

MONTANA BOARD OF REGENTS OF HIGHER EDUCATION
Policy and Procedures Manual

SUBJECT: GOVERNANCE AND ORGANIZATION

Policy 203.5.2 – Appeals

Effective May 16, 1966; Issued July 14, 2004; Revised January 5, 2021

I. Preamble:

- A. The purposes of this procedural policy include but are not limited to the following:
1. To provide to the constituencies of the board of regents an administrative procedure to exercise any legal right due from the board.
 2. To assure the board that the plenary authority it maintains over the Montana University System is exercised with knowledge of the facts relevant to any decision.
 3. To minimize litigation between the university system and its constituencies by allowing the board to become informed as to any disagreement and to allow the board to exercise its authority to remedy a grievance.

II. Board policy:

- A. Any party adversely affected by the final decision of a campus may appeal within thirty (30) days of the campus decision, to the commissioner of higher education, unless a board of regents' policy or an employment agreement explicitly provides that the campus decision is the final administrative decision.
1. Persons alleging that a university system employee has acted in a fashion incompatible with state ethics or conflict of interest statutes may bring that matter to the attention of the president or chancellor of the campus. A campus decision on such a complaint may be appealed under this policy once a final decision has been issued by the president or chancellor or their designee.
 2. The commissioner may in his or her discretion limit the scope of review to procedural matters.
 3. The commissioner may not substitute the commissioner's judgment for the substantive decision made by the campus, unless the campus decision was arbitrary and capricious, clearly erroneous based on the facts in the record, or violated some legally protected right of the appellant.
- B. Any party adversely affected by the commissioner's decision may appeal within thirty (30) days of the commissioner's decision to the board pursuant to procedure (III.B) below.
- C. This policy does not apply to any matters which are subject to the grievance procedure of a collective bargaining contract.

III. Procedures:

- A. Appeals from the final campus decision must be in writing, addressed to the commissioner, and shall contain the decision being appealed. Appeals from the final campus decision must also state the basis for the appeal and the relief desired. Upon receipt of the appeal, the commissioner shall notify the party of the scope of review and the procedure to be followed. The appellant shall provide the president or chancellor with a copy of all material sent to the commissioner.

History:

By-laws, Article VIII (rescinded February 15, 1977); Item 15-001-R0277, February 15, 1977 (rescinded). Item 21-003-R0778, appeals; Montana University System, November 2, 1979, June 21, 1985, October 25, 1990, September 28, 1995, and May 16, 1996; paragraphs renumbered July 14, 2004.

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1. A party must use the procedures established at the campus level before appealing to the commissioner. In the absence of applicable campus procedures, the party may appeal a determination by a campus official to the immediate supervisor. The final administrative decision at the campus level is that of the president or chancellor or their designee.
 2. The commissioner may attempt to achieve an informal disposition of the appeal. An informal disposition is binding only if the appealing party and the president or chancellor agree to the proposed resolution.
 3. Subject to the provisions of paragraph (III.A.4), the appeal will be decided based upon materials submitted by the appealing party and by the campus. The parties to the appeal have no right to introduce materials or raise issues that have not been part of the campus record. A full or partial hearing may be conducted if:
 - a. the right to a hearing is established by a board policy on the particular subject matter; or
 - b. failure to conduct a hearing would violate the appealing party's constitutional due process rights.
 4. The commissioner may request that the parties submit additional materials, or may take notice of other relevant matters. The commissioner may remand the matter back to the campus or the commissioner may affirm, reverse, or modify the campus decision or present the appeal to the board for its consideration.
- B. Appeals from the commissioner's decision to the board must be made within thirty (30) days of the commissioner's decision and must be in writing and addressed to the board in care of the commissioner. The appeal must also state the basis for the appeal and the relief desired. The commissioner shall place the matter on the board's agenda, and the board shall determine whether to accept the appeal. If the board accepts the appeal, it may request a full or partial hearing, or no hearing. The standard of review set forth in II.A.3 of this policy applies to the board's review of the commissioner's decision. The decision of the board affirming, reversing, modifying, or refusing to hear the appeal is the final administrative determination of the university system.
- C. No matters subject to this policy shall be considered final until the procedures of this policy have been used to present the matter to the board of regents. When a party fails to exercise the appeal rights provided by this policy, the party accepts the lower level decision as the final decision and waives the right to contest the matter further within the university system.

History:

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