

**Montana State University & the University of Washington,  
School of Medicine  
Expansion of the Montana WWAMI Program  
- An MUS Initiative Prepared May 2012**

**Background**

Montana has partnered with the University of Washington, School of Medicine (UWSOM) since 1973 to offer the first year of a four-year medical school education at the Montana State University (MSU) campus. The partnership has grown to include a significant presence of third- and fourth-year clinical training in Montana, and the UWSOM now is moving towards a regional model that will eventually engage all Washington-Wyoming-Alaska-Montana-Idaho (WWAMI) sites in offering most of the four-year professional education program at the state sites. WWAMI is Montana's medical school.

Montana joined the WWAMI program in 1973, with access provided for ten Montana students. That number was increased to twenty in 1975, and has not been increased since. However, Montana continues to face a serious physician shortage, especially in primary care specialties and in rural locations. The proposed increase (to thirty Montana students) would be accompanied by an increase in the number of students participating in Montana's innovative Targeted Rural Under-Served Track (TRUST) program (from five to ten). The TRUST program guides students towards medical careers in rural and underserved areas of Montana and makes an intentional effort to have a large portion of the student's medical education take place in Montana.

**Structure and Partners**

Montana State University will continue to be the central locale for Medical School Education in Montana. In May 2012, The University of Washington, School of Medicine accepted a new vision for the UWSOM's curriculum and medical education environment that included seven principles, one of which was specific to the vital role that WWAMI plays in the UWSOM. This long-standing partnership is a point of pride for both institutions. WWAMI has a presence in nearly every county in Montana and engages Montana's existing physician workforce in the education of the future workforce.

Cost for the expansion is minimal for the first year program at the MSU campus. The major expense would be the cost for the increased number of slots at the UWSOM for students in years two through four of their curriculum.