Professional Council  
December 7, 2011  
415 Reid Hall Montana State University  

Present: Pat Lane, Kathy Osen for Carolyn Plumb, Chancey Ringer, Nora Smith, Erika Swanson, Julie Tatarka, Jeanne Wilkinson, Betsey Pitts  

Others present: Senator Bob Hawks, Past-chair Nancy Filbin  

The meeting was called to order at 10:03 am by Chair Wilkinson. The minutes from the 11/16 meeting were unanimously approved.  

Senator Bob Hawks - Chair Wilkinson described to Senator Hawks what professional employees are, what their role on campus is and how the Professional Council operates within the context of MSU. He was also presented with the Professional Employee Fact Sheet which lists projects PC has been engaged in. One of the projects, student retention, was chronicled through a video PC made in 2010 to highlight how all MSU employees may positively affect the students and shown to Senator Hawks. Survey results of professionals and how they positively perceive their jobs in light of student interaction were also presented to Senator Hawks and discussed. Overall, professional employees expressed, enthusiastically, how invested they are in their jobs, community, and how they enjoy interacting with the students. Chair Wilkinson also apprised Senator Hawks that 27% of the 800+ professionals responded and how PC struggles to reach all employees. Senator Hawks was impressed with the student outreach efforts professional employees were engaged in and went on to clarify and reiterate the reason for his visit to PC: How do PC/professionals reach out beyond themselves to the broader university and the legislature? From his experience of being on four educational committees and various councils, Senator Hawks informed PC that they should be aware of what is going on nationally in the educational arena to understand how they may be effective at MSU and beyond. Understanding that public employees are valuable and equal to those in private sector and in these tumultuous times, economically, one has to go the extra mile to make their case and to establish one’s work and its value. It was suggested that an economist might help to compile that data for the professionals at MSU and present it in a report. He also noted that public funding has been dropping for 30 years and universities must be entrepreneurial; professionals are centrally placed to bring about the change that is happening across the nation. Another point discussed was the aging population and dwindling tax base in Montana and whether the university is organized well enough to deliver, efficiently, courses and programs to students so they are not spending 5 or 6 years getting a four-year degree. Two-year colleges would better prepare some students to enter a university to receive a degree. He spoke of the BoR’s/legislature’s goals for the university and how professionals might become involved, cohesively, with campus leaders. He also stated that being involved with the public (through outreach or volunteering) is helpful in showcasing the value of what MSU employees do.  

Professional Development Updates – Tatarka reported that Tom Calcagni will provide a general session for PEs on his vision for MSU Communications, and how PEs can contribute to that vision. The session is slated for December 19 at 11am. The talk will be recorded and placed on the PC website. A public speaking seminar will be scheduled in January/February if Darin Oelkers, TechLink Professional Employee and Distinguished Toastmaster, is willing. Also, lab safety might be a topic for a seminar in March and Pitts will investigate further.
Other Work Group Updates
PC Member Emeritus – Pitts stated that the past professional council members listings were not extensive enough (1997 to 2011 with three year overlapping of terms) and she will, therefore, send out a blanket email to all professionals asking if they served on the council.

As there was no other business, the meeting ended at 11:00 am.

Jeanne Wilkinson, Chair
Professional Council

Gale R. Gough
Administrative Associate
Professional Council