



## ACADEMIC SENATE MINUTES

**DATE:** January 22, 2026

**PRESENT:** Suzette Nynas  
Jen Lynn  
Heather Thompson-Bahm  
Kari Dahle-Huff  
Christine Whitlatch  
Sue Balter-Reitz  
Alexandra Slade (student)  
Susan Gilbertz (ex-officio)  
Vern Gagnon (ex-officio)  
Leslie Weldon (ex-officio)  
Eileen Wright (ex-officio)  
Matt Queen  
Debra Schoenfeld  
Mel Walker  
John Pannell  
Melissa Boehm  
Elijah Sneigoski (student)  
Tami Haaland (ex-officio)  
Melanie Reaves (ex-officio)  
Lee Vartanian (ex-officio)  
Kim Hayworth (ex-officio)

**ABSENT:** Kurt Toenjes (ex-officio)\* Sam Boerboom (ex-officio)  
\* *excused*

**GUESTS:** Christina Wulf  
Bre Griffin  
Kathleen Thatcher  
Joann Stryker

**PRESIDING:** Suzette Nynas, Chair

Suzette Nynas called the meeting to order at 3:40 p.m. in the Chancellor's Conference Room.

## J ANNOUNCEMENTS

Faculty Excellence Awards are February 24. Please RSVP by February 13.

The College Experience Committee met for the first time yesterday, and Matt Queen was elected Chair.

The Senate welcomes back Kari Dahle-Huff from sabbatical.

## II. ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES

The minutes of December 11 were accepted as presented.

## III. PROVOST & VICE CHANCELLOR REPORTS

### **Lee Vartanian, Provost & Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs**

The Provost reported we had an excellent event for Martin Luther King Jr. Day this week. Bailee Stenger from the Office of Student Engagement organized the event.

- Strategic planning is underway, and soon faculty will be receiving invitations to forums.
- The search for our CIO will have a candidate on campus soon.
- The CFO search will be opening soon, to replace Leslie Weldon.
- The COE Dean search is happening now.
- The Montana Center for Inclusive Education has hired a new director, Amanda Stonerock.
- Kathleen Thatcher is our new OCHE Liaison.

Dr. Vartanian highlighted several faculty publications:

- Dr. Mark Jacobson, Professor of Math, has a new paper: Jacobson, M. (2026) GPS Transmissivity through Light Rain. *Positioning*, 17, 1-11. doi: 10.4236/pos.2026.171001
- Dr. Lynn George was featured, along with her students, in a feature this week regarding their collaborative research on ALS
- Dr. Rachael de la Cruz, Assistant Professor of History, just published a fascinating article in the *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*: “Serving Admiral’s Row The Making of Filipino Navy Stewards and Community in Hampton Roads Virginia During the Twentieth Century”
- Dr. Cody Patton just found out that his dissertation is a top 3 finalist for the prestigious Krooss Prize awarded by the Business History Conference
- Stephanie Dishno is hosting an artist’s talk today at 4:30 for her latest exhibition “What We Hold Onto” in the Northcutt Steel Gallery.

### **Leslie Weldon, Vice Chancellor for Administration & Finance**

Ms. Weldon noted that we had a great pool of candidates for the CIO search, and we will have a campus visit with the top choice on February 2. Financial Services and Budget is in the midst of FY27 budget planning. Business Services is working hard to get students confirmed for attendance. There were some challenges with the new MyMSUB.

### **Kim Hayworth, Vice Chancellor for Student Access & Success**

Dr. Hayworth noted that the scholarship application opened December 1, with a soft close on February 1. Scholarship committees will begin reviewing applications after February 1. Financial Aid will be offering workshops or one-on-one training with scholarship committee chairs to get them familiar with the platform.

The Golden Merit, Outstanding Undergraduate Student, and Student Leadership awards nominations opened in December and will be open until March 9. A longer nomination period was requested last year. The nomination and information is on the Center for Engagement webpage.

Free spring bus passes are available for students through the Buzz Stop and at City College Jacket Student Central.

The search for the new Director of the Military & Veterans Success Center has opened. Eric Brown, part-time certification official, will be upping his hours to help cover the Center until a new director is hired. The MVSC also had its annual audit this week, and departing Director Shane Grantham set us up well for it.

Dr. Hayworth also gave a brief enrollment report. Spring census is February 4.

- Total headcount: 3,758 (down 2.5% but Dual Enrollment will likely change that)
- Dual Enrollment is down about 20%, but that's because SD2's schedule changed this year
- Undergraduate enrollment is up 5%
- Graduate enrollment is down 4.6%
- New and transfer students up 7.7% over last Spring
- FTE is almost 1% up
- Retention for fall to spring is 85%

Vern Gagnon, Dean, also reported that the search for the City College Assistant Dean/Dual Enrollment Director closes February 6 and they have a strong applicant pool.

#### IV. OTHER REPORTS

##### **EAB Navigate**

Vice Chancellor Hayworth reported on the Early Alerts for Fall 2025, attached to these minutes.

It was noted that reaching students via text through the EAB Navigate works really well. Faculty making early alerts are really helping identify students who need help getting their semester started.

#### V. ITEMS FOR APPROVAL

Item 1		
Ultrasound Technology Certificate of Applied Science	Deleted	1/15/2026

⇒ Motion by Christine Whitlatch, seconded by John Pannell to **approve Item 1**.

Vern Gagnon, Dean of City College, noted that the two semester Certificate program has not been used by the department for some time, as they moved to the AAS program. There are no students in this Certificate program.

⇒ Motion carried.

Item 2		
90s Courses Creation Policy	Added	1/16/2026

⇒ Motion by Jen Lynn, seconded by Matt Queen to **approve Item 2**.

This policy will aid the Registrar's Office and Academic Senate Office in building seminar/workshop courses for faculty. It was noted that the policy includes "If a similar course already exists, the regular curricular process will be followed." No retroactive clean up will be done.

It was noted that seminars and special topics courses should only be offered three times as such, and should then be converted to a regular course.

Also, an independent study course cannot be used to replace an already existing course.

The question was raised regarding a course in the College of Business, wherein some students had the financial ability to travel abroad to complete a project over Spring Break. This is not a requirement of the course and the learning outcomes are the same, as students can stay here and complete a project. Students traveling abroad need to be covered by our insurance while in a course. Should the students who are able to travel be enrolled in a separate special topics course? Adding a separate special topics course also increases the faculty load, which can be problematic. It was noted that the College of Education used to offer a course with a similar situation, but they no longer do. It was requested that the COB write up a proposal for what they are trying to do and the Senate will consider it at a future meeting. This may require a policy, or it might be a single course with special considerations.

⇒ Motion carried.

## VI. DISCUSSION/ACTION ITEMS

### A. CLASS Senator Vacancy Temporary Appointment

Emily Arendt is not able to continue as the temporary CLASS representative, so we have a vacancy. Joseph Bryan indicated his interest and agreed to serve for the Spring semester.

⇒ The Senate approved (with one abstention) the appointment of Joseph Bryan for Spring 2026.

### B. Dean Poll Completed

The Senate Executive Committee has analyzed the results. Provost Vartanian reviewed the summary reports. The raw data and summary reports were sent to the Deans on Tuesday. The summary reports will be posted to the Senate intranet page this week.

VII. NEW BUSINESS

During these uncertain times with ICE enforcement in communities, MSUB needs to know how to appropriately and properly respond. Jennifer Lynn agreed to lead this initiative. The Senate will continue discussions.

The meeting adjourned at 4:56 p.m.

rjrm

1/22/26

Report for Academic Senate regarding Faculty and Early Alerts for Nonattendance

*Attendance-related Early Alerts issued by Faculty in Navigate360: Comparison of Fall 2025 and 2024, start of term to Census*

	Attendance Concerns: Never Attended	Attendance Concerns: Missing Classes	Attendance Concerns: Stopped Attending	Totals
9/3/25 to Census	124 faculty/5 Katie	42	14	185
9/4/24 to Census	95	34	9	138

\*Note – these alert numbers do not include Dual Enrollment students

50 more attendance-related alerts were issued for non-DE students in 2025 between the start of term and Census than in 2024. Faculty efforts to identify students who are not attending or are otherwise in need of support to start the semester successfully have been critical. Faculty-issued alerts remain the most accurate and timely method of obtaining information on students who are not attending and attempt to reach them.

The ability to pull overall and course-specific Canvas log-in information via Navigate360 is useful, but only to the extent that it can be determined if a course is actively using Canvas. When I (Katie) examined the “No Canvas Log In” lists beginning 9/11/25, I was pleased to find that many of the students on the list already had alerts issued by faculty for non-attendance. However, I had a difficult time deciding who else to issue alerts for. While I could fairly easily exclude students enrolled in internships, courses that had not yet begun, etc., I did not have the knowledge of individual course structure to make this decision for many others. As noted previously, getting attendance data from faculty themselves is the most useful way to identify students who are not attending or experiencing barriers to retention.