



Minutes
Montana Board of Regents
November 21-22, 2024

Thursday, November 21st, 2024

Meeting convened at 8:32 a.m.

Regents Present: Todd Buchanan, Chair, Loren Bough, Vice Chair, Joyce Dombrowski, Casey Lozar, Dean Folkvord, and Raina Mortenson. Regent Southworth was excused. Ex officio members present included Commissioner of Higher Education, Clayton Christian, Superintendent of Public Instruction, Elsie Arntzen, and Governor Greg Gianforte.

Welcome by Chair Buchanan | 00:00:00*

Chair Buchanan welcomed everyone to the meeting and asked President Cruzado to begin her presentation.

Welcome by President Cruzado | 00:08:07

President Cruzado gave an overview of the programs at MSU and MSU's ongoing support of veteran students. She discussed annual research expenditures, various resources available on campus, the expansion of WWAMI and WIMU, new academic programs, an update on grants, and an update on the Innovation Campus. President Cruzado presented a slide show highlighting the changes on campus during her time as president over the past 14 years, along with all the upcoming projects that are in process.

Comments by Chair Buchanan | 00:31:35

Chair Buchanan thanked President Cruzado and her team for hosting the meeting and noted that the discussion of the Regents' breakfast with MUSFAR centered around the value proposition of higher education. He welcomed the faculty representative and the Tribal College representative to the meeting. He discussed his attendance at the AIMA Council on Wednesday, commented on the successes Montana is experiencing with American Indian enrollment and retention, and praised the organization for advancing those successes. Chair Buchanan reviewed the agenda.

Approval of Minutes | 00:37:10

- September 18-19, 2024 Meeting Minutes

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

**Due to technical difficulties, the audio/video recording did not begin until 00:08:07*



Commissioner's and System Report | 00:37:19

Commissioner Christian welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked President Cruzado and her staff for hosting the meeting. He paid tribute to President Cruzado and her accomplishments during her leadership at MSU. He expressed his appreciation to everyone in the MUS at every level for continuing to make the system thrive. He said the Governor's budget has been released and thanked the Governor for his proposed investments in and support of the MUS. He gave a brief Gear Up program and funding update.

- Search Update/Department of Education Update | 00:45:33

Commissioner Christian updated the Board on the search for a new president at MSU and new chancellor at Montana Tech and discussed the process for both searches. He noted that the final decisions will go to the board for approval.

Commissioner Christian noted that there are questions coming up across the country regarding the future of the federal Department of Education and said that OCHE will be closely monitoring the developments. He said some of the federal programs will have to remain intact but how federal programs are administered will be a topic of debate.

- Enrollment Report | 00:54:13

Scott Lemmon, Director of Admissions and Enrollment Strategy, reported on systemwide year over year Fall enrollment numbers. He discussed the overall enrollment landscape for first-year freshmen, FTEs, and total headcount. Director Lemmon reported gains in every area across the MUS and discussed recent high school student capture rates and the statewide projections for upcoming high school graduates. Discussion followed.

- Resolution on Math Proficiency | 01:19:04

Interim Deputy Commissioner of Academic, Research & Student Affairs, Joe Thiel, provided an overview of the multi-state agency collaboration and presented a proposed resolution to address math proficiency in Montana. Discussion followed.

- Campus Reports | 01:25:00

- Introductions & Acknowledgments | 01:25:43

Chancellor Kegel, MSU Northern, introduced Dr. Tiffany Vickers, Dean of the College of Health Sciences.

Chancellor Hicswa, MSUB, introduced Vern Gagnon, Dean of City College.

Interim Deputy Commissioner Thiel congratulated Ange DeWolf King, OCHE Director of Transfer and Special Projects, for receiving the Governor's Award for Excellence.



Budget, Administration and Audit Committee | 01:52:48

CONSENT | 01:54:07

Staff Item:

- a. Labor Agreement; MUS ITEM 215-100-R1124 | Attachment #1

Kerry Davant, Executive Director of Human Resources and Labor Relations, presented a summary of the collective bargaining agreements within the system, focusing on the newly negotiated agreement between the Montana University System (MUS) and the Montana Federation of Public Employees (MFPE) on behalf of the University of Montana graduate students. Executive Director Davant recommended approval of the proposed agreement.

Facility Items:

- b. Request for Authorization to Lease Agricultural Land for the Montana Agricultural Experiment Station (MAES); MSU Bozeman ITEM 215-2301-R1124 | Attachment #1
- c. Request for Authorization to Lease Space for MilTech; MSU Bozeman ITEM 215-2003-R1124 | Attachment #1
- d. Request for authorization to design and construct renovations on the third and fourth floors of Hamilton Hall; MSU Bozeman ITEM 215-2002-R1124 | Attachment #1
- e. Request for Authorization to Design and Construct a Fire Alarm System Replacement for the Brick Breeden Fieldhouse; MSU Bozeman ITEM 215-2001-R1124 | Attachment #1
- f. Request for Authorization to Grant a Sewer Easement to the City of Missoula for the New Residence Hall; UM Missoula ITEM 215-1009-R1124 | Attachment #1 Attachment #2 | Attachment #3 | Attachment #4
- g. Request for Authorization to Grant a Guy Wire Easement to NorthWestern Energy; UM Missoula ITEM 215-1008-R1124 | Attachment #1
- h. Request for Authorization to Increase Project Authority for the Study of UM's Southwest Quadrant; UM Missoula ITEM 215-1006-R1124 | Attachment #1

Other Item:

- i. Request for Approval to Revise Board of Regents Policy 203.3.3, Board of Regents Policy and Procedures; MUS/OCHE ITEM 215-103-R1124 | Attachment #1

Deputy Commissioner Tyler Trevor said Item i. is a revision to when and how Board policies should be updated and improved. Discussion followed.

ACTION | 01:59:56



- a. Request for Authorization to Transfer Interest in Real Property; Vigilante Stadium to Beaverhead County High School; UM Western ITEM 215-1602-R1124 | Attachment #1 | Attachment #2 | Attachment #3

Chancellor Reid, UM Western, said that with the completion of the new stadium, UM Western would like to transfer the old stadium to Beaverhead County High School. He said all parties involved agree with the proposed transfer.

- b. Request for Authorization to Issue Bonds to Finance a New Residence Hall; UM Missoula ITEM 215-1011-R1124 | Attachment #1

Deputy Commissioner Trevor said this is a request for the issuance of \$69 million in revenue bonds to ensure UM will receive necessary proceeds to meet project costs.

- c. Request Authorization to Execute Energy Performance Contracts (EPC) for Multi-year, Multi-phased Projects to Address Deferred Maintenance, Reduce Utility Costs and Improve Energy Efficiency; MSU Bozeman ITEM 215-2004-R1124 | Attachment #1 | Attachment #2

Dan Stevenson, Director of Facilities Planning, gave an in-depth report on what energy contracts are, how they are financed, and how they are utilized by the campus.

INFORMATION | 02:12:24

- a. Executive Budget Overview

Deputy Commissioner Trevor reviewed the Governor's proposed budget for the MUS. He discussed present law adjustments, the pay plan, Long Range Building Program projects, and MUS Initiatives. Discussion followed.

- b. System-wide Facilities Planning

Dan Stevenson, Director of Facilities Planning, said that system-wide facilities planning will start in late 2024 with the formation of working advisory groups at MSU-Bozeman, UM-Missoula, and across the affiliate campuses throughout the system. Planning will include assembling accurate and consistent facilities data; determining the appropriate key performance metrics at the campus and system levels; and applying analytics to this data to inform decision-making. The end goal is to arrive at strategic capital planning and resource management. The presentation concluded with a review of Capital Investment Analytics developed for Montana State University-Bozeman.

Academic, Research and Student Affairs Committee | 04:31:26

CONSENT | 04:31:37

Staff Items:



- a. Request for Authorization to Exclude Certain Officers/Directors from Personnel Security Clearance; MUS/OCHE ITEM 215-102-R1124 | Attachment #1

Emeriti Faculty:

- b. Arnold; MSU Bozeman ITEM 215-2010-R1124
- c. Inskeep; MSU Bozeman ITEM 215-2011-R1124
- d. Maxwell; MSU Bozeman ITEM 215-2012-R1124
- e. O'Neill; MSU Bozeman ITEM 215-2013-R1124
- f. Brown; MSU Bozeman ITEM 215-2014-R1124
- g. Haynes; MSU Bozeman ITEM 215-2015-R1124
- h. Held; MSU Bozeman ITEM 215-2016-R1124
- i. Lavin; MSU Bozeman ITEM 215-2017-R1124
- j. Walker; MSU Bozeman ITEM 215-2018-R1124
- k. Carter; UM Missoula ITEM 215-1005-R1124
- l. Lo; UM Missoula ITEM 215-1010-R1124
- m. Miller; UM Missoula ITEM 215-1012-R1124
- n. Burns; UM Missoula ITEM 215-1013-R1124
- o. Richter; UM Missoula ITEM 215-1014-R1124
- p. Daenzer; UM Western ITEM 215-1601-R1124

Tenure Faculty:

- q. MSU Bozeman; ITEM 215-2000-R1124

ACTION | 04:32:59

- a. Honorary Doctorate, UM Missoula ITEM 215-1007-R1124 | Attachment #1

Seth Bodnar, UM President, presented the request to award an honorary doctorate to William Marcus.

The Academic, Research, & Student Affairs Committee briefly paused so the board could hear remarks from Superintendent Arntzen, after which it continued with Action Item b.

Remarks by Superintendent Arntzen | 04:36:16



Superintendent Arntzen reported on the K-12 summative test assessment and the teacher residency program. She announced that Dawn Sievers from Power, Montana, has been awarded Montana's Teacher of the Year.

b. Request to Plan Proposals | OCHE Executive Summary | Supporting Documents

Dr. Joy Honea, MSU Billings, presented the request to plan proposal for a Master of Science in Criminal Justice.

Dr. Johnny MacLean, UM Western Provost, presented the request to plan proposal for a Minor in Professional Communications and Minor in Environmental Writing.

Dr. Adrea Lawrence, UM Provost, presented the request to plan proposal for concentrations for the Master of Fine Arts in Theater, concentrations in the Bachelor of Music, and Bachelor of Arts in Music, and a Master in Natural Resource Management. She also presented the request to plan proposal for Academic Organizational Structure with an in-depth overview of the plan. Discussion followed.

Dr. Tim Elgren, Montana Tech Provost, presented the request to plan proposal for dual credit for recruiting corrections officers, an online program for a certificate in Behavioral Health, and a Certificate in Applied Science in Behavioral Health.

INFORMATION | 05:27:26

a. Academic Approval Items

Interim Deputy Commissioner Thiel said these are items that have reached the next stage of development in the final approval process.

b. Academic Processes Update

Interim Deputy Commissioner Thiel discussed the process of evaluating the criteria and guidelines used when new academic programs are being developed.

c. Sprint Degree Panel

Angela DeWolf King, Director of Transfer and Special Projects, reported on MUS Sprint Degrees. Director King shared some highlights from current cohorts and graduates, as well as student motivations for selecting the program. The update was followed by a panel of students and employers discussing their experiences with the Sprint program. Discussion followed.

d. Montana Online Course Exchange

Interim Deputy Commissioner Thiel said the online course exchange allows collaboration on academics by creating a common online course catalog across the MUS to improve the student experience. He listed the campuses that are participating. He gave a detailed overview of how the common course catalog works and the opportunities it provides to students. Discussion followed.



e. MUS Research Update

Interim Deputy Commissioner Thiel reported on MUS research expenditures, activity, and growth. He provided an overview of current grant submissions and funds being requested. He gave an update on research award statistics and shared some of the changes underway and the potential impact on research. Discussion followed.

f. Headwaters Tech Hub

Dr. Tim VanReken, Headwaters Tech Hub (HTH) Executive Director and Regional Innovation Officer, reported on what a Tech Hub is and the vision for Tech Hubs across the nation. He spoke about the trajectory and growth of tech companies in Montana. He discussed HTH's vision, projected impact in the next 10 years, the project portfolio, and the leadership at the HTH office. Discussion followed!

g. National Security Research and Industry Panel

Al Deibert, Program Manager, MilTech, gave a presentation outlining what MilTech is, its mission, core competencies, projects completed, and the impact on Montana, along with funding received.

Dr. Tom Gallagher, Associate Vice Provost, UM, and Dean, Missoula College, detailed ongoing efforts across the state to enhance cybersecurity through workforce development. He gave an overview of the Centers of Academic Excellence and Cyber Defense (CAE CD) program and other ways the cybersecurity workforce shortage is being addressed. He provided an update on the Montana CyberRange, CyberHub, and the Cybersecurity & Infrastructure Security Agency.

Chris Huddleston, IT Supervisor, Ravalli Electric Cooperative, provided an overview of how some of the technologies are being used by the company. He stressed the importance of continuing education to stay up to date. He addressed some of the cybersecurity challenges they are facing as a co-op. Discussion followed.

Public Comment | 07:44:57

Butch Damberger, MSU staff, thanked President Cruzado for all her success during her time at MSU and wished her a happy retirement.

Elizabeth Olson, staff at MSU IT, thanked President Cruzado for all her accomplishments at the university.

Michael Stanley, Chief of University Police, MSU, recognized and thanked President Cruzado for her leadership and commitment to campus safety.

Jeannette Grey Gilbert, Chief Human Resources Officer, MSU, expressed her gratitude to President Cruzado from the Human Resource department.

Kim Anderson, employee in Financial Services, MSU, shared her gratitude for President Cruzado and for her leadership and support.



Jeff Bondi, representing the MSU housing staff, thanked President Cruzado for all she has done for MSU, especially in the housing department.

Friday, November 22nd, 2024

Meeting Convened at 08:30 am

Two Year and Community College Committee | 00:02:59:

INFORMATION | 00:03:39

a. 2023-2024 Dual Credit Enrollment Report

Director of Dual Enrollment and CTE, Jacque Treaster, reported on recent Dual Enrollment data, noting that participation every year has exceeded the last. She said the credit hours are also increasing, as is CTE Dual Enrollment.

b. Dual Enrollment Panel

Director Treaster asked the panelists to introduce themselves. Panelists included Bert Horsley, Assistant Principal at Belgrade High School, Emiliana and Aggie Kelm, Dual Enrollment students, and Sadie Kelm, a mother of Dual Enrollment students and a homeschool teacher. The panelists discussed their experiences with Dual Enrollment, some of the challenges they have encountered, and how Dual Enrollment has helped them move forward. Discussion followed.

d. Efforts underway to support Sibanye-Stillwater Mine

Mike Hopkins, MT Job Service Workforce Services Division Bureau Chief, discussed the steps a company goes through when initiating a substantial layoff and the rapid response required by Job Service to provide employment opportunities, help with filing for unemployment, and assist with unemployment insurance for laid off workers. He said federal funding has been requested to help support these workers and said Job Service's rapid response remains with the workers until they are reemployed in a job that suits their needs. Discussion followed.

Public Comment | 00:47:02

Tracy Ellig, Vice President of Communications, MSU, expressed his gratitude to President Cruzado for her dedication to students and to the Hilleman Scholars Program.

Julie Kipfer, Chief Marketing Officer, MSU, expressed her gratitude to President Cruzado for her dedication and grit.

Nicholas Conlin, student at Montana Tech, discussed his opposition to decisions made on his disability accommodations, financial aid, and degree conferral.

Committee Reports & Action | 00:55:26



- Resolution on Math Proficiency

A motion for approval of board item Resolution on Math Proficiency, was made by Regent Dombrowski; motion passed (6-0).

- Budget, Administration and Audit Committee

CONSENT

Staff Item:

- a. Labor Agreement; MUS ITEM 215-100-R1124 | Attachment #1

Facility Items:

- b. Request for Authorization to Lease Agricultural Land for the Montana Agricultural Experiment Station (MAES); MSU Bozeman ITEM 215-2301-R1124 | Attachment #1
- c. Request for Authorization to Lease Space for MilTech; MSU Bozeman ITEM 215-2003-R1124 | Attachment #1
- d. Request for authorization to design and construct renovations on the third and fourth floors of Hamilton Hall; MSU Bozeman ITEM 215-2002-R1124 | Attachment #1
- e. Request for Authorization to Design and Construct a Fire Alarm System Replacement for the Brick Breeden Fieldhouse; MSU Bozeman ITEM 215-2001-R1124 | Attachment #1
- f. Request for Authorization to Grant a Sewer Easement to the City of Missoula for the New Residence Hall; UM Missoula ITEM 215-1009-R1124 | Attachment #1
Attachment #2 | Attachment #3 | Attachment #4
- g. Request for Authorization to Grant a Guy Wire Easement to NorthWestern Energy; UM Missoula ITEM 215-1008-R1124 | Attachment #1
- h. Request for Authorization to Increase Project Authority for the Study of UM's Southwest Quadrant; UM Missoula ITEM 215-1006-R1124 | Attachment #1

Other Item:

- i. Request for Approval to Revise Board of Regents Policy 203.3.3, Board of Regents Policy and Procedures; MUS/OCHE ITEM 215-103-R1124 | Attachment #1

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

ACTION

- a. Request for Authorization to Transfer Interest in Real Property; Vigilante Stadium to Beaverhead County High School; UM Western ITEM 215-1602-R1124 | Attachment #1 | Attachment #2 | Attachment #3



A motion for approval of action item a., ITEM 215-1602-R1124, was made by Regent Bough; motion passed (6-0).

- b. Request for Authorization to Issue Bonds to Finance a New Residence Hall; UM Missoula ITEM 215-1011-R1124 | Attachment #1

A motion for approval of action item b., ITEM 215-1011-R1124, was made by Regent Dombrowski; motion passed (6-0).

- c. Request Authorization to Execute Energy Performance Contracts (EPC) for Multi-year, Multi-phased Projects to Address Deferred Maintenance, Reduce Utility Costs and Improve Energy Efficiency; MSU Bozeman ITEM 215-2004-R1124 | Attachment #1 | Attachment #2

A motion for approval of action item c., ITEM 215-2004-R1124, was made by Regent Lozar; motion passed (6-0)

- Academic, Research and Student Affairs Committee | 00:58:23

CONSENT

Staff Items:

- a. Request for Authorization to Exclude Certain Officers/Directors from Personnel Security Clearance; MUS/OCHE ITEM 215-102-R1124 | Attachment #1

Emeriti Faculty:

- b. Arnold; MSU Bozeman ITEM 215-2010-R1124
- c. Inskeep; MSU Bozeman ITEM 215-2011-R1124
- d. Maxwell; MSU Bozeman ITEM 215-2012-R1124
- e. O'Neill; MSU Bozeman ITEM 215-2013-R1124
- f. Brown; MSU Bozeman ITEM 215-2014-R1124
- g. Haynes; MSU Bozeman ITEM 215-2015-R1124
- h. Held; MSU Bozeman ITEM 215-2016-R1124
- i. Lavin; MSU Bozeman ITEM 215-2017-R1124
- j. Walker; MSU Bozeman ITEM 215-2018-R1124
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- m. Miller; UM Missoula ITEM 215-1012-R1124
- n. Burns; UM Missoula ITEM 215-1013-R1124



- o. Richter; UM Missoula ITEM 215-1014-R1124
- p. Daenzer; UM Western ITEM 215-1601-R1124

Tenure Faculty:

- q. MSU Bozeman; ITEM 215-2000-R1124

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

ACTION

- a. Honorary Doctorate, UM Missoula ITEM 215-1007-R1124 | Attachment #1

A motion for approval of action item a., ITEM 215-1007-R1124, was made by Regent Dombrowski; motion passed (6-0).

- b. Request to Plan Proposals | OCHE Executive Summary | Supporting Documents

A motion for approval of action item b., Request to Plan Proposals, was made by Regent Folkvord; motion passed (6-0)

Appeal #1
Appeal #2

Chair Buchanan explained the process related to appeals. He called for a motion to hear the appeals. No motion was made to hear the appeals, and therefore the Commissioner's decisions were upheld.

The meeting recessed at 10:30 a.m.

Approved by the Board of Regents on

01/08/2025
Date

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

01/08/2025
Date

Todd Buchanan
Chair, Board of Regents

APPENDIX A
WRITTEN PUBLIC COMMENT

From: [Downs, Alisha](#)
To: [Casanovas, Jasmine](#)
Subject: BOR Public Comment
Date: Wednesday, November 20, 2024 12:49:30 PM
Importance: High

As a long-time staff member at Montana State University and an elected member of the MSU All Staff Council (MSUASC), I am submitting this comment to express my concern regarding the lack of staff representation on the Presidential Search Advisory Committee.

The announcement of the selected committee members deeply disappointed many of us, as no representatives were chosen to advocate for MSUASC or staff at large. This decision disregards the core mission of MSUASC: to serve as the voice of the MSU staff and to facilitate communication on interests, concerns, and issues affecting all staff members.

At the staff open forum on October 24th, Greenwood Asher and Associates representatives incorrectly stated that the committee included representation from MSUASC. For the record, that claim is false. Despite repeated attempts by MSUASC to secure a seat on the committee, we were informed this was not possible.

This exclusion is a significant oversight. Staff play a critical role in the success of Montana State University, a fact highlighted by the strong attendance at the staff forum—a stark contrast to the turnout at other forums. This enthusiasm underscores how deeply staff members care about the future leadership of our institution.

Dr. Waded Cruzado, throughout her tenure, championed the importance of staff, emphasizing that the people of MSU are our greatest asset. Yet, the lack of staff representation in this crucial presidential selection process feels like a dismissal of that principle. The decision has the potential to impact all of us for years to come, and our voices deserve to be included.

I urge the administration and search committee to recognize the value of staff contributions and to correct this exclusionary approach in future processes. The staff of MSU are essential to achieving the university's mission, and our insights should inform leadership decisions that shape the institution's future.

Sincerely,
Alisha Downs
Elected Member, MSU All Staff Council

From: [Rudnicki, Richard](#)
To: [Casanovas, Jasmine](#)
Subject: Public Comment regarding the MSU Presidential Search
Date: Wednesday, November 20, 2024 1:50:47 PM

Dear MUS BOR,

These comments are in regard to the selection process for the next President at MSU. The selection committee membership does not contain any representation of the staff at MSU, this disregard for staff also occurred during the selection process at UM several years ago. Staff comprise over 2,100 individuals at MSU who are deeply invested in the success of the University and which the University cannot succeed without. Additionally, there is no representation from either the Facilities or Auxiliaries divisions of campus. The people critical to the daily function and operation of all the facilities on campus and those responsible for many aspects of student life are completely unrepresented. Many decisions the President makes are critically informed by the work and information provided by the hundreds of staff represented by these 2 divisions.

Having no representation of the staff voice or from these important perspectives of daily campus operation is a critical oversight in the process. Adding a single person could cover staff representation and a large amount of knowledge in these areas. This would provide a more well rounded and complete review of candidates from all perspectives of the university community and support finding the candidate most likely to be successful at MSU. Adding a representative to the selection committee now to correct this issue prior to reviewing candidates for the position should be an imperative.

I appreciate your thought and consideration of this comment.

Thank you,

Richard Rudnicki, AICP
Planning Manager - Montana State University
Planning, Design and Construction
Bozeman, MT 59717
(O) 406-994-5560
(C) 864-650-2360
montana.edu/pdc/



From: [Knoebl, Sarah](#)
To: [Casanovas, Jasmine](#)
Subject: Public Comment - MSU Presidential Advisory Search Committee - November Meeting
Date: Wednesday, November 20, 2024 12:58:44 PM

Commissioner Christian and Esteemed Regents,

As a dedicated staff member at Montana State University, I believe there is insufficient staff representation on the MSU Presidential Advisory Search Committee. Staff play a crucial, mission-critical role on MSU's campus and should have a voice in this important process. I urge the Board of Regents to add representation from the Montana State University All Staff Council, as their primary mission is to serve as a voice for MSU staff; promote a positive and collaborative campus work environment and advise the President and senior administrators on employee engagement and working climate. This decision will impact staff members for years to come and we should have had a seat at this decision-making table from the beginning.

Thank You,

Sarah Knoebl, AICP

Campus Planner

Planning, Design & Construction

University Facilities Management

Montana State University

From: [Joe Hancock](#)
To: [Casanovas, Jasmine](#)
Subject: Board of Regents Comment
Date: Thursday, January 16, 2025 10:34:59 PM
Attachments: [Joe Hancock Board of Regents Comment.docx](#)

****External Sender****

Jasmine,

I fully intended to present this comment at the meeting in the SUB in November, but the schedule moved far too fast for me to escape my office to make it in time. I'm finally sending them your way because the last two months have been quite hectic.

I have left the content unedited from the speech format I originally wrote it in.

Best,

Joe Hancock

Good morning. My name is Joe Hancock, Chief Steward of FOCUS-MSU, MFPE Local #8521, accounting analyst in Fiscal Shared Services, and mentor to the College Democrats of MSU. I currently hold two bachelor's degrees from this institution, in Construction Engineering and Political Science, and in May, I will earn my third and final degree in Economics.

I am also a U.S. Air Force veteran of Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom, a member of American Legion Post #30, and future chair of the Gallatin County Democrats.

I've seen things you people wouldn't believe. Gunships lined up on a taxiway in Kuwait. I watched towns turn into memories, while farms became commercial districts. Those moments can't be lost in time, like tears in rain. Time to act.

While the institutions in the Montana University System are uniquely positioned to influence housing availability in their communities, historically they have made decisions that were detrimental to the market. Moving forward, I know that inaction on their part will exacerbate the crisis.

As Mark Twain wrote, "History never repeats itself, but the Kaleidoscopic combinations of the pictured present often seem to be constructed out of the broken fragments of antique legends."

A significant moment of change is approaching, with President Cruzado's impending retirement and a consequential legislative session beginning in January. Decisions are about to be made to shape the future of MSU, Bozeman, and Montana, and the housing markets across the state are nearing a perilous tipping point. Universal access to healthy, affordable housing needs to be the top priority in 2025.

Ultimately, I am here to insist that our universities, especially MSU, step into an active role in solving the housing crisis. The arc of the moral universe does not bend towards justice without individuals and institutions working together to identify and correct systemic failures in our social structures.

There is no single solution to Montana's struggle with affordability, but I know that together we can build a successful model from the countless ideas being brought to the table if our community commits to the cause. We must be the fire that burns against the cold and the light that brings the dawn.

I came here today with my fellow university workers so we could share our stories with you all. I am proud of them for their commitment to seeking real solutions for Bozeman and Montana and their courage in speaking at this meeting. I am blessed to participate

in this forum with them, and I know our shared moment in history will have a positive impact on Montana's future. As James Baldwin said, "I can't be a pessimist because I am alive. To be a pessimist means that you have agreed that human life is an academic matter. So, I am forced to be an optimist. I am forced to believe that we can survive, whatever we must survive."