

MINUTES OF THE HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE ON EDUCATION
January 6, 1983

The House Appropriations Subcommittee on Education met at 9:00 a.m. on Thursday, January 6, 1983 in Room 104 of the State Capitol. With Chairperson Rep. Esther Bengtson presiding, all members were present. The purpose of the meeting was to conduct a "dialogue on education," with the policy-makers in the field of education sharing with the committee members their views on education in Montana.

Chairman Bengtson stated that it was the committee's hope that questions would be addressed in an open and straightforward manner. Data generation or conclusion-drawing would not be sought, but rather an understanding of the common problems in financing all areas of education would be addressed. She expressed the hope that if tough decisions had to be made, they would be based on policy rather than being across-the-board cuts. A number of introductions were then made: John Board - Montana Education Association; Gene Christiaansen - Assistant State Superintendent for Vocational Education Services, Office of Public Instruction; Cheryl Hutchinson - Governor's office; Irving Dayton - Commissioner of Higher Education; Jeff Morrison - Chairman of the Board of Regents; Don Kettner - President, Dawson Community College; Jess Long - Executive Secretary for the School Administrators of Montana; Harriet Meloy - member, Board of Public Education; Hidde Van Duym - Executive Secretary to the Board of Public Education; Ed Argenbright - Superintendent of Public Instruction; Maynard Olson - Deputy Superintendent of Public Instruction; Judy Johnson - Assistant Superintendent, Department of Special Services, Office of Public Instruction; Gary Steuerwald - Assistant Superintendent, Department of Administrative Services, Office of Public Instruction; Rod Svee - Assistant Superintendent, Department of Basic Instruction Services, Office of Public Instruction, and Wayne Buchanan - Montana School Board Association.

Chairman Bengtson posed the question, "What should the priorities of education, from elementary to graduate school, be, including research and public service agencies?"

Dr. Dayton responded by stating that the proper mix of these activities had to be found so that the total needs of the state could be served.

Rep. Donaldson stated that private sector involvement needed to be addressed when considering how to best serve the educational community. Dr. Dayton said he felt there was more interaction with the private sector in the research and service areas. The National Science Foundation, through the University System, has a program to develop basic research in the State, and the private sector has been involved in supporting this program.

One of the parts of the Governor's Economic Development Program will be a proposal to develop a Council on Science and Technology. One goal of that council will be to form a better relationship between the private sector and higher education. It will examine basic research, applied research and development, and industrial activity as a whole. Jeff Morrison added that research is aimed at issues relevant to the state which would benefit its economy.

Chairman Bengtson said she would be interested to know what the economic payback was to the state from money that goes into research and whether there was any duplication in the research projects at the Agricultural Experiment Station. Dr. Dayton explained that this was all overseen from the Director's office in Bozeman. He added that some of the experiment stations would be able to give very specific information in regards to payoff in terms of income to producers from the development of new methods or crop varieties, etc.

Harriet Meloy, Board of Public Education member, mentioned that an Institute may be held in March at MSU to help science and math teachers to increase their skills and continue their education. This led to a discussion of how to motivate students in these areas. Some ways would be science fairs or prizes for experiments, etc. The private sector could be involved in this by encouraging their children to learn more in these areas. Mr. Argenbright added that the Thomas Edison Institute had put on more institutes for science teachers in Montana than any other state, and research is being done to find out how much higher the Montana high school student's score in science areas is than in other states. He added that the vocational education program had a good deal of involvement, with community advisory councils for high school programs, and in addition to the local councils there is a state council. Also, Montana has a Task Force on Excellence, made up of 22 people, from industry and educational organizations. They are making sure that Montana's students are properly prepared. Because of the vital role the school plays in the community, the school districts have become vitally involved in community activities.

Chairman Bengtson acknowledged that the quality of education in Montana was agreed to be excellent, but the real concern is if costs will have to be cut, where can they legitimately be cut? Rep. Donaldson asked for a more thorough explanation of the Governor's proposal.

Dr. Dayton pointed out that Montana needs to set up some mechanisms for a closer working relation between basic science and its application and progress into manufacture and sales. The proposal by the Council on Science and Technology would look at the situation in Montana and see where the opportunities lie; for example, in agriculture, and take a look at the developments in "high technology" to see if there were any opportunities in Montana. State funding should be provided for that research base, which would both spawn and attract industrial development in the state. If Montana wants to diversify its industrial base, then those kinds of industry need to be attracted. He pointed out that the private involvement in formulating the proposal had been very enthusiastic.

Chairman Bengtson then shifted the topic to vocational education. She asked, "How many of the state's schools are getting into vocational education, and whose responsibility is it? How much money is being spent on vocational education?" Gene Christiaansen, Assistant State Superintendent for Vocational Educational Services, Office of Public Instruction, stated that many elementary and secondary schools in the state were involved in vocational education. In addition, there are five post-secondary vo-tech centers. NMC, U of M, MSU and EMC work with his staff in vocational education. Both state and federal dollars are involved. In addition, they have supported the state's community colleges. There are a number of vocational offerings available in private schools. Therefore, there is a vast reservoir of training opportunities in the state. In the last biennium the vo-tech schools were budgeted \$15.1 million. The universities apply to the OPI for support of research projects, curriculum development; support is granted basically on a 50/50 basis, half federal dollars and half university dollars. The federal government has increased the amount of its vocational education funding for FY 1984.

Rep. Ernst brought up the question of whether a vo-tech student should be required to relocate in order to take a certain area of study or whether there should be duplication to a certain degree. Mr. Christiaansen replied that new programs had to meet the approval of the Superintendent of Public Instruction and needed to be based on an established need. He pointed out that there were certain necessary "bread and butter" courses that are needed in every community, and there will always be some duplication in these areas. Don Kettner stated that the community colleges had worked diligently to avoid duplication.

Dr. Dayton said that in the past, the people could move

to where the program was, but now with the changing image of the typical student, they don't want to move to the program. This is forcing the state to change its viewpoint in regards to the definition of "duplication." Clearly this will lead to increased costs.

Sen. Haffey wanted to know if the colleges and schools had been trying to attract an older student body or if the change was a societal one. Dr. Dayton said he felt it was the latter. Many people need further training because of economic need and also society has made it clear that it is acceptable to be an older student. The schools are responding to this need by offering classes at convenient hours for working people. Sen. Haffey asked Mr. Argenbright if there was a competition for the funding between K-12 and post-secondary education due to this societal change. Mr. Argenbright said that they were being affected by technology, and this was being evidenced even in the high schools. The amount of technological knowledge being generated is mandating that professionals keep up-to-date on their skills. Ms. Meloy commented that 75% of all jobs by 1990 will have some relation to computers.

Chairman Bengtson asked whether the emphasis should be on undergraduates or the non-traditional students. She questioned whether quality would suffer because the state was trying to offer too much quantity. Mr. Morrison said there was no traditional student anymore. As the economy worsens, more demands are placed on the education system and less resources to meet them are available. Dr. Dayton stressed the importance of being able to serve people at the times and in the ways that they need.

Rep. Donaldson wanted to know if there was sufficient coordination between all the facets of education and what is the Board of Education's role in this activity? He was told that vocational education, at least in the secondary schools, serves a different need than the vo-techs or the community colleges. Vocational education might not necessarily have to be coordinated with the other forms of secondary education.

Harriet Meloy asked the question, "Are accreditation standards supposed to reflect the quality of education desired for Montana youngsters, or are they supposed to reflect the budget?" The priorities have to do with needs they feel are imperative. She expressed uncertainty regarding whether all the information and all the people they were serving was being coordinated. She stressed that they were working in that direction, however. Dr. Dayton pointed out that there

was a vast range of activities in the computer area and this made it difficult to get a grip on the matter. In the University System they have been very careful to delegate responsibility among the institutions as far as training programs in computer science. The other issue is the way the computer permeates everything; education is reflecting what is going on outside of education.

John Board, Montana Education Association, then spoke. He feels that an understanding of computers and computer technology is something that needs to be taught in high school. The public schools have a duty to prepare the students for the jobs they will take on. Demands are put on the public schools to keep up-to-date. The money has to be available in order to accomplish this. Remediation in kindergarten - 12th grade is to assist the student to meet a standard that is established there. However, remediation in the University System is to provide for what the student never had.

Don Kettner said that as long as the community colleges had open admissions, "developmental" education would be needed. Developmental education is very important at the post-secondary level because there are many adults whose skills need updating. Chairman Bengtson wanted to know if the enrollment in such courses counted towards an FTE which is subsidized by the state. Mr. Kettner said it was not, unless the student is beginning a technical program approved by the Board of Regents.

Chairman Bengtson then wanted to know approximately what remedial education was costing higher education. Mr. Kettner pointed out that although there was a law requiring open admissions in Montana, there was no requirement that the student be retained in academic programs. Because of the type of funding the state provides, often these students are retained. Although the universities are interested in becoming involved in a remedial program, he considers this a responsibility of the public schools. Dr. Dayton said that often a student will need courses at the post-secondary level that were offered but not taken in high school. The opportunities in high school offerings should be taken advantage of; then higher education wouldn't have this burden. He pointed out that there were two different types of remedial courses (1) courses that the universities consider non-credit; and (2) courses that were offered in high school but not taken.

Chairman Bengtson wanted to know if there was any dialogue going on between secondary and higher education officials regarding remedial education other than limiting enrollment and competency testing. Mr. Morrison said there has been an increasing effort to communicate the difference between a minimum high school diploma and a college preparation course to all parties involved. He

added that they were working with the Board of Education, and were sending out information to parents, high schools, counselors, etc. on specific courses that are necessary to prepare for college. Jess Long added that in the 60's, societal changes caused colleges to lower their standards, which in turn was reflected by a more diversified course offering in the high schools. He feels that this had contributed to current problems. There hasn't been a great deal of dialogue between secondary education and the colleges. At this point, there are some efforts being made to open that dialogue up, however.

Sen. Jacobson asked Dr. Dayton if he felt that because of the legislature's method of funding, are higher education institutions being encouraged to keep students that don't belong there? Dr. Dayton replied that nothing was gained by having more students because along with more money from an increased enrollment comes increased obligations as well. He pointed out that the practices of academic suspension and counseling of students were aimed at taking this problem into consideration. He stated that a task force, composed of himself, Dr. Van Duym, Dr. Svec, and Tom Crosser, looked at what kinds of activities could be carried out to improve the relations between elementary, secondary, post-secondary, and higher education. They came up with fifteen activities, some of which are now underway. Perhaps one of the biggest gains is a consciousness-raising of the general public on the subject.

Mr. Argenbright then spoke up regarding the role of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction. His staff includes curriculum specialists who maintain a relationship with people at the university level.

Chairman Bengtson asked whether any thought had been given to formulating sliding-scale tuition rates. Mr. Morrison replied that the Commissioner's office had been asked to study whether there might be a rationale for changing tuitions in the graduate programs. Chairman Bengtson wanted to know how many high-cost, low-enrollment graduate courses were being offered. Dr. Dayton said that a minimum number of students was required in order to offer a course. Also, there were considerable limits on how much could be spent on high-cost, low-enrollment programs because the funds come from a "mixed pot". He pointed out that some of the graduate programs produced research vitally necessary to the state. Sen. Hammond wanted to know if any thought had been given to sending students back to high school to pick up remedial courses rather than taking them at the post-secondary level. Dr. Dayton said that they were trying to build incentives for taking work when it is first available, often in high school, without penalizing people who hadn't had the opportunity or who had been away from school for a long time. Possibly students who have been

out of high school for less than two years could be asked to go back and pick up the course in high school. He stressed that this was simply an idea he had, and it hadn't been shared with anyone else. Another possibility would be to offer these types of courses in the summer. Mr. Morrison pointed out that putting this responsibility on the secondary schools would add to their operating costs.

Mr. Van Duym pointed out that the task of the public schools was very complex in that it had to prepare students for a variety of post-graduation situations. He didn't see how the public schools could produce people for that complex and diverse a need right off. He added that in addition to higher education, the work force and the vo-techs also had problems with preparation. Specific understanding of the needs in all these areas is needed by the high schools. Chairman Bengtson asked, if choices had to be made in educational offerings, should the emphasis be on that area rather than on graduate work? Mr. Long said preparation was needed further down the line from graduate level, but trying to prepare students in so many diverse patterns has become a nearly impossible chore. Mr. Van Duym pointed out that private high schools can be specialized in their preparation of students for a certain area, but he stressed that the public high schools couldn't cover all bases.

Rep. Donaldson suggested the high schools were a resource that could be used by older people wishing to prepare themselves for post-secondary education. Mr. Van Duym said that the Board was examining the external diploma area. A diploma program developed in the Office of Public Instruction has been approved which covers all the deficiencies.

Sen. Hammond submitted that there was no longer a "traditional student" because it has been made easy for almost anyone to go to school. Mr. Morrison agreed that there were many people "hiding out in higher education." However, he didn't feel this was occurring on a scale that was causing them concern. Rod Svee said that it was a big undertaking to get a handle on what is expected of education, but the process has begun and it will work.

Don Gatzke, President of Flathead Valley Community College in Kalispell, then spoke up. He explained what a community college was. There are three parts to the definition: (1) it is the first two years of a university; (2) the vo-tech component, and (3) community education and/or service.

January 6, 1983

Jim McGarvey, Montana Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO, spoke. He brought up the theme that "everyone has to suffer a little bit" in regards to budget issues. Long-range and short-range problems have to be looked at. If any part of the education process is allowed to be diluted, there will be more problems in the long run. His organization is interested in programatic issues. Vacancy savings in education translate to program cuts. This will create a void in the future. He stressed that the overall educational process that Montanans are entitled to needed to be concentrated on.

Rep. Donaldson commented that resources were not unlimited; this was political and economic reality. The responsibility of the committee members is to try to spread the resources as far as they would go. He stressed that the agencies needed to come to the committee with definite proposals.


Cheryl Hutchinson, Governor's Office, stated that the Governor applauded the committee's decision to have the dialogue and she added that this was one of the priorities the Governor had.

Mr. Board said that the Constitution outlined what had to be funded in the elementary and secondary schools and he stressed that the job couldn't be done without funding. The statement that there is fat in the public schools is ludicrous, in his opinion. He feels the belts of the public schools are cinched as far as they can go already.

Chairman Bengtson thanked the participants for their input into the discussion of the problems to be faced by the committee. Sen. Haffey said that if it was true that there was no fat and if resources are limited then it was inclumbent on the educational community and other sectors of the state to talk to the committee with the strength of their constituency and make it clear if there was no give to come from the programs. Mr. Board submitted that the people of Montana were historically and inherently committed to education and the legislature must keep faith with this belief.

Rep. Donaldson reiterated that the committee needed to address the most efficient way of providing a maximum amount of services with the funds available.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:00 a.m.


Rep. Esther Bengtson, Chairman

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Gene Christensen	Helena	OPI		
JUDY JOHNSON	Helena	OPI		
Gary Steuerwald	Helena	OPI		
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Maynard Olson	Helena	OPI		
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Bunny Walters	Great Falls	CMJ intern		
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Brenda Schye	Glasgow			
Alan Zetter	Dillon	WMC		
FRANK	Helena	Mont Community Coll		
Burt Hurwitz	White Sulphur Spgs	Regents		
Don Gatzke	Kalispell	Flathead Valley Community Coll		
Mike Capeland	Missoula	Dean Kemmis		
Kevin Dolan	Bozeman - Columbus	ASMSU Exponent		

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Bruce Carpenter	Billings	EMU		
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