

**Montana Associated Students
2017 Legislative Priorities
September 13th, 2016
SB01-16/17**

**Authored by: Sam Forstag, MAS President
Sponsored by: Garrett Leach, MAS Vice President External**

Whereas, The Montana Associated Students (MAS) serves to represent and advocate on behalf of over 47,000 students in the Montana University System (MUS);

Whereas, MAS discusses, designs, and confirms a set of legislative priorities every two years in advance of the Montana legislative session;

Whereas, The availability of a robust, quality public education is valuable to the health and well-being of the state of Montana;

Whereas, 80% of MUS graduates are living and working in Montana in their first year after graduation;

Whereas, Tuition and fees at the two MUS flagship Universities rose by 100% and 130% respectively from 2000 - 2015;

Whereas, The functions and services that are expected of a public University have expanded significantly over the past 25 years with the well-warranted addition of mandates such as Equal Opportunity, Title IX, ADA requirements, and further services in the areas of mental health, veteran's services, and increased academic support for students;

Whereas, enrollment across MUS has increased significantly over the past 25 years;

Whereas, Administrative costs in MUS have remained fairly consistent over the past decade at approximately 8% of total spending;

Whereas, MUS schools had lower administrative costs per student than comparable institutions from 2009 - 2013;

Whereas, MUS Unrestricted funds totaled approximately \$468 million in 2015;

Whereas, Montana's state funding for higher education has failed to keep pace with the MUS budget over the past 25 years;

Whereas, The proportion of state funding for higher education in Montana declined from 72% in 1992 to 39% in 2015;

Whereas, State funding constituted 49% of MUS Unrestricted Funds as recently as 2000;

Whereas, A decreased financial commitment to higher education leaves Montana universities increasingly dependent on increased enrollment and detracts from Montana Universities' mission of providing highest quality education possible;

Whereas, An increased state contribution is needed to ensure that MUS maintains the quality, affordability, and safety are maintained throughout the Montana University System (MUS) is maintained;

Therefore, Let it Be Resolved, Montana students call upon our representatives in the Montana Legislature to make a clear, substantive commitment to Montana's future and the future of higher education in our state with an increase of state appropriations in the General Fund Appropriations Act;


Therefore, Let it Further Be Resolved, Montana students call upon the Montana Legislature to increase overall state funding to the Montana University System (MUS) to half (50%) of the MUS Unrestricted Funds costs;

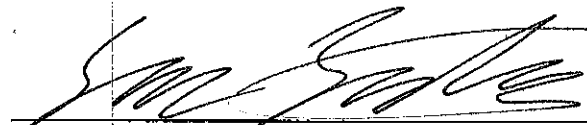
Therefore, Let it Further Be Resolved, Montana students call upon the Montana Legislature to fully fund the MUS Long-Range Building Program so as to ensure that state buildings on university campuses are safe, accessible, and available for use;

Therefore, Let it Further Be Resolved, Montana students call upon the Montana Legislature to fully fund the MUS portion of the Employee Pay Plan so as to ensure that Montana Universities have the ability to hire and retain quality faculty and staff;

Therefore, Let it Further Be Resolved, The legislative priorities set forth herein shall serve as the official position of the Montana Associated Students (MAS);

Passed by Montana Associated Students: September 13th, 2016


Kennedee Burk,
MAS Vice President Internal


Sam Forstag,
MAS President