

ACADEMIC SENATE MINUTES**DATE:** October 23, 2025

PRESENT: Suzette Nynas
Emily Arendt
Debra Schoenfeld
Mel Walker
John Pannell
Paul Pope
Sue Balter-Reitz
Melanie Reaves (ex-officio)
Kim Hayworth (ex-officio)

Matt Queen
Jen Lynn
Heather Thompson-Bahm
Rachael Waller
Christine Whitlatch
Melissa Boehm
Susan Gilbertz (ex-officio)
Vern Gagnon (ex-officio)
Eileen Wright (ex-officio)

ABSENT: Vikash Kumar (student)
Tami Haaland (ex-officio)*
Leslie Weldon (ex-officio)*
* *excused*

Kurt Toenjes (ex-officio)*
Lee Vartanian (ex-officio)*
Sam Boerboom (ex-officio)

GUESTS: Bre Griffin
Joann Stryker

Kathleen Thatcher

PRESIDING: Suzette Nynas, Chair

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

I. ANNOUNCEMENTS

ResearchFest is tonight at 5:00 at Craft Local.

Preview Day is Thursday, October 30.

The Senate congratulated Kathleen Thatcher on the NWCCU visit. Ms. Thatcher noted she is working on fact and error checking the report, which is due back to NWCCU

today. She, Dr. Hicswa, and Dr. Vartanian will meet with the NWCCU Board of Commissioners in January and the final results will be released around the end of February.

II. ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES

The minutes of October 2 were accepted as presented.

III. PROVOST & VICE CHANCELLOR REPORTS

Provost Lee Vartanian

Dr. Vartanian's father is in the hospital so he is traveling to see him. A short report is attached to these minutes.

Vice Chancellor for Administration & Finance Leslie Weldon

Ms. Weldon is in Butte participating in Leadership Montana. A short report is attached to these minutes.

Vice Chancellor for Student Access & Success Kim Hayworth

Dr. Hayworth noted that this week, Ruffalo Noel Levitz presented at University campus and City College. She will share slides from those presentations with Jacket Leadership Team, which then can be shared with the Senate. RNL discussed the national landscape and how we did this year.

The closing session for the current Elder in Residence, Janice Little Light-Hudetz, will be tomorrow. Anyone is welcome between 10:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m. Then, Monday, our next Elder, Dr. Lester R. Johnson III arrives. Our students have really enjoyed the Elder in Residence program!

Student Health Services had their accreditation visit last week and it went very well.

IV. OTHER REPORTS

None.

V. ITEMS FOR APPROVAL

Title	Status	Received	Request Type
Biology BA Moratorium	Added	10/16/2025	Policy
Broadfield Science Teaching Licensure Option BS Moratorium	Added	10/16/2025	Policy
Broadfield Science BS Moratorium	Added	10/16/2025	Policy
Academic Senate Bylaws – Eligibility <i>Requires all faculty vote</i>	Added	10/15/2025	Policy

Academic Senate Bylaws – Vacancy Appointments <i>Requires all faculty vote</i>	Added	10/15/2025	Policy
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It was requested that the moratoriums be held until the next meeting, when Dean Kurt Toenjes can attend.

⇒ Motion by Paul Pope, seconded by Jennifer Lynn to **approve the Senate bylaw changes on eligibility and vacancy appointments.**

It was noted that the vacancy appointments will be done by the Chair, but perhaps the bylaws should specify that the appointments will be done in consultation with the college affected, and/or the Executive Committee.

Since there isn't a college to consult, vacancies for at-large positions, especially for a single semester sabbatical, should be left open.

⇒ Motion by Sue Balter-Reitz, seconded by Paul Pope to **amend the vacancies bylaw change to include the Chair will “consult with the Executive Committee and the faculty of the college.”**

⇒ Motion to amend carried.

⇒ Motion to approve carried.

VI. DISCUSSION/ACTION ITEMS

A. Interdisciplinary Studies M.S. and new Co-Convening Policy

Last year, Art, Music, and English all proposed graduate-level courses to be part of the Interdisciplinary Studies MS, but they did not make that clear during the curriculum approval process. The Senate asked for a plan of study from the College of Education that shows these courses in a program.

Melanie Reaves, Interim Dean of the College of Education, noted that the Interdisciplinary Studies MS has very open requirements. It requires 6 credits of education courses and a 6 credit capstone, plus 24 credits of other courses from at least 2 disciplines. This 24 credits can be graduate courses from COE, such as special education; or they can be the art, music, and English that were proposed; or existing communication and psychology courses. Any department on campus can create graduate-level courses to put in this program. Students create their plan of study in consultation with advisors, and the COE works with the departments of those courses. Many people approve that plan of study before it is filed with Graduate Studies and the Registrar's Office builds a DegreeWorks for that student. Students are not required to create a theme or emphasis, and there is no such information listed on their transcript.

It was noted that there is very little governance for these graduate courses outside of COE. They are not really in a program, but can be used in a program. Further, assessment of the Interdisciplinary Studies MS must be difficult. Is anyone keeping an eye on how these courses are offered? Are we using our scant resources in the best way? It was noted that the Environmental Studies bachelor program is interdisciplinary, and could serve as a model for the masters. However, the courses in the Environmental Studies program are not being created for that program. Rather, they are existing courses offered for different programs. Ms. Thatcher noted that we need to evaluate programs across colleges, of which there are several, instead of only evaluating parts of programs.

Regarding the new co-convening policy, it was noted that there is some uncertainty about how much detail the Senate wants on assignments and assessments. We don't want to ask for rubrics or every assignment from the course, but we want a summary about the greater expectations for graduate students. We don't want this to be a lot of work, especially if a course may not be planned yet because it won't be taught until next year. It may be easier to talk it through with the UCC and Graduate Committee, rather than writing it out.

B. Possible The College Experience Committee (standing committee of the Senate)

Getting the TCE course up and running was a big lift for the workgroup, and the course is going to need stability to keep it running. It's too much work for the Gen Ed Committee, which already has a workload with Gen Ed assessment.

Advocacy to keep the TCE course running will be an important part of the committee's work. Pay for people teaching the course now is still not settled. The committee can bring the faculty teaching the course together with the administration that agreed to pay for it. Given that this has become contentious, should the members be tenured? It was suggested all members don't need to be tenured, but the chairperson should be. Further, reassigned time for the chair—and the chair of the Gen Ed Committee—should be requested of the Provost.

VII. NEW BUSINESS

A number of draft policies from Jacket Leadership Team were distributed via email. Feedback can be sent to Dr. Nynas.

The meeting adjourned at 4:57 p.m.

rjrm

Lee Vartanian, Ph.D.

Provost & Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs

- Faculty Excellence Awards – I sent out a reminder that nominations are due October 24. I am particularly excited about the event in February. The Foundation has taken an interest in supporting this event and is helping to take it to the next level. Dr. Aebersold is leading the team that is planning this event. It's going to be a special celebration of faculty excellence.
- ResearchFest – Tonight at Craft Local! I am disappointed that I can't attend this.
- PEP Faculty Liaison – Dr. Nicole Bogunovich has agreed to serve as Faculty Liaison. She has taught in the PEP for the last two years and brings an impressive amount of experience and strategic skills to this position.
- Associate Dean at City College – In the coming weeks, we will launch a search for Associate Dean at CC. In addition to supporting the multiple academic programs within the College, this position will provide administrative support for our ever-growing Dual Enrollment program. Over half of our students funnel through City College.
 - o NOTE: If someone asks, "Where is the money coming from?" If I were there, I would say that I have worked with the Business Office to find funds to support this position and that, with the influx of DE students that providing additional support for the DE is a strategic and urgent priority.

Leslie Weldon

Vice Chancellor for Administration and Finance

I am unable to attend the Academic Senate meeting Thursday as I am in Butte participating in Leadership Montana. The following are brief highlights from Administration and Finance:

- Jacket Success will be offered again October 22nd and 23rd. These training courses provide information and updates from Financial Services, Payroll, Budget, Information Technology, Human Resources, Business Services, Facilities, Environmental Health and Safety and University Police. New training courses are offered twice a year on a variety of topics. Recordings are always posted on the Jacket Success intranet page.
- Colleges are reviewing their course fees for next semester. Spring semester fees for students will be assessed in December, but as students register for spring semester, they will see their fees listed on their course schedule.
- All Collective Bargaining Agreements ratified at the September Board of Regents meeting will be reflected in the October 29th payroll. Salary calculations and retroactive pays for faculty will be included in this payroll.
- 70% of all employees (faculty and staff) have completed our cybersecurity training KnowBe4.
- A minimum password length of 14 characters has been implemented for all new accounts. Current accounts will not be impacted, but it is recommended that employees update to a password or passphrase of at least 14 characters. The new standard is a passphrase.