Montana University System
Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education

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MONTANA UNIVERSITY SYSTEM ACADEMIC PRIORITIES
and Analysis of AY 2023-234 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 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

- **Community-Based Health Needs** Several MUS institutions are focused on creating more healthcare pathways in response to community needs. **Montana State University** is developing a program for a Doctor of Nursing Practicing in Adult Gerontology-Acute Care. Currently the availability of Adult-Acute Care NP's is limited to 51. This shortage, along with needs from critical access hospitals and overall health shortages, provides a clear need. **Great Falls College** is looking to expand cohort offerings in dental hygiene and dental assisting. Pieces of this expansion will result in partnership with **Highlands College. Helena College** is looking to develop an occupational therapy assistant program. Currently there are no programs offered in Montana.
- **Adapting to Changing Student Needs** Many campuses mentioned the need to review and understand how students are best learning and what processes may need to be in place to support student success. **University of Montana** continues to utilize and reexamine student needs thought the lens of UMs Office of Strategic Planning and Implementation. This planning centers on understanding the broad range of learners that are served at UM and addressing changes in societal needs. **University of Montana Western** is choosing to prioritize programming that advances the experiential learning model while also serving populations of Montana (and beyond) who are currently underserved by institutions in higher education. **UM Western and MSU Northern** are looking at ways to expand access to education curriculum across Montana. **UM Western** will look to develop an elementary education degree with a distance delivery option, while **MSU Northern** will work to provide graduate level coursework that would allow educators to increase their education content knowledge. This program will also provide flexible delivery options. **Montana Tech** is reviewing credit requirements, as many programs require more than 120 credits to graduate. Students and families are focused on time-to-degree and cost. A review and potential restructuring of credit requirements will ensure that quality and reputation is met, while also meeting the needs and interests of students.

- **Emerging Technologies** As Montana's economy continues to grow and change, campuses are always reviewing how academic programming aligns with current workforce needs. **Miles Community College** will review academic programming for renewable energy needs and drone technology. **Missoula College** will work to establish the Center for Cybersecurity Workforce and Rural Policy (CWRP). The Center will serve as a regional hub for cybersecurity training, outreach, and technology research.
- **Collaboration and Connection** While MUS campuses have always collaborated to support student needs (CCN, Central Application, etc.) many campuses are intentionally collaborating to support students and Montana communities. As mentioned previously, hub and spoke models for education not only signal system wide commitment to collaboration, but also signal a commitment to Montana's communities. By expanding delivery models, sharing coursework, and developing shared resources, our campuses expand access to educational equity to Montana.

OVERLAP ANALYSIS

To help focus conversation on the 2023 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 allied health programs.**
   - Helena College will explore the addition of an Occupational Therapy Assistant
   - MSUB will explore the expansion of Nursing and other Allied Health Programs
   - Dawson Community College will explore program additions in areas of Exercise Science and Health & Human Performance
   - UM Western is exploring 2+2 options in Fire and Emergency Services

2. **Missoula College, Miles Community College, Helena College, and Gallatin College are exploring program expansion in the areas of Cybersecurity and IT.**

MONTANA's ACADEMIC PROGRAMMING OVER TIME

Net Annual Change in the Number of Academic Programs, AY2016-2021

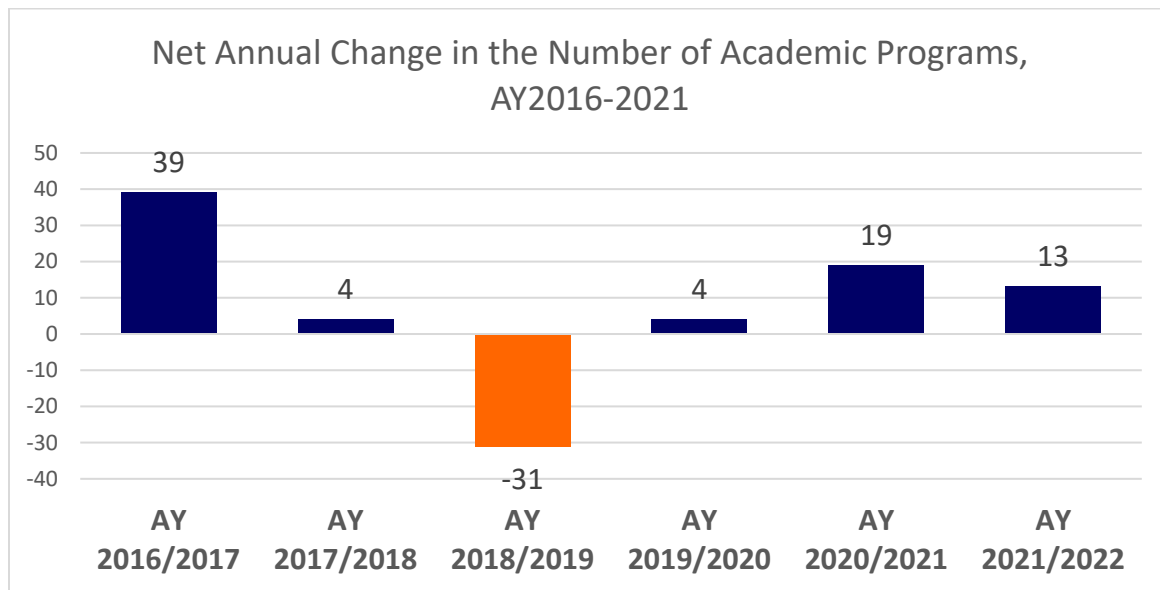| AY 2016/2017	AY 2017/2018	AY 2018/2019	AY 2019/2020	AY 2020/2021	AY 2021/2022
39	4	-31	4	19	13

Table 1 - Source: OCHE program approval tracking. Excludes minors and options within a major from counts of new programs / moratoria. Data includes MUS institutions and community colleges.

AY 2023-2024 SYSTEM ACADEMIC PRIORITIES

OCHE anticipates focusing on three 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. Support and expand online learning modalities
2. Transfer Partnerships and Stackable Credentialing
3. Emerging Industry and Workforce Needs
4. Intentional academic design to support student completion

Academic Priorities Memo