



**Minutes**  
**Montana Board of Regents**  
**September 18, 2025**

**Thursday, September 18<sup>th</sup>, 2025**

Meeting convened at 8:29 a.m.

Regents Present: Todd Buchanan, Chair, Loren Bough, Vice Chair, Joyce Dombrowski, Jeff Southworth, Dean Folkvord, Heather Hoyer, and Carter Jasper. Ex officio members present included Commissioner of Higher Education, Clayton Christian and Superintendent of Public Instruction, Susie Hedalen. Governor Greg Gianforte was excused.

Welcome and Comments by Chair Buchanan | 00:01:05

Chair Buchanan thanked everyone for their continued work throughout the summer and thanked Montana Tech for hosting the meeting. He gave a brief history of Butte and Montana Tech spanning the past 125 years. He acknowledged faculty representative Dr. Scott Risser and Chancellor Johnny MacLean. He gave a detailed agenda overview

Welcome by Chancellor MacLean | 00:08:34

Chancellor MacLean welcomed everyone to Butte and Montana Tech and shared his gratitude for his time at UM Western. He highlighted Montana Tech's 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary and September 10<sup>th</sup> being Montana Technological University Day. He acknowledged student Abby Clark, faculty member Dr. Richard Ladouceur, and Marketing and Communications Executive Director Amanda Badovinac and highlighted their successes and achievements at Montana Tech. He shared Montana Tech's accolades over the past 125 years, Highlands College successes, and the university's continued purpose in meeting the country's and Montana's emerging needs. He introduced Dr. John Metesh, Executive Director of Critical Materials Initiatives. He then shared a video presentation on Montana Tech.

Approval of Minutes | 00:28:11

- July 10<sup>th</sup>, 2025 Meeting Minutes

With no corrections offered, the minutes were approved as distributed.

Commissioner's and System Report | 00:28:26

Commissioner Christian welcomed Montana Tech's new Chancellor, Dr. Johnny MacLean and shared his excitement for the start of a new academic year. He thanked Chancellor MacLean and staff for hosting the meeting and thanked the staff across the MUS for getting students settled in and setting them up for success. He provided a brief update on the legislative interim committees and the work they are doing, along with



OCHE's work in building stronger connections between the MUS and OPI. He stressed the importance of resident student access initiatives, shared the goals of increasing retention and completion, attracting more students to post-secondary education, and keeping Montana students in Montana.

- Resident Student Access | 00:38:47

Scott Lemmon, Director of Admissions and Enrollment Strategy, gave an update on resident student access initiatives and an overview of potential areas for the MUS to pursue in the coming years including: increased marketing efforts; direct admission pilot programming; and universal FAFSA completion. He reported on national trends as well as state-led efforts in other areas of the country as a benchmark for what could be possible in Montana for the future. Discussion followed.

- Short Term Pell | 01:14:08

Joe Thiel, Interim Deputy Commissioner of Academic, Research and Student Affairs, gave an overview of the Pell grant expansion of shorter-term programs. He shared details on the approval process of these programs. He addressed some of the major questions that have yet to be answered, shared a timeline for rulemaking and implementation, and discussed eligible programs in Montana.

- Campus Reports | 01:20:21
- Introductions | 01:20:28

Chancellor Stefani Hicswa, MSUB, introduced Dr. Lee Vartanian, Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs.

President Seth Bodner, University of Montana, introduced Dr. Jen Cavanaugh, Dean of the College of Arts and Media.

Chancellor Johnny MacLean, Montana Tech, introduced Dr. John Metesh, Executive Director of Critical Materials Initiatives; John Lafave, Interim Director of the Montana Bureau of Mines and Geology and Interim State Geologist; Dr. Jack Skinner, Dean of Lance College of Mines & Engineering; Tammy Burke, Dean of Highlands College; and Dr. Katie Hailer, Interim Vice Chancellor of Research and Dean of the Graduate School.

President Brock Tessman, Montana State University, introduced Mike Becker, Interim Vice President for University Communications and Dr. Richard Badenhausen, Dean of the Honors College.

- Remarks by Superintendent Hedalen | 01:29:09

Superintendent Hedalen said she has been participating in the interim committees and Board of Public Education meetings. She stated OPI is focusing on school safety,



student wellbeing, and increasing support for special education programs. She provided a data modernization update and stressed the importance of data in order to better support students, especially in remedial math. She said OPI is updating its accountability system. She gave an overview of the Teacher Residency Program and its expansion and highlighted the importance of letters going out to students to inform them of their post-secondary opportunities.

**Budget, Administration and Audit Committee | 01:38:30**

**CONSENT | 01:40:15**

**Staff Item:**

- a. Labor Agreements; OCHE/MUS ITEM 220-100-R0925 | Attachment #1

**Facility Items:**

- b. Request for Authorization to Enter into Off-Campus Lease with Hamilton Public Schools; University of Montana-Bitterroot College ITEM 220-1004-R0925 | Attachment #1
- c. Request for Authorization to Renovate Reid Hall First Floor; Montana State University ITEM 220-2002-R0925 | Attachment #1

**ACTION | 01:41:39**

- a. Request for Approval of Montana University System Operating Budgets; OCHE/MUS ITEM 220-101-R0925 | Attachment #1 | MUS Operating Budgets

Tyler Trevor, Deputy Commissioner for Budget and Planning and Shauna Lyons, Director of Budget and Planning, presented the FY26 comprehensive operating budgets for the Montana University System. Director Lyons walked through the types of funds that comprise the all funds summary of the MUS. Deputy Commissioner Trevor then provided a system-level summary highlighting the history of the MUS budget and national comparisons. Director Lyons then moved into the campus-level analysis of the operating budgets providing metrics, benchmarks, and highlighting revenue, expenditures, staffing, waivers, and enrollment.

Dan Stevenson, Director of Facilities Planning, walked the Board through each of the Facilities Action Items.

- b. Request for Authorization to Remodel the Food Service Space (coffee shop) within Lommasson Center – University of Montana-Missoula ITEM 220-1005-R0925 | Attachment #1
- c. Request for Authorization to Renovate Within and Construct Additions to the Visual Communications Building; Montana State University ITEM 220-2003-R0925 | Attachment #1
- d. Request for Authorization to Lease Additional Space in the Engineworks Building Located in the MSU Innovation Campus on Behalf of a Defense Innovation



OnRamp HUB; Montana State University ITEM 220-2004-R0925 | Attachment #1

- e. Request for Authorization to Construct an Elevator and Associated ADA Improvements at Lewis Hall; Montana State University ITEM 220-2005-R0925 | Attachment #1

**INFORMATION | 02:45:08**

- a. Montana Technological University Capital Development Projects

Ron Muffick, Vice Chancellor for Administration and Finance, Montana Tech, provided an overview of Montana Tech's Capital Development projects. Discussion followed.

- b. Intent to Seek Financing and Project Authority for Multi-year, Multi-phased Projects Related to Energy Performance Contracts (EPC) and University Student Housing to Address Deferred Maintenance; Montana State University

Terry Liest, Vice President, Administration and Finance, MSU Bozeman, presented the intent to seek authority for financing projects for Energy Performance Contracts and University housing deferred maintenance.

- c. Intent to Request Authorization to Purchase a Multi-family Residential Property Located at 524 E. Poindexter Street, Dillon, MT; University of Montana Western | Attachment #1

Director Stevenson presented UM Western's intent to seek authority in November to purchase multi-family residential property in Dillon adjacent to the campus. He discussed the appraisals and the property's market value, adding that the project would benefit UMW by generating rental income while also filling a need for student housing.

- d. Budget, Administration & Audit Committee | Workplan and Calendar

Deputy Commissioner Trevor discussed work plan priority areas, including budget, facilities, information technology, enterprise risk management, and the MUS success agenda.

- e. Enterprise Risk Management | Annual Report

Deputy Commissioner Trevor reviewed the annual report. Discussion followed.

**Academic, Research and Student Affairs Committee | 03:11:20**

**CONSENT | 03:11:51**

**Emeriti Faculty:**



- a. LedBetter; UM Missoula ITEM 220-1002-R0925
- b. Kalm; UM Missoula ITEM 220-1003-R0925
- c. Ridenour; UM Western ITEM 220-1601-R0925
- d. Sterling; MSU Bozeman ITEM 220-2001-R0925

**Tenure Faculty:**

- e. MSU Bozeman; ITEM 220-2000-R0925
- f. UM Missoula; ITEM 220-1006-R0925

**Other:**

- g. Request for Approval to Appoint a Faculty Member on Continuous Tenure to the Committee on Service; OCHE/MUS ITEM 220-102-R0925

**INFORMATION | 03:12:29**

- a. ARSA Work Plan 2025-26

Interim Deputy Commissioner Thiel reviewed the 2025-26 ARSA work plan priorities, including shared policy goals with the legislature, the success agenda, retention, MT 10, research, distance education, and artificial intelligence.

**Academic Review Items:**

- a. 2025-26 Academic Planning
  - 1. Policy 301.11, Undergraduate Degree Requirements | Attachment #1 | Attachment #2
  - 2. Policy 303.1, Academic Program Proposals | Attachment #1

Interim Deputy Commissioner Thiel discussed the policy changes and revisions that will be proposed at the November Board of Regents meeting. Discussion followed.

- 3. Accreditation Report

Interim Deputy Commissioner Thiel presented the Accreditation Update, including proposed policy changes and the work that had been done on campuses. The report summarizes NWCCU peer evaluation team feedback to campuses during the 2025-25 academic year.

- 4. Academic Priorities and Planning OCHE Executive Summary | Campus Priorities and Planning Statements| Forthcoming Academic Proposal Report



Interim Deputy Commissioner Thiel discussed the process to identify the academic priorities across the MUS campuses and the process to develop upcoming proposals before they come to the Board.

### 5. Academic Planning Working Group

Interim Deputy Commissioner Thiel reviewed the Academic Planning Working Group processes for AY 25/26, report due dates, and members of the group.

- b. Academic Approval Memo
- c. Degree Approval Tracking

Interim Deputy Commissioner Thiel reviewed the final two academic review items. He said Item b. is a step in the request to plan process for final approval; Item c. is the detailed tracking list of degree approvals across the MUS.

### **Strategic Priority Items:**

- e. AI Panel | MUS AI Leadership Retreat

Interim Deputy Commissioner Thiel shared an update on AI, the impacts and challenges across the MUS and ways to keep up with the rapid pace of change. He introduced the AI Innovations Panel.

Zach Rossmiller, AVP and CIO, UM Missoula, shared a presentation on UM's approach to adopting AI over the past few years through engagement and intentional planning. He gave an overview of the 2024 Flagship Fund and the Future Project and how they will guide UM forward with AI. He shared that UM has launched a website for AI training and resources along with Amplify, a generative AI tool, which are both free for students and faculty. He explained collaboration is taking place statewide in order to incorporate AI and to ensure AI competency for students, faculty and all Montanans.

Caitlin Byers, Director, MTDA Frontier Learning Lab, gave a brief history of MTDA and its role in making sure AI and VR are implemented responsibly, ethically, safely and specifically through professional learning both in person and online. She said they have set up an AI helpdesk for educators. Ms. Byers shared strategies being used, including vetted access to AI tools for teachers; buying consortiums; launch partners that offer different AI tools; tool development and release; and experimentation.

Van Davis, Vice President of Digital Learning, WICHE, shared results from their national survey on institutional maturity on the use of AI. He shared the WCET policy and practice framework that includes governance, operations, and pedagogy to ensure ethical and responsible implementation of AI use. He reviewed the ethical components that need to be addressed by institutions. He highlighted the different components of AI and how they create AI literacy for users. Discussion followed.

- f. MT 10 Update



Director Miller updated the Board about the MT 10 program, the support it received from the Governor and the Legislature, and how that support will help continue and expand the program. She discussed the immediate next steps for the program on campuses and how operations will continue using the funding received in the 2025 Session.

**Two Year and Community College Committee | 05:08:13**

**INFORMATION | 05:10:15**

**a. Two Year Work Plan**

Interim Deputy Commissioner Thiel reviewed the FY-26 work plan with focus on shared policy goals with the legislature, flexible career and technical education, dual enrollment, future ready payments, transfer success, and a timeline of when these things will take place.

**b. Future Ready Payments**

Interim Deputy Commissioner Thiel reviewed the Student and Teacher Advancement for Results (STARS) Act. He showed the estimated Future Ready Payments at the 3 goal levels and shared some of the challenges of defining what qualifies as a CTE equivalent credit. He discussed some credit analysis trends by MHSSA class and the implications and steps needed to bring this funding back into the districts. Discussion followed.

**c. MUS Workforce Initiatives | Attachment #2**

Director of Workforce Initiatives, Dr. Kirk Lacy, praised the great work that has been going on around the system regarding workforce initiatives and said his goal has been to leverage and build upon that work. He reported on last winter's MUS Workforce Initiatives Tour to 2-year campuses, the discussions with campus workforce development leads, and the information that tour produced. He talked about the MUS Workforce Initiatives Leadership Council and its structure.

**d. Perkins Comprehensive Local Needs Assessment**

Director of Dual Enrollment and Career and Technical Education, Jacque Treaster, reported on the Perkins V local needs assessment requirement, noting that it is an exciting new direction the program is taking in Montana. She discussed the impact of Perkins in Montana and how the needs assessment requirement will be implemented.

**Public Comment | 05:55:40**

No public comment was received



Committee Reports & Action | 05:56:40

- Budget, Administration and Audit Committee

**CONSENT** | 05:56:50

**Staff Item:**

- a. Labor Agreements; OCHE/MUS ITEM 220-100-R0925 | Attachment #1

**Facility Items:**

- b. Request for Authorization to Enter into Off-Campus Lease with Hamilton Public Schools; University of Montana-Bitterroot College ITEM 220-1004-R0925 | Attachment #1
- c. Request for Authorization to Renovate Reid Hall First Floor; Montana State University ITEM 220-2002-R0925 | Attachment #1

A motion for approval of consent items a.- c. was made by Regent Dombrowski; motion passed (6-0).

**ACTION** | 05:57:36

- a. Request for Approval of Montana University System Operating Budgets; OCHE/MUS ITEM 220-101-R0925 | Attachment #1 | MUS Operating Budgets

A motion for approval of action item a. ITEM 220-101-R0925 was made by Regent Folkvord; motion passed (6-0).

- b. Request for Authorization to Remodel the Food Service Space (coffee shop) within Lommasson Center – University of Montana-Missoula ITEM 220-1005-R0925 | Attachment #1

A motion for approval of action item b. ITEM 220-1005-R0925 was made by Regent Hoyer; motion passed (6-0).

- c. Request for Authorization to Renovate Within and Construct Additions to the Visual Communications Building; Montana State University ITEM 220-2003-R0925 | Attachment #1

A motion for approval of action item c. ITEM 220-2003-R0925 was made by Regent Jasper; motion passed (6-0).

- d. Request for Authorization to Lease Additional Space in the Engineworks Building Located in the MSU Innovation Campus on Behalf of a Defense Innovation OnRamp HUB; Montana State University ITEM 220-2004-R0925 | Attachment #1

A motion for approval of action item d. ITEM 220-2004-R0925 was made by Regent Dombrowski; motion passed (5-0). Regent Bough abstained from the vote.





- e. Request for Authorization to Construct an Elevator and Associated ADA Improvements at Lewis Hall; Montana State University ITEM 220-2005-R0925 | Attachment #1

A motion for approval of action item e. ITEM 220-2005-R0925 was made by Regent Dombrowski; motion passed (6-0).

Academic, Research and Student Affairs Committee | 06:05:04

**CONSENT** | 06:05:10

**Emeriti Faculty:**

- a. LedBetter; UM Missoula ITEM 220-1002-R0925
- b. Kalm; UM Missoula ITEM 220-1003-R0925
- c. Ridenour; UM Western ITEM 220-1601-R0925
- d. Sterling; MSU Bozeman ITEM 220-2001-R0925

**Tenure Faculty:**

- e. MSU Bozeman; ITEM 220-2000-R0925
- f. UM Missoula; ITEM 220-1006-R0925

**Other:**

- g. Request for Approval to Appoint a Faculty Member on Continuous Tenure to the Committee on Service; OCHE/MUS ITEM 220-102-R0925

A motion for approval of consent items a.- g. was made by Regent Jasper; motion passed (6-0).

The meeting adjourned at 4:00 p.m.

**Executive Session**

The Board convened an executive session at 4:10 pm. Chair Buchanan determined the discussion related to matters of individual privacy and the demands of individual privacy outweigh the merits of public disclosure.

Executive Session adjourned at 5:15 pm.

Approved by the Board of Regents on

November 20, 2025

Date

Clayton T. Christian  
Commissioner of Higher Education  
and Secretary to the Board of Regents

November 20, 2025

Date

Todd Buchanan  
Chair, Board of Regents