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MUSSA thanks the Regents and OCHE for their timely action and recognition of the Recruitment and Retention Task Force recommendations, and for including MUSSA and all constituent groups in the process of addressing critical MUS issues and needs.

We acknowledge the considerable System-wide efforts to pursue improved student recruitment and retention, and employer competitiveness.

We recognize the “source problems” from which *Pooled Resources* originated, and to which it now falls victim.

**History** (for a more detailed summary of the current situation please see [www.montana.edu/staffsenate/pr2-21-08.pdf](http://www.montana.edu/staffsenate/pr2-21-08.pdf))

- July 2005: MUSSA invited to meet with the Board of Regents and Chief Executives to explore MUSSA’s ideas for non-salary staff recruitment & retention initiatives
  - Professional development and training (PD&T) is identified as a priority need
  - That most of the necessary materials and expertise already exist within the MUS is eagerly acknowledged
  - The many benefits of maximizing these untapped resources are recognized
  - MUSSA is charged with exploring the feasibility of creating a web-based catalog (of articles, books, podcasts, facilitator-led workshops, classes and online courses, etc), widely derived from, and broadly accessible to all staff, across the MUS. The concept has the working title: *Pooled Resources*
- November 2005 Board of Regents meeting: MUSSA reports on its comprehensive research
  - Achieved through significant collaboration on a System-wide scale
  - *Pooled Resources* is deemed feasible and desirable and enthusiastically supported everywhere
  - The Board of Regents authorize MUSSA to form a System-wide implementation committee
- May 2006 Board of Regents meeting: MUSSA presents its Implementation Plan
  - Naming 25 project partners and interested parties from across the MUS
  - Detailing
    - roles and undertakings
    - needs assessment and inventory collection
    - web development
    - marketing, launch and on-going project maintenance
- Summer/Fall 2006: continued MUSSA System-wide collaboration in executing the Implementation Plan
- January 2007:
  - Designated program coordinator, under MUSSA direction, conducts a needs assessment among every MUS classified employee
  - MUSSA broadcasts MUS and local administration support for *Pooled Resources* and begins to network with inventory donors
- February 2007 Board of Regents meeting: MUSSA announces anticipated launch on each of the 8 campuses for April 2007

- Spring 2007/Fall 2007: despite on-going support for *Pooled Resources* and best efforts by MUSSA, OCHE, and MUS HR directors
  - Budgetary and manpower constraints render inventory collection impossible
  - Challenges in staff recruitment and retention across the MUS impose serious limitations of employee potential to participate, thereby casting doubt upon *Pooled Resources*' viability (but not the worth of the concept) at this time
- Spring 2008: MUSSA and OCHE agree that it is appropriate to postpone further work on *Pooled Resources*.

### **Observations**

- There has never been lack of support for the concept of *Pooled Resources*, nor for MUSSA or its efforts
- MUSSA's collaborative success has been widely recognized
- MUSSA gratefully acknowledges the contribution of the Regents, OCHE, campus administrators, the 25 *Pooled Resources* project partners and interested parties and the countless other individuals and departments with whom we worked to bring the concept this far
- The lack of available manpower and/or funding to progress *Pooled Resources* at this time springs from compounding recruitment and retention issues, continued budget constraints and the consequent multiple priorities placed upon all MUS employees (i.e. the source problems)
- The Regents and the MUS is focusing intently on ways to combat these source problems and MUSSA supports and gratefully acknowledges their efforts
- Much has been learned from the *Pooled Resources* experience, including
  - The importance of essential communication
  - The recognition of when to utilize an exit strategy
  - While professional development and training remains an important long term goal, support of the immediate initiatives before the Board is now of greater priority
  - The significant potential of MUSSA's leadership strengths

### **Conclusion**

Ironically, *Pooled Resources*, a well supported, extremely low cost initiative intended, among other things, as a professional development incentive and reliever of staff stressors, has itself fallen victim to budgetary, recruitment/retention, and workload issues. These source problems are compounding for the MUS, and MUSSA supports and gratefully acknowledges current Regent-led activities to address them.

### **Recommendations**

It is MUSSA and OCHE's opinion, in the best interests of the MUS, that our combined efforts should now be redirected in support of current initiatives addressing these source problems, morale issues and the ability for campuses to grow.

It is MUSSA's strong belief that the concept of *Pooled Resources* should be re-visited as human and fiscal resources improve.

### **Action**

MUSSA has already opened discussion with Kevin McRae, OCHE Director of Labor Relations, regarding ways to build upon our current working relationship with MUS human resource leaders. Our conversations have focused on how to attain potential future success when challenged by these source problems.