

Concerns about MSU's Assumption of MSU – Great Falls' Programming in Bozeman

From the system level, the withdrawal of MSU – Great Falls from the Gallatin Valley and the authorization of two-year degrees at MSU raise various concerns. Among the most pressing are:

- How will the commitment to students currently enrolled and enrolling at the COT in Bozeman extension be honored?
- How will the authorization of the two-year mission at MSU “fit” into the already unwieldy mix of governance, structure, and local investment models for two-year education in Montana?
- At a time when partnerships between educational institutions, both K-12 and higher education, are being promoted and actively pursued as best practice, what justifies the dissolution of this partnership and what precedents does it set?

The first of those questions can and must be addressed immediately. The others, however, require exactly the strategic planning the Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education has recently undertaken through its involvement in the Making Opportunity Affordable project and its appointment of a Deputy Commissioner of Two-Year Education. That planning will take time to complete and further time to implement.

Therefore, this agenda item proposes no permanent answer to the question of how to respond to the demand for two-year education in the Gallatin Valley. This request proposes a short-term, interim solution that honors our commitment to students, but minimizes the impacts on MSU – Great Falls, sustains the two-year mission options in the Gallatin Valley, and keeps the Regents' options open for a long-term resolution that is equitable, responsive, and in the best interest of students, communities, and taxpayers in the Gallatin Valley and throughout Montana.

Proposal Elements

- MSU – Great Falls will discontinue its extended programming in Bozeman, which consists of developmental course work for MSU students and three career/technical programs – Aviation Technology, Interior Design, and Welding Technology – as of Fall Semester 2008.

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- With Regental approval, MSU will assume the responsibility for all MSU – Great Falls extended programs in Bozeman and will be authorized on a temporary basis to award the three career/technical degrees currently awarded by MSU-Great Falls in Bozeman and a fourth degree recently approved for the extension campus.
- OCHE will work with the Regents, Montana’s two-year colleges, the Governor’s office, and the legislature to set parameters for two-year colleges and programming that will guide a long-term proposal for delivering the two-year education mission in Bozeman no later than July 1, 2010 – and hopefully much earlier.

Implementation Guidelines for the Interim Period of Temporary Authorization

1. The temporary solution timeline extends from July 2008, upon Regental approval, through June 30, 2010, at the latest. An earlier end of the temporary authorization and a transition to long-term authorization may occur if:
 - a. the structural and governance issues surrounding two-year education in Montana are resolved prior to June 2010 *and*
 - b. MSU continues to believe that responding to the demand for two-year education is a high priority *and*
 - c. the Board of Regents chooses to authorize the expansion of mission at MSU to include two-year degrees on a permanent basis.
2. Upon Regental approval, MSU – Great Falls will discontinue its extended programs and services in Bozeman and will assist MSU in assuming them.
3. Upon Regental approval, MSU will assume the existing programs and services of MSU – Great Falls in Bozeman under the following guidelines:
 - a. All extended program professional and classified staff will become employees of MSU effective August 2008, with their previous service for MSU – Great Falls and the benefits attending thereto recognized by MSU.
 - b. All extended program faculty will become employees of MSU, effective Fall 2008, with their service and the benefits attending thereto recognized by MSU. If the faculty and VTEM concur, faculty’s previous bargaining unit affiliation and collective bargaining agreement will remain in place.

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- c. As part of the communication about the short-term solution, all extended program employees of MSU – Great Falls will be notified of the intent of MSU – Great Falls to discontinue extended programming in Bozeman and of MSU's intent to assume the programming until at least June 2010 and, contingent on the conditions outlined in #1, *supra*, for a longer term.
 - d. Tuition and fees will follow The University of Montana practice, charging four-year degree-seeking students the established four-year tuition and fees for all courses and charging two-year degree-seeking students the tuition of MSU – Great Falls College of Technology and the fees of MSU.
4. During FY09 OCHE will actively work with internal and external stakeholders to effect a long-term solution by Fall 2009, thus allowing the COT in Bozeman project to continue to expand as early as FY10, with the Regents' approval. However, until a long-term solution is in place and has been authorized by the Board of Regents:
- a. No additional workforce programs will be added to the COT in Bozeman.
 - b. No students will be admitted to A.A.S. programs after Fall 2008.
 - c. No students will be admitted to the C.A.S. program after Fall 2009.

Notice will be given to all current and enrolling students of a timeline by which they must have completed all courses to receive their respective degrees, in the event that the programs are permanently discontinued.