Montana Tech Faculty Senate Meeting
Wednesday, September 21, 2016 - 3:30-5pm

Senators present:
Stella Capoccia, Conor Cote, Bill Drury, Charie Faught, John Getty, Bill Gleason, Brian Koontz, Brian Kukay, Atish Mitra, Tony Patrick, Vicki Petritz, Scott Risser, Glen Southergill, Miriam Young

Guest:
Matt Egloff

1. **Welcome & Minutes**
   1. [Prior minutes](#)
   2. Motion (John Getty; 2nd Stella Capoccia): To approve minutes
   3. Vote: Unanimously in favor; Motion carried
2. **Academic Dishonesty**
   1. Existing Policies
      - Scott Risser - There are two main documents to review for Montana Tech policies for Student Conduct that should be reviewed. Scott shared these documents with the Senate:
         - [College Community Expectations Program Manual](#)
         - [Student Handbook](#)
   2. Procedures Update
      - Scott Risser - There is a new online system for reporting Academic Dishonesty and other incidents of Student Misconduct: http://www.mtech.edu/student-conduct/ . The software in use is called Maxient. This system has been presented to department chairs but not all faculty may be aware of the new system. There are four available forms depending on this issue:
         - Academic Dishonesty Violation
         - Non-Academic Student Conduct Violation
         - Concerning Behavior
         - Title IX Violations
      - The Student Handbook will need be updated in order to reflect this new reporting system, but the Senate could suggest amending the Faculty Handbook as well. One of benefits of this software is it creates a database of reports that can be accessed later by request, and could be used to identify repeat offenders. Some have noticed issues with the usability of the forms, for example having to manually enter all fields for student information and having to file multiple reports for incidents that involve multiple students.
      - Discussion
         - Charie Faught said she liked the recommendations put for at the last meeting, but wanted to add the importance of providing Student Training on this issue. Specifically training that aligns with Faculty Training so that both groups are receiving the same message.
         - Bill Gleason added that this training could be implemented in the Freshman Engineering program. Scott Risser said this could be brought to Curtis Link and to the other first year programs (CLSPS, Highlands).
         - Scott Risser noted that aspects of Academic Dishonesty (notably Plagiarism) are taught as part of the Writing program, and wondered to what extent. Glen Southergill suggested asking the Interim Writing Director, Kay Eccleston.

- Charie Faught added that while training may not have solved the problems encountered this summer, it could help head off these problems. Bill Drury said that it is likely that transfer students would not receive this training, however. Students in general do not see cheating as a problem.
- Bill Gleason said that in Metallurgy labs, where these issues have come up, it's essential to address cheating right away, informing students that the consequences are serious.

3. Policy Review
   - Common Syllabus Statements
     - Scott Risser - In the past the faculty considered adopting common syllabus language, but this did not garner support. A boilerplate statement on Academic Dishonesty could be drafted for faculty to use on their syllabi, and individual departments could tailor it to their needs.
     - Stella Capoccia suggested that a statement like this be added to the introduction to each Moodle course, and faculty could add/delete/edit the statement as needed.
     - Scott Risser, Miriam Young and Vicki Petritz said they copy the entire section on Academic Dishonesty on their syllabi, which works well. Bill Gleason added that every syllabus should at least point to the Academic Dishonesty section of the Student Handbook. Scott Risser asked if this should be mandated to faculty or if it should be encouraged through training. Bill suggested it be discussed at a Full Faculty meeting or taught in training instead of as a mandate.
     - Stella Capoccia said that ultimately the responsibility falls to each class and situations would be handled different depending on the class, instructor or department. One way to instill learning and prevent cheating is to have students copy by hand, but here is no single watertight solution.
     - Matt Egloff asked about the legal bearing of syllabi and if the Senate should seek feedback from the Um General Counsel. It would help if faculty had an understanding of the legal implications of policy statements on syllabi. He suggests contacting Lucy France of the General Counsel about this.
     - Scott Risser agreed that it is a good general recommendation to have suggestions vetted by legal counsel.
     - Matt Egloff provided an example: how to handle a doctor's note that you believe is fake; can this be headed off by a statement in the syllabus?
     - John Getty said faculty do not have to take a doctor's note at face value if they suspect it is false, and can confirm with the doctor.
     - Matt Egloff said it would be helpful to have an FAQ answering questions about how the syllabus ties to these issues. For example, if it is not made clear in the syllabus, do faculty have to accept certain types of excuses?

- Stella Capoccia recommended creating a standard list of universally accepted excuses, along with the level documentation required for each excuse.
- Scott Risser pointed out the existing list of accepted excuses in the student handbook, and asked if anything should be added.
- Stella Capoccia said it would be good to have a default list of what to allow and if instructors choose to go beyond that list it is up to them. Brian Kukay supported this idea.
- Sanctions
  - Scott Risser directed the Senate to the existing sanctions for Academic Dishonesty. These sanctions are listed under Academic Dishonesty in the Student Handbook. Does the Senate recommend additional sanctions? Charie Faught observed that the headings of this section imply that the sanctions only relate to Unauthorized Signatures, this may be worth revising to avoid confusion.
  - Stella Capoccia said sabotage (when a student intentionally interferes with another students work) is another strong form of academic dishonesty and would like to see it added.
  - Matt Egloff suggested adding the falsification of add/drop cards or lying about class transfers. Scott Risser asked if the section on unauthorized signatures could be bolstered to include these cases.
  - Glen Southergill suggested that sanction C be modified to include changing an F to XF grade, upon instructor recommendation and subsequent due process.
  - Bill Gleason suggested the Senate consider how involved the faculty should be in the sanction process. Currently when faculty identify a case of cheating they take it to the administration and make a recommendation, but after that they are removed from process. How involved does the faculty want to be?
  - Scott Risser clarified that faculty currently have unilateral control over assigning grades. The Provost acts on additional sanctions.
  - Brian Kukay said he serves on the Student Disciplinary Appeals Committee where students can appeal if they feel they have been unfairly accused of Academic Dishonesty. Students present their case and the faculty can present theirs. This allows some recourse for students but still involves the faculty.
  - Bill Gleason said that this committee action is still an administrative procedure. The final decision is still up to the committee rather than the faculty member.
  - Vicki Petritz stressed it is imperative for the XF grade not to be applied arbitrarily. The final decision should be made by a formal committee with set procedures in place where students are afforded due process. This grade could have significant and long-lasting consequences to students.
  - Scott Risser said that currently faculty must report matters of Academic Dishonesty to the Provost (see item 1 under *Actions to be taken when cheating is discovered*, Student Handbook), the minimum penalty is an F

> on the assignment or exam. However there is leeway for the instructor to recommend additional penalties to the Academic Standards Committee (item 3).
- Stella Capoccia asked how many times a student has been expelled at Montana Tech over the past year?
- Scott Risser said sharing this information could be interpreted as a violation of FERPA.
- Matt Egloff questioned this. Isn't FERPA only for personally identifiable information? How is providing a number a violation of FERPA?
- Scott Risser said once a definite number is given you run the risk of violating FERPA. For example, with the small number of students taking classes this summer, they could be identified.
- John Getty questioned if this concern for FERPA is being reasonably applied. Could more information be shared by the administration without violating FERPA? He acknowledged that if you have two students in a class, and you report that one cheated that would be a problem, but there should be a reasonable limit to where these numbers can be reported.

- XF Grades
  - Glen Southergill asked if transcripts are currently marked for expulsions to indicate Academic Dishonesty. Is the XF grade necessary if this is already being done?
  - Scott Risser clarified that a transcript will indicate an expulsion but won't give a reason.
  - Bill Gleason pointed out that there are reasons you can be expelled unrelated to academic dishonesty, such as bouncing a tuition check.
  - Bill Drury said the XF grade would serve as an indicator for students that failed due to academic dishonesty but were not expelled.
  - Glen Southergill said that not all cases of Academic Dishonesty require expulsion, sometimes the situation can serve as a learning opportunity. Students can be directed to Academic Counseling, for example. The XF grade could serve as an intermediate consequence between receiving an F and being expelled.
  - Stella Capoccia would like to a see more rigorous policy from Montana Tech. She suggests shoring up policies such as applying the F to a higher percentage of the grade upon a second offense.
  - Matt Egloff said there should be a process for this – the decision should not fall solely on the faculty member. This takes the liability of the decision off of the faculty member, even though they could still make the recommendation to the committee..
  - Motion (Glen Southergill; 2nd Bill Gleason): Recommend the Academic Standards Committee allow for an XF grade to be applied to a transcript as a possible sanction.
  - Scott Risser reminded the Senate that this would grant additional powers to the Academic Standards Committee. Vicki Petritz said it is important that the Academic Standards Committee put the proper procedures in place to ensure due process for students.

- Amendment to motion (John Getty: 2nd Glen Southergill): Recommend ASC develop the appropriate procedures for applying an XF grade.
- Vote: Unanimously in favor; Motion carried.
- Scott Risser will notify the chair of the ASC of this decision. He will ask the chair of the ASC meet with the Senate to discuss procedures.
- Glen Southergill said it would be helpful to better understand the steps that fall between reporting an issue and an ASC decision. Bill Gleason said the ASC procedures should be passed along to the faculty, and more transparency in this regard would prevent feeding the rumor mill.
- Scott Risser said that the campus is required to report crimes on campus. The legality of reporting numbers of incidents of cheating/expulsion can be investigated, and is something to discuss with the chair of the ASC.
- Stella Capoccia said she would be interested in seeing those numbers. It is helpful to know that the process is occurring and working. Bill Gleason said it would be helpful to see the trend from year to year. Has the number of incidents increased or decreased?
- Scott will contact the chair of the ASC, give the Senate recommendation, and ask that they meet with the Senate to discuss these questions.
- Refunds
  - Scott Risser explained that a way to determine if a student received a refund is by their transcript. If there is a W on their transcript for the class they probably did not receive a refund. If there is no W they probably received a refund. The current policy is based on the Add/Drop deadline. If they drop the class before the deadline they are eligible for a refund.
- Excused Absences
  - Brian Kukay asked that the Senate revisit the earlier discussion of updating the Student Handbook on Excused Absences.
  - Motion (Brian Kukay): Senate recommend that the policy on excused absences in the Student Handbook be clarified.
  - Scott Risser asked if there was a specific recommendation that Senate would like to make?
  - Stella Capoccia said she would like to see medical excuses added as an official excuse. She would also like to see a death in the family added.
  - Charie Faught noted the vagueness of the statement "personal matters deemed appropriate" in the policy. How are they deemed appropriate? Bill Gleason added that "reasonable accommodation" is also very vague. What is a reasonable accommodation?
  - Scott Risser said that this question was brought to the Senate in a meeting last year by Dean Coe. The answer is whether a reasonable person in the community would agree that the accommodation is reasonable. The Faculty Senate can provide feedback for this purpose.
  - Stella said as Montana Tech grows, it may need to revisit this policy. She suggests that a sub-committee work on shoring up these policies.

- Matt Egloff said he would like to see a definition of the level of documentation required for each type of absence. What documents are accepted?
- Bill Gleason asked about the designation between an absence for athletic teams and for college clubs. For example, hockey is a club but basketball is an official team. Is there a difference? Stella Capoccia said she considered the authority of the team or club's coach to extend notice to all faculty for this purpose.
- Stella Capoccia recommended that jury duty also be added to the list of official excuses. An example of a reasonable accommodation is to require students to make up an exam within one week upon returning to class. A change is made to the exam but not to the extent required if the exams had already been passed back. This prevents the class from being held up due to one student's absence.
- Miriam Young said the in her department, athletes are required to give notice of absence in advance, and take the exam prior to the absence. Exams are never returned to students in hand. Students have an opportunity to review the exam in class, but then the exams are passed back to the instructor.
- The motion on the table was not seconded. Scott Risser recommended that Senators bring written suggestions to the next meet. It would be preferable if these were sent to him in advance of the meeting.

4. Final Comments & Next Meeting
   - Scott Risser asked the Senate to come to next meeting with concrete ideas about how to provide effective faculty and students training on these matters.
   - John Getty said there are still areas of improvement for the new online form for reporting Academic Dishonesty. Matt Egloff said currently the process of entering in student information in tedious and redundant. Could the form be improved to allow reporting multiple students at once, and automatically populating fields? This would save time and prevent manual error.
   - Motion: (Bill Gleason; 2nd Glen Southergill): Senate send its recommendations to the administration (and Maxient) to improve the usability of the reporting form.
   - Vote: Motion carried.
   - Stella Capoccia said they she had a student fake a jury duty letter. Could policy be added to address falsification of excuses? Scott Risser suggested bringing this language to the next meeting for discussion.
   - Scott Risser asked the senators to review the existing sanctions for Aggressive Student Behavior in the College Community Expectations Program Manual and Student Handbook in preparation for next week's discussion.
   - Bill Gleason serves on the Safety Committee and is willing to act as a liaison between the Senate and that committee. He said the issue of safety is the bigger issue of concern for him, as people have been physically threatened. The Safety Committee is currently discussing what you should do in a threatening situation. The committee is discussing the use of panic buttons and the status of campus security.

5. Adjourn
   - Meeting adjourned