

Highlands College Layoff Plan

To: Board of Regents
From: Kevin McRae, Deputy Commissioner for Human Resources
Date: February 8, 2021
Re: ITEM 193-1501-R0321

The Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education (OCHE) recommends adoption of a layoff plan affecting three tenured faculty members at Highlands College (a college of Montana Technological University) in Butte.

The collective bargaining agreement between the Board of Regents and the Montana Two-Year College Faculty Association defines “layoff” at Highlands College as “the termination of tenured faculty members for programmatic or financial reasons.”

Administrators for the employer initiated the layoff plan by notifying three tenured faculty members and their collective bargaining agent on or about October 27, 2020 that they will be laid off from their positions effective May 15, 2021. The reasons for the layoffs are program prioritization adjustments, student enrollment, and related fiscal efficiencies.

Two of the three layoffs are related to the elimination of the “General Studies Department” at Highlands College. The third layoff is related to the elimination of the college’s “Medical Assistant Program.” As a side note, a fourth faculty member who is not tenured in the Medical Assistant Program received notice on or about October 27, 2020 that he will not be retained as a probationary faculty member and his employment at Highlands will terminate on May 15, 2021.

OCHE staff has reviewed the layoff plan letters, layoff plan checklists and layoff notifications submitted by Montana Tech. OCHE and Montana Tech administrators have communicated with the collective bargaining agent throughout the process, in addition to the employer’s communications with the affected faculty members. The timelines in the collective bargaining agreement have been adhered to and are not in dispute. For the reasons above, OCHE recommends approval of this item.