TO: **FACULTY SENATE-MONTANA TECH**                    9/21/98

**FROM: JOHN W. RAY, HEAD, LIBERAL STUDIES DEPARTMENT**

**RE: FACULTY 60VERNANCE AND THE ACADEMIC VICE-CHANCELLOR**

The ideal university . . . is a <u>community of ]earning.</u> This phrase . . . expresses the central fact that a university ought to be a <u>community of persons</u> united by collective understandings, by common and communal goals, by bonds of reciprocal obligation, and by a flow of sentiment which makes the preservation of the community an object of desire, not merely a matter of prudence or a command of duty.

> Robert Paul Wolff, <u>The Ideal of the University.</u>

Although no college or university ever achieves Wolff's goal, his concept should be our model. It is the duty of the faculty senate to keep us on this path in order to achieve the ideal of an institution of higher learning.

In order to achieve this ideal of a university, the following minimal conditions must be met:
**1. There needs to be a free flow of information up and down all levels of the college.** The "broadest possible exchange of information and opinion should be the rule of communication among components of a college or university."(AAUP, American Council on Education, and the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges.)
**2. Those impacted by a decision need to have a substantive role in making that decision.** All affected college components need to be offered the opportunity to participate in decision making, This of course implies that they <u>need to know ahead of time</u> about pending decisions which could affect them or their department. The reason for this should be obvious. The more information brought to bear on a decision the better the decision, People who have a role in making a decision are more likely to support a decision once it has been made, Involvement increases learning and creativity. The lack of involvement produces suspicion and hostility. The lack of involvement harms morale. The list could go on and on. "The variety and complexity of the tasks performed by institutions of higher education produce an inescapable interdependence among governing board, administration, faculty, students, and others. The relationship calls for adequate communication among these components, and full opportunity for appropriate joint planning and effort." (AAUP) Broad participation in academic decision making should be the rule,
**3. It is the faculty not the administration which should have primary responsibility for academic matters such as curriculum, subject matter, instructional methodology, etc. (AAUP)** Faculty governance should be more than just a slogan at Montana Tech, Faculty governance should be an operational reality.
**4. Academic decision making authority should be decentralized.** Academic expertise <u>resides in the faculty</u> as organized into departments.
**5. Consensus and collegiality should be the norm for academic decision making.** The idea of a college or university as a **community** of scholars in pursuit of truth needs to be emphasized. In <u>The Academic Community,</u> John Millett makes this observation:

I do not believe that the concept of hierarchy is a realistic representation of the interpersonal relationships which exist within a college or university, Nor do I believe that a structure of hierarchy is a desirable prescription for the organization of a college or university, I would argue that there is another concept of organization just as valuable as a tool of analysis and even more useful as a generalized observation of groups and interpersonal behavior. This is the concept of <u>community</u> The concept of community presupposes an organization in which functions are differentiated and in which specialization must be brought together, or coordination if you will, is achieved not through a structure of superordination and subordination of persons and groups but through a <u>dynamic of consensus.</u>

**6. Accountability and responsibility are impossible without participation in decision making.**
**7. Academic professionalism demands that the faculty participate in academic decision making.**

The above seven points are not justifications for anarchy or for a lack of structure, discipline, or professionalism in the academic community, The above seven principles do not obviate the need for due process, for decorum of debate and for acting as a responsible member of the academic community. Rather, they are a demand that the maximum number of participants have a substantive role in academic decision making. These seven points are a demand that those affected by a decision be informed of the decision prior to the implementation of the decision. These principles are a demand that those affected by a decision be consulted before the implementation of that decision.

**Two recent actions by the Interim Academic Vice-Chancellor Dan Bradley have directly contradicted the above guidelines.**

1. This summer, without informing or consulting me, Dan unilaterally contacted a member of my department about offering a course in "Contemporary Issues". This was to have been a new course in the Liberal Studies Department for which the instructor would have received release time both to prepare the course as well as to offer the course. The person approached by Vice Chancellor Bradley does not have as his responsibility nor was he hired to teach contemporary issues. Other department members already teach contemporary issues. Bradley's plan was that this was to become a multi-section course for engineering students. This past spring, our department had already addressed the engineering student's need for instruction in contemporary issues in a 60 page report we submitted to Dan, The content of this report was ignored by him. To me this conduct was an egregious breach of academic professionalism, chain of command and communication, and proper decision making. If this type of activity becomes standard procedure, academic anarchy will be the result. This type of procedure makes a mockery of the principles of faculty governance and following proper procedures. Vice-Chancellor Bradley's approach has created needless conflict and has disrupted long term planning in my department. My concerns were voiced to Vice-Chancellor Bradley,

2. Recently, Interim Vice-Chancellor Bradley has once again contacted a member of my department about serving on a committee to redo part of the general education requirement, to change the designation of some of our courses and to discover what are **"real** humanities and social sciences" courses. I was never informed of the existence of this committee, nor was Dean Abbott, ahead of time by Dan Bradley. Such a proposal would affect our entire department as well as other departments on campus. At a meeting with Dan Bradley, he indicated to me that he did not have to inform or consult with me or any one else in order to do this type of action, I indicated that I did not agree with him that this is or should be policy. His response was simply: "You are wrong. "

My concern is not so much with the specifics of the above two cases but with what they portend for the functioning of the office of Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs. They show an unfortunate trend. I see such action as directly contrary to the principles of faculty governance, consensual and collegial decision making, the sense of academic community, and proper lines of communication and decision making. I am not comfortable with the kind of power which the Academic Vice-Chancellor seems to think he possesses.

In light of the above discussion, Dan Bradley's actions raise two important issues which I am asking the Faculty Senate of Montana Tech to consider.

**1. Does the Academic Vice-Chancellor have the authority to intervene unilaterally in the substance and process of the Tech faculty at the department level in the manner which cases I and 2 illustrate?** I would argue that he does not have this authority. Although the VCAA may be the dean of the faculty and may have responsibility for the development of Tech's academic programs, this does not give the VCAA unilateral authority to make academic decisions and unilaterally decide the substance of those programs. This does not give the VCAA authority to intervene in the internal workings of a department without the knowledge of the department head, This does not give the VCAA authority to create and charge committees which affect departments without informing those departments through the department heads, who are the representatives of their departments (AAUP), ahead of time of what is happening. There is a chain of communication and command at Montana Tech which was developed to maximize participation in academic decision making and which needs to be followed by all.

**2. Should the VCAA have such authority?**
No! Such activities as described in cases 1 and 2 directly contradict the principles of faculty governance, collegial and communal decision making, professionalism, decentralization, and the free flow of information as well as open communication.

**Therefore. I am asking the faculty senate to consider this matter and to issue guidelines to the administration which guidelines would ensure that faculty governance, collegial and communal decision making, professionalism, decentralization, and the free flow of information become a working reality at Montana Tech.** More specifically, I feel that a starting point would be to remind the Interim

Vice-Chancellor of Academic Affairs that he should be nurturing the above described principles and not inhibiting them. Furthermore, a resolution of the faculty senate should be passed which states that in the future any activity of the VCAA which affects the academic offerings at Montana Tech be first discussed with the appropriate dean and department head prior to that activity. The dean and department head should not only be informed but consulted prior to a decision being made. Full use of the curriculum committee is also needed.

This matter goes to the heart of what the Senate is supposed to be about. For my part, I will obey the decision of any legitimate authority in this matter and carry out my duties to the full, I intend to conduct this discussion rationally and with restraint.