

Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes November 6, 1998

Attending: Doug Cameron, Curtis Link, Mary McLaughlin, Larry Smith, Don Stierle, Courtney Young

Recorder: Don Stierle

Invited Guest: Regent Margie Thompson

The meeting was called to visit with Butte Regent, Margie Thompson about several issues. In the last meeting we developed a list of topics. They were:

- ◆ R-113 what does it mean to Montana Tech?
- ◆ The 95 Interim Northwest Accrediting Report and ABET have identified deficient funding as problem areas and may affect Accreditation. How does the BOR and the State Legislature plan to address these issues?
- ◆ The current FTE funding model is not working for the four “smaller” schools in the MUS. Competition for students between the schools may have an adverse impact on the students’ education. What is the BOR thinking in this area? Are there plans to work with the Legislature to improve this funding mechanism?
- ◆ The recent meeting the Commissioner Crofts caused concern with many faculty. The Commissioner’s view of the fiscal reality had the appearance of a lack of interest or enthusiasm in attempting to improve the MUS funding through the Legislature. There is an interest in having a stronger proponent represent us.
- ◆ What is Mrs. Thompson’s vision of and for the MUS?
- ◆ What is the BOR’s vision of and for the MUS?

R-113 and Tech- Thompson said there are different opinions on the effect of C-75 and R-113, and that many people in the Commissioner’s and Legislative Analyst’s offices are working with legislators on taking care of the problem. Although there is quite a bit of confusion as to the legal interpretation of CI-75 and R-113 it appears that the legislature can and will override the issue.

ABET and Northwest Accreditation- Thompson stated that we need to raise funding, especially for Montana Tech but she didn’t have any concrete ways of doing this.

FTE funding- Thompson agrees that there is a problem with the current funding model, both because we can’t fully plan for the next year’s budget and in the way we fund per student. She said that the BOR is planning a series of workshops to specifically discuss the current funding model and hopefully make some changes. On the point of Tech’s funding in light of a dwindling FTE count we have a problem. This problem is partly due to the change of Montana from a resource based economy. We pointed out that it seems many of the other social programs were getting substantial increases in funding why not the MUS system? Thompson thinks that we need a better way of telling the public that we are doing a good job at a very economical price.

Commissioner Crofts- Thompson thinks that the Commissioner is doing an excellent job in lobbying the Legislature for money and believes that he is a good advocate for the MUS system. The BOR are also working hard in lobbying the Legislature.

WGU- Thompson is the BOR representative to the WGU. She thinks it is another tool that we can use to educate some of our students but didn't have any suggestions on how to take advantage of WGU.

Ways to increase our funding- During our discussion Thompson indicated several ways that we could increase our funding outside of the State system. Some were:

1. Establish permanent endowments for higher education. Other states do this.
2. Establish research partnerships with businesses in Montana. This would involve tailoring our research interests to those of local businesses. This approach could also be used to attract new businesses to Montana. It was pointed out that in general Tech Faculty don't have extra time to devote to research.

What can the Montana Faculty do to increase funding for Tech?- Crofts recommended a Grassroots approach when he was at Tech in early October. The goal would be to motivate students to enlighten their parents and put more pressure on the legislature. Thompson agreed that this might be an effective approach. We let Thompson know that we wanted to be kept informed on ways we could help.

It was suggested that we set up an interview with the Commissioner, BOR and the paper and present "The MUS in Crisis."

We would like to have Thompson back after the legislative session to give us her impressions of the session.