



Montana State University All Staff Council Membership

Council Member Name		A = Absent P= Present			
Whitney Hinshaw, Chair	P	Julie Clay, Chair Elect	P	Glen Steinhoff, Past Chair	P
Kim Anderson, Member-at-Large	P	Nikki Tuss, Governance Chair	P	Amanda Tebay, Professional Development Chair	P
Kristin Brill, Governance Committee	P	Madison Graff, Governance Committee	P	Danica Weitz, Special Events Chair	P
Diane Robidou, Professional Dev Member	P	Gerre Maillet, Professional Development Member	P	Melis Edwards, Special Events Member	A
Sidrah Watson, Special Events Member	P	Shawn Hudson, Special Events Member	P	Tia Brown, Budget Council	P
Jared Leonard, Campus Sustainability (CSAC)	P	Susan Andrus, ADA Advisory Committee	P	Jonathan Dove, Outreach & Engagement	P
Patrick Baci, Parking Appeals	P	Monique Hill, President's Commission on the Status of University Women (PCSUW)	P	Julie Brown, Personnel Board & MUSSA Member #2	P
Colin Shaw, Planning Council	P	Nick Childs, Research Council	P	Andrew Keegan, Rec Sports & Fitness Advisory Board (RSF)	P
Kimberly Hilmer, Space Management	P	McKenna Christensen, Classroom Committee	P	Stephanie Breen, Transportation Advisory Council (TAC)	P
Shawn Long, University Facilities Planning Board (UFPB)	P	Cori Huttinga, Public Arts and Artifacts Committee (PAAC)	P	John Ooley, General Member	A
Kyla McNamara, General Member	P	Megan Lasso, General Member	P	Candace Mastel, General Member	P
Leslie Schroeder, Program Coordinator	P				
Guests					
Terry Leist, VP for Administration & Finance	P				
Jeannette Grey Gilbert, Chief Human Resources Officer	P				

Agenda

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Chair Whitney Hinshaw. She asked the committee to allow the public comment section before the approval of last month's meeting minutes, out of respect for the busy schedule of our guest speakers.

II. Public Comment

Guests Terry Leist (VP for Administration & Finance) and Jeannette Grey Gilbert (Chief Human Resources Officer) answered previously submitted staff questions regarding COVID-19.

Testing, Quarantine and Contact Tracing



- 1. Q: My question for you is about instructor testing. I am currently a .6 instructor at MSU, working with the Hilleman Scholars program and teaching two sections of the US101 freshmen seminar. Across both of my US101 sections, I currently have 10 students who have tested positive/ are in quarantine. I have not been contacted by the health department as having been in proximity and am not currently experiencing any symptoms. However, as an adjunct without MSU health benefits, I'm wondering if there is an option for me to get tested? Exposure to ten active cases within my classrooms seems like it would be reasonable to request a test from the walk-in MSU testing site.**

Opening comments by TL:

Terry thanked employees for all their efforts to keep campus safe. He recognizes that employees are all dealing with the pandemic in different ways.

A: Regarding testing, it is important to realize that we can't compare Montana State University to other universities, especially outside the state of Montana, because MSU must follow state and county health department protocols. Testing (and the capacity to test) is set up differently in Montana. MSU is not authorized to do their own testing, except for very limited testing in UHP (student health). The governor gave money to help with state testing, but MSU performs that testing under the direction of the state health department (DPHHS). The Symptomatic Student Testing Center is now set up in the stadium parking lot. Staff should contact their health provider or visit the Gallatin City-County Health Departments webpage on testing locations at: <https://www.healthygallatin.org/coronavirus-covid-19/testing/>. Contact tracing is overseen by the Gallatin County Health Department. Their website includes a 5-minute video about how contact tracing works, which you can view here: <https://youtu.be/FoybDvQa4Ug>

- 2. Q: Knowing that we have several positive COVID cases in our building, why is there no pretesting for staff? I don't feel safe at 64 years of age.**

A: MSU does not have the capacity (or authority) to test employees. However, we do have an excellent track record of people doing the right thing based on the messaging we put out (social distancing, wearing masks, washing hands, disinfecting workspaces, etc.). When employees feel at risk, reach out to your Human Resources Business Partner (HRBP). An important tenet in HR is to encourage employees to work directly with their own medical providers. If an employee has concerns, please have open, regular communication with your manager. You may also work with your HRBP to come up with a reasonable accommodation.

- 3. Q: Why hasn't on-campus-COVID-testing been made available for full-time staff?**

A: MSU does have not the capacity nor the authorization to conduct on-campus testing for staff. Please visit the Gallatin City-County Health Department website on testing for more testing resources: <https://www.healthygallatin.org/coronavirus-covid-19/testing/>

- 4. Q: Both students and community members have told me that when students who are out of state residents, contract COVID-19, their cases are being reported to their legal state of residence, not**



to Gallatin County. I see the FAQs say that MSU reports “Gallatin County Residents” cases to the local Health Dept. Does that mean only students who are registered to vote in Gallatin County, or all students presently living in Gallatin County?

A: It is important to clarify that MSU does not report cases to County Health. County Health does all the reporting. On-site testing gets reported through the State Health Department and County Health Department. MSU is not notified of individual faculty, staff or students who test positive for coronavirus, unless they live in campus housing and are required to quarantine or isolate. Legally, MSU cannot ask for test results. We can ask about symptoms, and ask people exhibiting symptoms to go home, but that is all MSU can legally request. All MSU students who are tested here, and test positive, are reported to the Gallatin County and State of Montana Health Departments, even if the student is an out-of-state resident. If out-of-state residents are tested out of state, they are not included in the Gallatin County number. Figures are updated every Friday.

<https://www.healthygallatin.org/about-us/press-releases/>

- 5. Q: As some departments at MSU are requiring staff with cold symptoms to get two negative COVID tests AND a doctor’s note before returning to work, but MSU is not providing testing to staff, will MSU be supplementing the costs of testing and in-person doctor’s office visits (the only way to get a doctor’s note, IF you can get an appointment in a reasonable amount of time)?**

A: This should not be happening. Negative tests are not required before returning to work, and no medical documentation is required. The process that should be implemented across campus is if someone is ill, they should go home. They can use COVID leave or work from home if the position allows. When their medical provider tells them it is safe to return to work, they may. An employer could require documentation, but MSU chose not to in order to make things as easy as possible for employees. Please reach out to HR if this happens.

Terry and Jeannette added the following comments regarding quarantine and isolation:

TL – Approximately 375 beds are set aside for student quarantine and isolation. MSU has not come close to using this capacity. Roughly 3800 students are living on campus this semester, and the infection rate has been lower on campus than the Gallatin County community as a whole. Roughly 5 – 12 contacts need to be quarantined for each positive test case, and many of these never become infected. Off-campus residents are required to quarantine/isolate on their own.

JGG – The county website contains information about testing site locations. The testing locations change over time, so this site is a good place to find the most current information.

<https://www.healthygallatin.org/coronavirus-covid-19/testing/>

COVID-19 Reporting

- 6. Q: Does MSU report the number of quarantined students on campus?**

A: MSU does not report student quarantine numbers because there have been so few quarantine cases. If we reported the number, then people may ask where they are located. This increases the possibility that quarantined students will be identified. We want to protect the privacy of our students. For context, neither the Gallatin City-County Health Department, nor the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services reports quarantine numbers.



- 7. Q: When MSU reports the number of cases each week to Gallatin County, who is included in that number? Are they people that live in the Residence Halls? Does it include those who live in FGH? What about students who live off campus? Are faculty & staff included in the count?**

A: MSU does not report case numbers to the county (we don't have that information). The total number of active cases at MSU, reported weekly by the county, includes all faculty, staff, and students. MSU is not entitled to know who the individuals are. MSU students and employees have no obligation to tell faculty or HR or the president... it is private information.

People often try to compare MSU with other universities in other states, but it is not a fair comparison. Different states operate differently and have different rules. The county has the most complete information and is already reporting, and two sets of numbers would be confusing. The MSU COVID-19 website FAQ section contains a link to the county data, and the website is updated regularly. However, a shortcut to the county data can be found here by looking at the last page of each "Weekly COVID-19 Surveillance Report": <https://www.healthygallatin.org/about-us/press-releases/>.

Compliance

- 8. Q: Please give a detailed explanation of the specific sanctions for "sustained, willful non-compliance of face mask requirement" that MSU will pursue and give a definition of "sustained, willful non-compliance" that would trigger said sanctions. Please explain what changes will be made to the policy and procedure for Spring 2021 semester.**

A: MSU has been very fortunate. Occasionally an employee or student will not be wearing a mask, but whenever asked, people have been very compliant. MSU has not seen any sustained, willful noncompliance. If someone will not wear a mask after being asked, please report faculty/staff noncompliance to HR and student noncompliance to the Dean of Students. HR will have a conversation with the individual and possibly their manager. There may be an underlying reason for the noncompliance. A few faculty and staff have medical conditions which make face coverings difficult; HR is working with those individuals to provide accommodations. Please follow this process.

- 9. Q: Has MSU considered creating a COVID incident reporting hotline where students, faculty and staff can report non-compliance issues that place the health and safety of our students, faculty and staff at risk? If so, how many reports have been made and how many of those have been investigated? If not, please explain MSU's plan to do so.**

A: The hotline, called EthicsPoint, is already set up and posted on the MSU website (<https://www.montana.edu/orc/reporting/index.html>). There are six categories of concerns for reporting. HR is not aware of any reports generated from the hotline on the issue of noncompliance, probably due to the fact that MSU just isn't seeing willful noncompliance. Other COVID-related questions have been left on the hotline, but none related to noncompliance.



10. Q: How will MSU address a COVID outbreak in the dining halls among staff? Will the dining halls be closed, and will staff be informed if their colleagues get sick?

A: MSU will treat an outbreak among dining hall employees the same as any other case or group of cases, by making sure individuals are quarantined and working with their medical provider. Federal and State COVID leave is available for all MSU employees, plus individual leave if necessary. If too many dining hall staff are out simultaneously, the Auxiliaries management team has a number of contingency plans in place to lessen the impact to operations. Staff levels are being monitored.

Telework

11. Q: What is MSU doing to support telework beyond the current, as-written policies?

- a. **As a follow-up, it seems some supervisors on campus do not honor telecommuting as a legitimate way to work and are insisting doing business in office despite employee anxiety and despite the ability of the staff member to fulfill their duties remotely.**
- b. **What can an employee do if their supervisor does not honor telecommuting or alternating schedule requests? I've heard from some staff on campus that their supervisor "does not believe in telecommuting."**

A: MSU has learned much about teleworking during this pandemic. This question has two parts: 1) telework during the pandemic, and 2) general telework/telecommute/remote work on a more permanent basis. MSU doesn't want to make permanent decisions that have policy implications and impact MSU culture. It is important for MSU to discuss long-term ramifications. Some jobs cannot be done remotely. Some can be done in-part remotely. This pandemic has shown us that many faculty and staff can telework efficiently and effectively. However, the decision to allow continued telework is not as easy as it may seem.

Regarding telework during the pandemic, many employees were encouraged to work from home. However, some jobs cannot be done remotely. These decisions were made and continue to be made at the department level. There has never been a mandate that all employees return to campus. HR will provide guidance to departments as needed. As the county situation changes, department heads may change the plan. Flexibility is key to ensure work is getting done.

Regarding permanent telework, this may be easy in some units, but it is not as simple as it seems. MSU has certain limitations, put in place by the state government. There are IRS regulations and tax implications for out of state employees. Montana code requires some offices to be open during specified hours. MSU tries to balance the best interests of both the university and our workforce. MSU will discuss this with procurement folks and workers compensation folks, to understand the expenses related to remote work.

12. Q: What about staff that had to use their COVID leave even though they weren't sick? Some staff have jobs that can't work from home, and now if something happens, they don't have leave.



A: Janet Simon is MSU's ADA coordinator and she can help. COVID leave was authorized by both the Federal and State government and is available for each employee. Each type of leave has different eligibility rules. Expanded Family Medical Leave may also be available for those responsible for caring for children because of a school or childcare closure. Additionally, employees may use personal sick leave and annual leave. HRBPs are very knowledgeable and they will help you navigate these situations. Terry clarified that the law simply authorized the use of COVID leave, but it did not provide the funding for it.

13. Q: What scenario(s) would warrant a complete switch to virtual business/learning similar to what we did in Spring?

A: We would not likely go back to complete virtual learning, now that we understand the virus and how to limit its spread, which we didn't know in March. Students are overwhelmingly in support of an in-person classroom experience. MSU enrollment this fall is strong, exceeding our expectations, which helps our economic stability. The condensed schedule should help prevent a spike on campus. The strategies MSU put in place are working, and we are managing the exceptions. Everyone is doing their part – thank you. Ultimately, the answer to this question is not MSU's decision; it will be up to the Commissioner of Higher Education and the Board of Regents.

14. Q: What is the risk of MSU furloughing employees?

A: MSU has had no layoffs, and there are no plans or active planning for layoffs. Many universities and other employers are laying off employees, but MSU is financially stable. MSU took steps early on, and the Montana University System (MUS) implemented a hiring moratorium. Staffing is our largest expense (~80% of the MSU budget). The moratorium will remain in place for as long as necessary. In addition, MSU set up a workshare arrangement – if one department is experiencing an employee shortage, another department with excess personnel could loan an employee to help. MSU has no intention of furlough. MSU is proud of the fact that we've managed our budgets to be in this position. We are all in this together and that is our commitment.

15. Q: Has President Cruzado and the Executive Administration considered taking a temporary pay cut to cover some of the revenue losses due to the pandemic?

A: There is not a need for any pay cuts at any level at this time.

Academic Questions

16. Q: We know that each spike in our country, state, and county has really followed a trend after a holiday. Yet, we are starting spring semester on January 11th, less than two weeks after New Year's Day, two weeks after Christmas, and three weeks after Hanukah (just to name a few holidays over winter break). How is MSU planning for students/staff/faculty to come back to campus safely during a time of a likely large spike in cases?



A: This scenario is similar to last summer when COVID spiked all over the country. Students could have brought the virus back, but they were pretty responsible. Students understand what needs to be done. Students don't want a longer break – it will be too long. No spring break will mean less travel. Some students will take advantage of the Snowmester. Spring semester will end in April.

17. Q: Why did MSU not replace spring break vacation days elsewhere in the academic calendar? It seems to be a pretty long stretch from President's Day to the end of April to have no break from normal operations.

A: HR recognizes that stress and uncertainty have impacted our workforce. Make sure to care for yourself. Use your annual leave. Resources are available through the Employee Assistance Program. The Wellness Program includes well checks, nutrition and exercise programs, and activities to help employees focus on their own wellbeing.

MSU considered adding in some 3-day weekends but doing so may incentivize some students to travel (which has risks for spreading the virus). The decision to maintain our January 11 start date provides an opportunity to begin summer session earlier, which will allow some students to finish sooner and still have 2+ months to get a job, etc.

Terry's parting comments:

He thanked the council and encouraged staff to check out the link to the Gallatin County website video on contact tracing. Last week's county COVID report lists 282 MSU cases from 20,000+ staff, faculty and students since August 1. Cumulative cases since August 1 account for 1.4% of our campus population, which is relatively small. Please keep up the good work you are doing to protect yourself and others.

Terry and Jeannette offered to return in the spring to answer more questions.

III. Approval of Minutes

Maillet motioned to approve; Huttinga seconded; the vote was unanimous in favor.

IV. Previous Business

a. DEI Working Group – Megan Lasso

1. The working group will bring recommendations to the Exec Committee who will bring them to the council.
2. Goals for the year – look at:
 - Hiring practices
 - Committee makeup
 - Language in advertisements
 - Internal bias alleviation in hiring practices
 - iChange collaboration
3. Are there barriers to being part of MSUASC? Exit interviews could provide important information.
4. Family Graduate Housing policy change
 - Beginning June 1, 2020, faculty and staff leases cannot be renewed.
 - Purpose is to make more room for students.

- Policy change may impact certain staff groups more than others.
- Telework might allow employees to live in less expensive places than Bozeman.

b. BIPOC Virtual Feedback Sessions – *Whitney Hinshaw*

1. Diversity & Inclusion was asked to make a BIPOC action plan.
2. This is a prime opportunity for staff to give their perspectives.
3. Virtual feedback sessions will be scheduled sometime in the future.
4. MSUASC will invite Ariel Donohue to explain the action plan.

V. New Business

a. New Member Orientation – *Nikki Tuss*

The Governance Committee is currently working on a New Member Orientation which will be available for the next election cycle.

VI. Public Comment

- a. It would be good to post today's questions and answers on the MSUASC website, so staff can see that the session provided new information.
- b. It would be helpful if acronyms were explained first before assuming everyone knows what they stand for.
- c. Nominations for Excellence Awards are due by the end of the month.
 - Excellence in Outreach rarely gets staff nominations.
 - An important way to support staff is by recognition – it is important to nominate staff for awards.

VII. Meeting Adjourned

Huttinga motioned to adjourn; Brown seconded. Meeting was adjourned at 10:21 a.m.

Next meeting: November 18, 2020 from 9 – 10 a.m. via WebEx