



Minutes

Montana Board of Regents

Conference Call Meeting
January 30, 2009

Friday, January 30, 2009

The Board convened at 1:00 PM.

Roll call indicated a quorum present.

Regents Present: Stephen M. Barrett Chair, Clayton Christian Vice Chair, Lynn Hamilton, Lila Taylor, Todd Buchanan, Janine Pease and Mitch Jessen, all by phone. Commissioner of Higher Education Sheila Stearns, *ex officio*, was present in person, Governor Brian Schweitzer, *ex officio*, was represented by Jan Lombardi by phone, and Superintendent Denise Juneau, *ex officio*, was represented by Joyce Silverthorne.

Sites represented by phone were: Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education (OCHE), UM-Missoula, UM-Western, UM-MT Tech, UM-Helena COT, MSU-Bozeman, MSU-Billings, MSU-Northern, MSU-Great Falls COT, Flathead Valley Community College, Dawson Community College, Miles Community College, and the Office of the Governor.

- 1. Legislative Update**
 - Budget Update**

Commissioner Sheila Stearns explained that the purpose of the conference call was to keep regents and campus CEO's updated on the current legislative and budget process and bills of special interest to the Montana University System (MUS).

Deputy Commissioner Mick Robinson, Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education (OCHE), said the Decision Package Summary compiled by the Montana Legislative Fiscal Division details decision packages for present law issues and decision packages that have been approved by the legislative Joint Education Subcommittee.

Commissioner Sheila Stearns said committee action on the three professional student exchange programs that offer educational opportunities at specific, out-of-state professional programs in select fields of study the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE), Washington, Wyoming, Alaska, Colorado, Montana and Idaho (WWAMI), and Minnesota Dental Programs has been deferred for action.

- Other Legislation of Interest**

Tyler Trevor explained the MUS bill tracking process for the 2009 Legislative Session. Some of the bills of interest included:

- HB 5, Long-Range Building Appropriations
- HB 13, Pay Plan for State Employees
- SB 80, Elect the Board of Regents



- SJ 12, Proposed Bitterroot Valley Community College
- HB 185, Tax Deduction for Other States' College Savings Plans

Discussion followed on the following points:

- Clarification that BOR cannot oversee other states' college savings plans
- MUS website has link to weekly higher education related legislative information
- Concern if scholarship resolution directs all scholarship aid to merit based
- Executive action for MUS will be sometime after February 11
- The importance of maintaining the current slots for WICHE, WWAMI, and Minnesota Dental

2. Federal Stimulus Package as it Relates to Higher Education

Commissioner Stearns said OCHE has been working with the Office of the Governor in comparing the federal House stimulus bill with the Senate version. Deputy Commissioner Mick Robinson has compiled a task force to work through the bills' entirety to identify all the components involving higher education. Dr. Brad Eldredge, OCHE, is focusing on reviewing the various pieces that involve education. Two portions of the bill discussed included:

- Compiling a list of infrastructure projects in Montana. The bill includes \$19 million for infrastructure projects in Montana.
- The potential opportunities associated with the state stabilization fund.

Mr. Robinson explained the method of awarding funds from the federal government to the states is a formula driven process which determines the amount of money to be allocated to individual states. At this time, the bill is projected to include \$240 million for Montana. He directed the campuses to think of opportunities that could benefit from the one-time-only funding included in the legislation. The U.S. Senate projects passing the legislation by mid-February, at which time the congressional bodies will begin the reconciliation process and, thus, finalize the funding amounts.

Joyce Silverthorne, Office of Public Instruction (OPI), informed the Board that OPI also has a staff person committed to analyzing the stimulus bill.

3. Updates on Regents' Ongoing Initiatives

The regents were updated on the Making Opportunity Affordable (MOA) project by Deputy Commissioner Mary Moe. She explained she is working with the Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education, Office of Public Instruction, Governor's Office, and the Department of Labor for adult pathways in higher education and the workforce, working on the process used for the common course numbering in the two-year degrees, best practices on transferability and dual enrollment, as well as putting out Requests for Proposals (RFP) for consultants and a facilitator.

Chief Legal Counsel, Cathy Swift, OCHE, told the regents that OCHE is in the process of performing an internal policy review in which all Board of Regents policies will be reviewed to see if any policies need to be revised to comply with court decisions, statutes, and other policies of the Board of Regents.



Dr. Brad Eldredge is compiling data on findings in enrollments, including how students are served in local areas, diversification and job placement.

4. Other

Deputy Commissioner Robinson clarified that the legislative budget information will be given to the regents throughout the session, including the current status of the budget process, as well as what has been deferred as well as acted upon.

Meeting adjourned at 2:00 PM.

Posted on

Approved by the Board of Regents on

Date

Date

Sheila M. Stearns
Commissioner of Higher Education
and Secretary to the Board of Regents

Stephen Barrett
Chair, Board of Regents