

The Montana University System

Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education

Work Plan 2004-2005

The Work Plan is organized in two categories: programs and priorities of the Board of Regents and the Montana University System; and organizational operations of the Board and OCHE to accomplish the goals and programmatic priorities. As the Board develops its committee structure, the work and direction of the committees will help prioritize the many projects which OCHE staff work on regularly, and will affect or modify aspects of this plan.

The work plan includes those areas that have been identified by the Board in recent years, particularly in their discussions at their retreat in October of 2003. It is anticipated that the plan will be developed further during discussions with the Board both at the September 2004, meeting, and the Board retreat in October 2004. If 2003-2004 is any guide, actions and directions of the Board of Education will continue to provide strong direction to the priorities and workload of the Commissioner and OCHE staff.

I. Programs, Projects, Planning , and Priorities

Developing/Preparing and Communicating priorities of the Board to the Legislature:

A. Shared Leadership

For a Stronger Montana Economy

Workforce Development, including but not limited to:
Nursing and Health Care professions
Two-year programs

Access, Affordability, and Lifelong College Expectations

Distance Learning

Policy Support: Active leadership/participation by MUS for mutual assistance among the legislature, executive, private, and non-profit sectors on key statewide policy issues

B. Budgets and Initiatives for all of MUS

1. Board Initiatives
2. Student-Centered Emphasis
3. Valuing Employees

C. Annual/Biannual Reports: Accountability, Quality (others?)

Developing/Preparing and Communicating priorities of the Board internally and externally in the context of overall vision and long-range planning:

D. Facilitating Board Governance, Long-Range Planning, Operations/Committees, and System Oversight.

1. Design and implement overall MUS Planning Process
2. Utilize new Committee Structure
3. Provide increased oversight to athletics and other high-profile, sensitive areas

E. Board of Education Committees and priorities:

1. Strengthening P-20 connections and coordinated planning
2. Share leadership role in Indian Education For All

F. Student Assistance and Reauthorization of Higher Education Act – Ensure MUS ongoing voice in the national discussion

II. Organizational Operations

The Commissioner, under the oversight and guidance of the Board of Regents, directs the operations of OCHE. The following outlines staff goals and planned activities for improving the effectiveness and overall quality of OCHE operations:

A. Meetings

Board meetings are scheduled through November of 2006. Attached to this work plan is the addition of a proposed meeting schedule for 2007 and 2008, for long-range planning purposes, and for Board discussion and approval.

Officers and leaders of the Montana University System will meet at least four times during the course of the year, in the months between Board meetings. The Commissioner will work with campus CEO's to develop a format that increases communication and collaboration within the System, as a vehicle to provide advice to OCHE from the campuses, and that is in accord with the decision of the Montana Supreme Court in regard to meetings of MUS senior administrators.

Board Committee meetings will continue to be held on the Wednesday prior to the Board meetings. As this is written, only the Budget Committee exists, but it is anticipated that other committees will meet as well, occasionally by teleconference call as determined by the chair of the Board or a particular committee.

B. Legislative, Alumni, Employee, and Stakeholder Networks

Networks exist through dozens of MUS advisory boards. They must be updated and organized so that each legislator feels a strong tie to, and is supported by, connections with individuals associated with the University System.

C. Communication and Travel

1. It is evident that the position of Commissioner requires considerable travel throughout the state on behalf of the program objectives listed above. Organizing the office to function well through frequent absence of the CHE is a priority for reorganization within the office.
2. Web Page Renovation

The Board, OCHE, and MUS all have their own web pages, which are maintained somewhat differently. Utilize state and other resources to update and coordinate a portal to the Montana University System, with all appropriate, user-friendly links.

D. Staff

Four senior staff members report directly to the Commissioner, in the areas of academic and student affairs; finance and administration; guaranteed student loan program, and office administration.

To accomplish the programs described above, staff shortages are acute in several areas, including:

1. Administrative and program assistance in the Commissioner's immediate office and both divisions. Explore utilization of faculty residencies, graduate assistants, and student internships.

Areas: economic development/shared leadership; general administrative assistance; BOE committees-staffing; communications.

2. Additional assistance needed in legal affairs, in cooperation with UM and MSU campuses.

E. Data Warehouse

Continue development of the data warehouse, making it more useful to the Board and to OCHE and campus decision-makers.

F. Office Space

Resolve space issues with the Student Assistance Foundation; develop short and long-range plan and rationale for space allocation supporting programs, operations, goals; additionally providing room for faculty and student semester residencies within the office.