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**TO:** Board of Regents  
**FROM:** Terry Roark  
President, MSU-Bozeman  
**RE:** Campus Report for the September, 2000 Board of Regents Meeting

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**REPORT ON RETENTION**

- The Office of Retention, part of the Dean of Students Office, at Montana State University—Bozeman advances a comprehensive, systematic plan which front-loads retention efforts to address the needs of new, traditionally-aged students during their first year at MSU. The First Year Initiative (FYI), winner of the 2000 National Retention Excellence Award, consists of six major program components that target entering freshmen at the most critical points during their first year. Programs include:
  - A comprehensive survey of college readiness and motivation (College Student Inventory);
  - A peer mentor program with a social and academic integration focus;
  - One-on-one or small group contact with retention staff and college faculty/deans during the first six weeks of the fall semester;
  - Intervention at mid-semester with students who appear on the “D & F List”;
  - A qualitative student satisfaction survey conducted in December; and
  - The Mid-Year Retention Intervention (MRI) program conducted throughout spring semester for academically at-risk freshmen.
  
- In January 1997, the First Year Initiative (FYI) program at the Office of Retention conducted a pilot project. The results from the first year pilot showed an initial increase in retention rates from freshman to sophomore year of seven (7) percentage points. When, in 1998, the FYI program was broadened to include the entire entering cohort of traditionally-aged students (approximately 2000 students), the program showed an overall increase in retention of three (3) percent.
  
- The General Studies Freshman Seminar enrolls 600 students per year and has been highlighted at numerous national and international conferences on the First Year Experience. The course was piloted and developed with the support of a FIPSE grant and is now in its eleventh year of implementation. The primary goal of the course is to integrate students into the academic and social communities of the university. It is led by upper class students who

themselves take a course that includes training in group leadership, inter-personal communications, problem solving and conflict resolution.

- The College of Letters and Science at Montana State University—Bozeman, offers an academically challenging, cross-disciplinary seminar for first year students, aimed at helping new students succeed in college by building strong thinking, speaking and writing skills and helping students feel that they belong in the university community. Since the College Seminar was first offered in 1996, it has served over 500 students. Students who took this course were retained at rates higher than the university average: 4.6% higher retention in the second semester and 2.6% higher in the third semester).
- In addition to the three programs described above, there are various programs and services, across the campus, that seek to address retention issues. These include freshmen classes in the College of Engineering; the long-standing Freshmen Seminar (BUS101V) in the College of Business; the New Student Orientation program; the wide range of Student Services programs; Residence Life programs; and a host of departmental efforts aimed at improving the college experience for first-year students:
  - Making more core courses available in the summer
  - Offering a greater variety of courses in the summer
  - Increasing sections of core courses each semester based on demand
  - Continuing to expand the freshman seminar program
  - Enhancing university and department-level student mentoring programs that connect upper division students with freshmen
  - Providing department-level, faculty-based advising for all incoming students
  - Establishing a Recruitment and Retention Task Force, charged with examining policies affecting recruiting and retention

## **OTHER ITEMS**

- Grant and Contract expenditures exceeded \$61 million in FY 2000. This is a 22.5% increase over FY 1999, involved most academic departments and generated a \$40 million payroll for faculty, research professionals and both graduate and undergraduate students. Of recent note is an award to the Veterinary Molecular Biology Department of \$1.8 million from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal Genome program.
- In addition to the continuing student we named last time, MSU will have five entering freshmen who have been named as Gates Millennium Scholars. They are: Kristofer Fourstar of Wolf Point, Amber Means of Lame Deer, Joni Ackerman of Billings, and Jennifer Show and Donna Young of Harlem.
- Kristy Moeller, a Senior Chemistry major from Corvallis was awarded one of only 13 \$20,000 scholarships from the National Science Foundation as part of a program to encourage students from disadvantaged backgrounds to pursue educational and career opportunities in biomedical research.
- Campus-wide reviews are currently underway in the areas of faculty workload, recruitment and retention, Extension programs and structures, the Core Curriculum and the Biology curriculum.
- In the search for MSU's next President, the campus has been most impressed with the visits to campus by Ann and Randy Hart and Larry and Laurel Branen. All look forward to meeting Jeff and Patricia Gamble next week. Thanks to members of the Board who have and will take part.