ACADEMIC SENATE MINUTES

DATE: October 26, 2023

PRESENT:

Mara Pierce	Jennifer Lynn
Scott Gorman	Susan Gregory
John Pannell	Austin Bennett
Paul Pope	Melissa Boehm
Vern Gagnon	Jim Barron (ex-officio)
Tami Haaland (ex-officio)	Susan Gilbertz (ex-officio)
Sep Eskandari (ex-officio)	Kim Hayworth (ex-officio)

ABSENT:

Suzette Nynas*	Matt Queen*
Debra Schoenfeld*	Kari Dahle-Huff*
David Russell (student)	Ann Beste-Guldborg (ex-officio)
Vicki Trier (ex-officio)*	Leslie Weldon (ex-officio)
Jana Marcette (ex-officio)	Eileen Wright (ex-officio)

* excused

GUESTS:

Kathleen Thatcher	Joy Honea
Andrea Aebersold	

PRESIDING: Jennifer Lynn, Chair

Jennifer Lynn called the meeting to order at 3:43 p.m. in the City College Health Science North Conference Room.

I.   ANNOUNCEMENTS

None

II.   ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES

The minutes of October 12 were accepted as presented.

III.   PROVOST REPORT

Provost Eskandari stated that OCHE has given approval for our agreement with Barnes & Nobel First Day Complete with an implementation date of Fall 2024. The campus implementation team will include faculty, Registrar representatives, and Dr. Eskandari himself. He will provide an update at every Senate meeting he attends. He also noted that the fee for books will work like our current student fees, such as the ASC fee. It will not be a fee associated with a course.

Dr. Eskandari also reported that OCHE is putting together a system-wide AI working group to gather information and make policy recommendations. We will be asked to nominate someone from our campus, likely from the Senate's AI Subcommittee.

IV.   OTHER REPORTS

John Pannell reported the AI Subcommittee held reading and discussion forums with the Center for Teaching and Learning. Next they plan to review existing policy and make recommendations. It was noted that the more in-front of the issue we are, the better off we will be, especially in terms of the OCHE working group.

V.   CONSENT AGENDA

Title	Status	Received
EDU 353: Junior Field Experience	Edited	10/11/2023
Spanish Minor	Edited	10/11/2023

⇒ Motion by Vern Gagnon, seconded by Paul Pope to **approve the Consent Agenda.**

⇒ Motion carried.

VI.   ITEMS FOR APPROVAL

Title	Status	Received
Item 1		
EDCI 697: Capstone: Issues in Education	Edited	10/12/2023
Item 2		
Teaching and Learning Online Certificate	Deleted	10/12/2023

There was no one present able to describe the items. They will be postponed to the next meeting.

VII.   DISCUSSION/ACTION ITEMS

A. Scholarship Process Update
Kim Hayworth, Vice Chancellor for Student Access & Success
Dr. Hayworth noted that last year's roll out of a new process did not go smoothly, partly because of some staff losses. However, they are re-evaluating the process and have worked with the four-campus Academic Works liaison to make sure we are using the platform to its full potential. The scholarship platform will open for faculty December 1, 2023, partly because of the extra time needed for changes, but also because the FAFSA is being revised by the federal government, and they will not roll it out until sometime in December. The platform will be open for students to apply on February 1, 2024, and will remain open until September 30, 2024, to allow for re-awarding of funds that are not accepted.

It was noted that merit-based scholarships, based on high school performance and other factors, can be awarded earlier than the endowed scholarships. Need-based scholarships must have the FAFSA info to establish need.

They will be making an effort to get student applications to faculty committees for endowed scholarships as early as possible, and then ask those committees to award funds by Spring Break 2024. It was noted that it might be a good idea to let Departments know ahead of time which scholarships they are considering. Committees will also be asked for second and perhaps third choices, because not all students accept the award. Financial Aid must also check to make sure each student is not being over-awarded.

The question was raised about students receiving their aid delayed to after the start of the semester. Dr. Hayworth noted that if students apply for scholarships late, perhaps in the summer, they may be late in receiving aid.

B. Proposed Regular and Substantive Interaction Policy
Andrea Aebersold, Director, CTL; Joy Honea, Faculty Co-Director, CTL
Dr. Aebersold stated that this initiative is coming from the U.S. Department of Ed, with the idea of stopping online courses that are run by software, often from for-profit schools, with no instructor interaction. The guidelines from the Department of Ed are quite vague, but MSUB can create a policy and then the Center for Teaching and Learning can provide options for how to meet the policy.

Dr. Honea noted that we will not have trouble complying with the federal policy, but we should create a campus policy. We already require peer reviews by faculty colleagues as well as faculty evaluations. Department Chairs are responsible for reviewing their part-time faculty.

Provost Eskandari thanked Dr. Aebersold and Dr. Honea, as well as Kathleen Thatcher and Sue Balter-Reitz for their work on this project. This, like the federal gainful employment policy, will be one of several measures we need to adopt.

Dr. Honea noted that the CTL offers training for faculty who have not taught online before, as well as training to prepare for an evaluation.

It was agreed that the CTL will develop a policy draft to be adopted by the Senate.

C. Success of Students Who Add a Course Late
We probably don't need to change policy, but include this as part of best practices for advising students. Dr. Eskandari noted that the date a student adds a course is recorded in Banner, so we could get some data on success of those students who add late. Dr. Lynn will reach out to IR to see about getting this data. Provost Eskandari also noted that MSUB's last day to add is similar to what most universities have.

VIII.   NEW BUSINESS

The texts sent out about the water main break at McMullen were confusing, as all they say is "Something happened that may impact your safety. Check your email." Can those messages be improved? Perhaps different messages for a water main break vs. a theft warning, etc.

The meeting adjourned at 4:38 p.m.

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MSUB Scholarships

- MSUB scholarship application opens December 1, 2023
  - Priority deadline is February 1, 2024
  - We encourage all returning students to apply
  - Some scholarships will be awarded by using student information from Banner
- Scholarship Committees
  - Communication w/ Deans late Nov. to check list of Scholarship Committee Chairs w/ 2023
  - Scholarship Committee Chair communication before December 7, 2023
    - Identify committee members
    - Scholarship Committees will receive Academic Works and process information by January 17, 2024
    - Academic Works platforms opens to Scholarship Committees on Feb. 7, 2024
    - Scholarship Committee nominations due by March 1, 2024

Regular and Substantive Interaction

New U.S. Department of Education regulations for distance (online) education require **regular and substantive interaction** between students and their instructors. The phrase "regular and substantive interaction" comes from the federal definition of distance education. While regular and substantive interaction is specifically mentioned in the US Department of Education's definition of distance education, it is applicable to any class regardless of instructional modality (synchronous or asynchronous).

While this is a federal requirement MSU Billings, as a leader in distance education in Montana, has long realized that the interaction between faculty and students is the hallmark of quality education. We have both a legal and ethical responsibility to provide quality interaction with our student.

Regular and Substantive Interaction has three elements 1) It must be initiated by the instructor; 2) it must be frequent and consistent; 3) it must be focused on the course subject.

Faculty teaching online courses are responsible for complying with this policy and its associated federal regulations. Faculty teaching online courses are responsible for ensuring their courses are designed to facilitate regular and substantive interaction between instructors and students. Faculty may consult with the Center for Teaching and Learning to ensure that their online courses meet the above regular and substantive interaction requirements.

Each department or academic unit is responsible for ensuring instructors who teach online courses in their department comply with this policy.

Definitions of Regular and Substantive Interaction

Substantive interaction is defined as engaging students in teaching, learning, and assessment, consistent with the content under discussion and also includes the following:
1. Providing direct instruction;
2. Assessing or providing feedback on a student's coursework;
3. Providing information or responding to questions about the content of a course or competency;
4. Facilitating a group discussion regarding the content of a course or competency; or
5. Other instructional activities approved by the institution's or program's accrediting agency.

Regular interaction requires the opportunity for substantive interactions with the student *on a predictable and regular basis* commensurate with the length of time and the amount of content in the course or competency. The instructor is responsible for *promptly and proactively* engaging in substantive interaction with the student.

Examples of Regular and Substantive Interaction

1. Participation in regularly scheduled learning sessions where there is an opportunity for direct interaction between the student and the qualified instructor.
   (Note: merely logging into class is insufficient without further participation.)
2. Provide personalized comments (in any medium) for an individual student's assignment or exam.
3. Actively facilitate an online discussion.
4. Post-assessment debriefings based upon class performance.
5. Provide an overview video to accompany recorded lectures.
6. Use of small working/study groups that are moderated by the instructor.

Examples of What is Not Considered Regular and Substantive Interaction
1. Assignment of recorded webinars, videos, and reading materials without instructor-initiated interaction.
2. Contact with instructors not related to the course subject matter.
3. Adding numeric grades to the course gradebook
4. A student submits a quiz that is automatically graded.
5. Reminding students of the course attendance policy.
6. Posting an announcement about an upcoming assignment deadline.
7. Providing an open-ended online forum that is not moderated by the instructor.