



Montana University System

Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education

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MONTANA UNIVERSITY SYSTEM ACADEMIC PRIORITIES

and Analysis of AY 2024-25 Campus Academic Priority and Planning Statements

ACADEMIC PRIORITIES AND PLANNING STATEMENTS

Where do Academic Priorities and Planning Statements fit into the MUS program approval process?

The academic program approval process approved by the BOR in November 2019 requires campuses to submit an annual report to the Board on their academic priorities and planning. This statement is meant to give the Board a broad overview of campus's academic direction, provide useful context for the Board as it considers new academic proposals, and identify some of the specific program proposals that the Board may see from each campus in the coming year. The Priorities and Planning Statement also provides an opportunity for campuses to describe, in broad terms, the process they use to prioritize and review academic programming.

How might the BOR use these reports?

OCHE and the Board can use these reports to:

- Identify areas of overlap in forthcoming academic programming, so that OCHE and campuses can organize early coordination and state-level conversation.
- Evaluate the alignment between a campus's academic priorities, mission parameters, and emerging local, state, and regional needs.
- Understand campus-level procedures for reviewing and prioritizing academic programming.

PLANNING THEMES AND HIGHLIGHTS FROM ACROSS THE SYSTEM

- **Broadening the Scope of the MUS student (dual enrollment, PEP, adult learners)**

Many campuses present plans to offer programming that intentionally aligns with the broadening scope of the MUS student. As a system, structured academic offerings now span from dual enrollment pathways to Prison Education Programming, to programming designed to support a return learner and/or adult learner. **Miles Community College** is developing the Workforce Solutions Program alongside local industry partners to provide needed workforce solutions for students looking to upskill. **Montana State University Northern** will continue to develop focused career pathways within dual enrollment in both trades and healthcare. **Great Falls College, Helena College and MSUB** will look to provide Prison Education Programming.

- **Intentional Academic Design (warp-around needs for certain areas, improving completion rates, flexible degree finishes)**

Expanding on the above theme, campuses are working to not only create diverse access points for multiple student groups, but also to make sure that those programs are intentionally designed to support those specific student needs. **Montana State University Billings** will begin to offer coursework for a 1-credit first year experience course as part of the General Education curriculum, while also focusing on consolidating and restructuring programming to ensure that students have a clear understanding of options and outcomes. **Great Falls College** has developed the Academic Affairs Leadership Team and the DREAM (driving Retention and Educational AttainMent) teams. These teams will work to ensure that programs align with labor needs and trends, while also aligning with the correct organizational structures to support retention and completion efforts. **University of Montana** revised their general education requirements to include Career Competencies to ensure that course learning outcomes were linked with career readiness. The addition on Career

Competencies will begin Fall 2024.

- **Emerging and changing technology-based programming.**

With the emergence of AI and other technology tools, campuses are focused on how to integrate these new skills into programming. Related, several campuses are integrating topics of data, AI, and technology directly into course offerings. **Montana State University Northern** and **Montana State University Bozeman** are exploring programs that directly tie technology and agriculture – precision agriculture and agricultural data analytics. **MSU** is also exploring robotics and photonics engineering to best prepare students for changing career needs and to respond to local development in the Gallatin Valley and across Montana.

- **Responsiveness.**

Mentioned in almost every report was the desire and the focus to be responsive to the needs of students, the state of Montana, and the changing economy. **Helena College** will launch the state's first Occupational Therapy Assistant program. Several two-year campuses will begin programs that have historically not been available from public institutions.

- **Collaboration and Connection**

While MUS campuses have always collaborated to support student needs (CCN, Central Application, etc.) campuses are supporting others who plan to offer programming that is currently in delivery. **Great Falls College** has been in conversation with **Gallatin College** to discuss the addition and expansion of dental hygiene and dental assistants throughout Montana. **Helena College** and **UM Western** continue to have conversations about 2+2 programs and **Helena College** is working with **Missoula College** and **Bitterroot College** to develop an LPN-RN bridge.

OVERLAP ANALYSIS

To help focus conversation on the 2024 forthcoming academic proposal template, OCHE has developed a short list of proposals that showcase areas of overlap and potential collaboration.

1. **Several campuses are exploring adding or will add healthcare programming.**

- Great Falls College will add an EMT program in Fall 2024 and a Substance Abuse and Counseling Program in Fall 2025
- MSU will launch a Behavioral Health CTS and a Doctorate of Nurse Practice
- MSUB and City College will propose programming in Cardiac Sonography Associate of Applied Science and Vascular Technology Associate of Applied Science
- Helena College will launch an Occupational Therapy Assistant Program, LPN-RN Bridge program.
- Highlands College will propose programming in Behavioral Health intended to be stackable to a BAS.
- Miles Community College will add a certificate in Medical Assisting

2. **Montana State University Northern and UM Western** are both exploring meat processing programs.

3. **Several campuses are exploring Trades development.**

- MSUN will propose a certification and AAS in Industrial Technology
- MSUB will propose a certification in Industrial Maintenance
- UM Western will propose a certification in Construction Trades

AY 2024-2025 SYSTEM ACADEMIC PRIORITIES

OCHE anticipates focusing on five academic planning priorities in the coming year to ensure that the system's academic offerings are responsive to the needs of Montana students and the state economy.

1. Academic Program Planning – a review of the planning process and the items included in that process.
2. Review of Policy 301.11 – Definitions and outcomes of the bachelor's degree

3. AI in the Classroom
4. Flexibility of academic programs – how do they support multiple student groups and how do they connect along an academic pathway.
5. Course/program sharing