



## MAS Agenda

Time: 4:30pm

Helena College of Technology, Room 231

I. Call to Order – The meeting was called to order at 4:30pm

II. Roll Call – The following were present:

ASUM-Missoula — Andrea

ASMT Tech — Chris

ASMSU-Billings — Kevin

ASMSU-GF COT —AJ

ASMSU-Northern —Samantha

The following members were absent:

ASMCC — Andrew

ASDCC — JR

ASFVCC – Devin

ASMSU-Bozeman — Cole

ASUM-Western — Whitney

ASHCOT — JT

\*Since quorum is not met, no votes would be cast

III. Approval of Minutes – November and December

IV. Public Comment: None

V. Presentations

- a. Jim Stipcich – Montana Higher Education Student Assistance Corporation (MHESAC) and Student Assistance Foundation (SAF): Jim, the CEO of SAF, presented a power point presentation to the group concerning student loans. The average debt in 1983 was \$783 for education, but now it has grown to be \$20,000 - \$25,000. It is about \$123,000 for optometrists and doctors. When he asked us who has accrued student debt, all of us raised our hands. Jim continued to discuss changes in loans that have occurred over the years. Payment options for loans are looked individually, but students have the opportunity to consolidate their loans. This consolidation has been a huge factor in the state of Montana. Student loans are delivered primarily through five partnerships. MHESAC ensures that lenders sell or refer the loans to them in order to provide capital for student loans since they are a non-profit organization. Its business is managed by SAF; however, the SAF not only provides money to students, but it also works with families to be prepared for college. He also explained that tax-exempt debt exists but it is subject to stricter parameters. What the SAF does is offer rebates to students who have loans through them. If payments are made on time, the results can be a lower

interest rate or principle balance. Currently, they're in the process of offering lower financing in an effort to express their interest in student financial assistance. What makes this program more unique is that no state dollars are involved, which means all business is done through the selling of capital. A question was asked about the detail of bonds, how much is made from them, and do they help assist in operating costs. Jim's response was that their goal is for Montanans to have access to education no matter what kind of economic status they come from. Kelly filled in stating that they use the loan activity to fund public benefits and made clear that grants are dollars that students do not pay back. She indicated the public benefit outreach services as well as the staff's ability to conduct entrance and exit counseling, help staff in the Financial Aid office, and advise 8<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grade college bound students. As the SAF grows, it desires to develop a stronger relationship with the Executive Branch. MHSEC and SEC are committed to helping students and have received good satisfaction ratings from the students they work with. In conclusion to his presentation, Jim ensured that a packet of information was passed out to all of the attendees and announced that there will be another office location in Butte about mid-March.

- b. Representative Michele Reinhart- Representative Reinhart discussed House Bill 260, which would enable the student regent to serve for a one year term with the possibility of being reappointed. Andrea gave a brief overview of what the current process is for the position. The bill would definitely ensure students from all campuses have the ability to maintain a strong voice to the Board of Regents because they could evaluate the performance of the current student regent and compare applicants to choose the best candidate for the position. Regent O'Loughlin was asked how much campaigning is done for the position to which she replied that it is more of a long interview process. She mentioned that this bill would help sustain participation from the two-year colleges. A couple of issues about how the student regent position is now is that term limits can be one or more years with limit capped at four. So far, only a few students have been reappointed in times past. The learning curve was another opposing argument, but once again, choosing a student would be limited to someone almost in their freshman year of college if longer terms were required.
- c. Legislative Updates- Denver Henderson, Jessica LaRouche, and Scott Martin: Scott reported that they all have been really busy with the senate, house, and political parties. They had the opportunity to sit through the presentation of the Governor's CAP, which is built into the base budget. Denver clarified that the legislature meets once every 2 years and that one cannot control what another does. He elaborated further how half of the Governor's \$50 million would go to increasing faculty salaries while the other half goes towards the tuition relief. MAS can help influence this plan to be approved by connecting with the legislatures. He advised to make this plan very important by personalizing the significance of it. Methods could be a written testimonial from a student's perspective, emailing, and calling. Out of those methods, a handwritten letter serves as the best because that is as personal as anyone can become when they express a need or support..

VI. Raise Your Voice Allocation/Day at the Statehouse – Since we do not have quorum, we may have to vote on Tuesday to approve the funds to sponsor hotel rooms. This was

covered on a conference call last month. Andrea mentioned that the next conference call will include the subject of dues because Cole had an idea he would like to share with MAS.

VII. Regent O'Loughlin – Heather announced that the Board of Regents and the Board of Education met. The Board of Regents passed a policy earlier today giving purely online students the ability to not pay the student government/activity fee. We discussed about working with Board of Regents of possibly creating a separate fee for those students in order to adequately represent them. Heather said the one of the goals of the Education office is to bring about consistency. We discussed emailing how much each campus' fee is and what the fee covers to Andrea so she can compile them and bring to the Board of Regents in March. Speaking of March, deadlines on campus' need to be out ASAP for Heather's successor. Some of the benefits that could be mentioned are that all expenses are covered plus a \$50 stipend for each meeting.

VIII. Legislative Plans:  
ASMSU-Northern will be teaming up with ASMSU-B's lobbyist. AJ is in the process of working with the new ASMSU-GF COT senate for approval to team up with ASMSU-B as well.

IX. Other  
Kevin passed out the current budget and we will try for a conference call next week.

X. Adjourn