# Faculty Senate’s Response to the draft Strategy for Distinction, 5/3/18

Preamble   
The Faculty Senate appreciates the opportunity to engage in important conversations regarding the future of the University of Montana. Moreover, we value the administration's recognition of UM's long tradition of shared governance. Over the past two weeks, ECOS reviewed a variety of feedback, attended multiple listening sessions, consulted with ASCRC, the General Education Committee, and the Graduate Council. Additionally, Chair Bowman and other members of ECOS have accompanied Interim Provost Kirgis to meetings with faculty in the departments of the College of Humanities and Sciences. From these various sources of feedback, numerous comments expressed support for the necessity of change at the University of Montana and a willingness to participate in the process. The President's preliminary recommendations have generated productive conversations about how best to achieve the promise of a UM education. The Faculty Senate looks forward to participating in the on-going discussions that will allow us to realize the vision within the Strategy for Distinction.

## Recommendations

In the spirit of open collaboration, Faculty Senate offers the following recommendations:

1. The Faculty Senate supports the immediate implementation of staff restructuring that would promote improvement of student support and services, particularly those impacted by the VSO.  To this end, the Faculty Senate encourages the development of a shared-services model for student/administrative services based on collocated programs.
2. The Faculty Senate notes that there are many ongoing interdisciplinary collaborations. Therefore, the Senate is uncertain that the large-scale reorganizations proposed are the best means to achieve increased collaboration.   The Faculty Senate observes that the Faculty is eager to engage in conversations with the Deans, Provost, and President about how best to sustain and promote interdisciplinary activities.  We encourage the full participation of faculty in the development of recommendations regarding reorganizations throughout AY 2018-2019.

1. Faculty Senate recommends reasserting UM's commitment to the humanities, liberal arts, sciences, and graduate education in the refreshed mission statement.  This may be accomplished by re-inserting the following phrase from the current mission statement:   "integration of the liberal arts, graduate study, and professional training with international and interdisciplinary emphases."

*The University of Montana’s mission is to provide high-quality and accessible education and generate world-class research and creative scholarship. By integrating the liberal arts, graduate study, and professional training, we shape global citizens who are creative and agile learners prepared to build and sustain communities. As Montana’s flagship university, we lead conversations that question and expand the frontiers of knowledge to tackle the world’s most complex challenges.*

1. Faculty are most familiar with relevant professional accreditation standards, current pedagogical research and "best practices" within their own disciplines. Therefore, Faculty Senate requests that the administration work directly with faculty and deans of affected departments when curricular restructure or departmental re-organization is necessary to improve completion rates and/or efficiency of instruction rather than imposing unilateral changes on departments.
2. Faculty Senate recommends that the President, Provost, and Deans reconsider proposed FTE reductions by addressing the following concerns:
   1. **Administration must provide justifications and the data used for any proposed FTE reductions.** Faculty Senate observes with concern that key data has not been forthcoming throughout the UPC process, which has impeded the faculty review of the preliminary recommendations.
   2. **Administration must demonstrate that the University can continue to adequately deliver the General Education curriculum prior to implementation of FTE reductions.** Faculty Senate observes with concern that FTE reductions disproportionately affect the College of Humanities and Sciences, which teaches a large majority of General Education classes. The Senate fears that the proposed FTE reductions will affect availability of General Education classes and, in turn, delay degree completions. Therefore, Faculty Senate advises administration work in tandem with the General Education committee to ensure the University's ability to deliver the General Education curriculum.
   3. **Administration must demonstrate how proposed reductions align with the proposed Mission Statement and Key Strategies for Distinction.** Faculty Senate observes with concern that substantial faculty reductions in the Humanities, Sciences, and the Arts contradicts the vision in the UM Mission Statement and the Key Strategies for Distinction.  In particular, the proposed FTE reductions from CHS dramatically weakens the assertion that "the UM Core will reflect innovative ways to honor our 'humanities-driven' liberal arts tradition." (*Strategy for Distinction,* 4). Furthermore, the suggestion of eliminating 19.5 FTE from English, MCLL, and the College of Visual and Performing Arts will impede "Artistic Expression & Communication" as one of the newly proposed Communities of Excellence.
   4. **Administration must allow Faculty Senate discussion and review of curricular proposals beginning Fall Semester 2018.**  Any curricular changes suggested, including alterations or discontinuance of degree offerings, must go through Faculty Senate process prior to implementation. We encourage the Deans, Provost, and President to consider how these curricular changes might impact recruitment and enrollment prior to submission to Faculty Senate.
   5. Faculty Senate expects the administration to provide regular updates to ECOS and the Faculty Senate as the preliminary recommendations evolve, crystallize, and move forward for implementation.
3. Faculty Senate cautions that any development of faculty reduction plans over the summer 2018 take into consideration the curricular implications of curtailments and discontinuances.  Therefore, we advise the President, Provost, and Deans to allow regular Faculty Senate discussion and review of curricular proposals resulting from proposed discontinuances and curtailments throughout the Fall 2018 semester prior to finalizing faculty reduction plans.
4. The Faculty Senate recognizes that the Strategy for Distinction document released April 17, 2018 presents preliminary recommendations and since the time of its release the administration has been receiving feedback from a wide variety of sources. The Faculty Senate appreciates that the initial recommendations are evolving and encourages the administration to continue to engage in open dialogue as these recommendations develop. The Faculty Senate reserves the right to review and recommend new proposals or those that change significantly through this on-going process.