17th. Final seating and technology updates will be completed after flooring. LI 231 is expected to be back online by the first week of March.

LA Building:

Working with the Art Department to determine an interim solution to preserve the Northcutt Steele gallery while we remedy the underlying cause of the leaking.

Cisel:

Demolition work will take place in room 001 the week of February 10th.

Campus Wide:

Electricians are working on updating security cameras across both campuses.

RMTD has given the final approval for the retaining wall rebuild outside of the Yellowstone Science building.

Finance:

- FY26 Budget Workbooks are being created
- FY26 Personnel Budgets
- Department budget review for FY26 preparation

Payroll:

- Vendor payments
- Securing out-of-state business licenses and setting up workers compensation and unemployment for PT faculty hires outside of Montana

- Development of the summer session calendar
- List of Non-Tenured Fixed Term Faculty
- Pippenger and merit awards
- Ellucian Experience

Finance

- Working on the BOR Athletics report, CUPA, IPEDS, and UBIT reports.
- KEMC Audit is ongoing
- LAD Financial Statement Audit is almost finished, just waiting on a Bozeman component unit
- Space Rentals & Administrative Assessments
- Athletics Quarterly Camp Commissions
- Insurance Reimbursements

IT:

- Working on an interactive campus map that will be available for review in the coming weeks.
- Local right rights removal for COB and COE faculty will begin on February 7th. Attending department chairs meetings for CLASS and CHPS to discuss their timelines.
- Experimenting with AI video generation that has an AI avatar read a script over the presentation.
- Equipment in McMullen 305 will be upgraded over Spring Break.