

MONTANA BOARD OF REGENTS

NEW ACADEMIC PROGRAM PROPOSAL SUMMARY

ITEM 130-1603+R0306

Institution: The University of Montana-Western

Program Title: B.A., new Environmental Interpretation Option

1. How does this program advance the campus' academic mission and fit priorities?

Western's mission has always been centered on the education of future educators, especially at the undergraduate level. This proposal is consistent with this mission since students are preparing for careers in an industry with the primary focus of educating the public about the natural environment. The university's mission statement strongly supports "education through experiential learning that combines theory and practice." Western's unique setting in one of the best natural laboratories in the country, in combination with our unique Experience One scheduling model allows us to offer a significant portion of this program through field-and-project-based curricula designed to provide students with real-world experiences that cannot be duplicated in classroom-based curricula. In addition, the program requirement for an internship allows students to (1) gain first-hand experience in the industry and (2) make contacts with potential employers that will enhance their potential for employment upon graduation. As a result, this proposal meets the university's mission of "education through experiential learning that combines theory and practice", as well as the Board of Regents' goals and objectives "To be responsive to market, employment, and economic development needs of the State and nation."

2. How does this program fit the Board of Regents' goals and objectives?

This proposal meets the Board of Regent's goals and objectives by providing a stimulating, responsive and effective environment for student learning and academic achievement and by being responsive to market and employment needs of the state and nation.

3. How does this program support or advance Montana's needs and interests?

The objective of this proposal is to meet the growing need in the tourism and outdoor therapy industries for qualified naturalists, interpreters and outdoor educators. The University of Montana-Western has offered a successful related area (focused study within an existing option area) to meet this need for ten (10) years, and now proposes to elevate this related area to the option level. The intellectual basis for the degree is a strong foundation in the field-based natural sciences in combination with courses that focus on communicating and engaging the public in understanding how the natural world works.

4. How will this program contribute to economic development in Montana? (Note projected annual economic impact both regionally and statewide.)

Educational tourism is a growth industry in the state and in the nation and increasingly there are environmental interpretive components of therapy programs. Individuals such as those trained in this program are needed to fully develop areas that are important components of the state's economy.

5. What is the program's planned capacity?

• Break-even point?	20	FTE students
• Enrollments / year?	50	
• Graduates / year?	12	
• MT jobs / year?	10	

6. Resource Allocation:

• Total program budget?	\$ 0
• Faculty FTE?	1
• Staff FTE?	0

7. *Does this program require new resources?* Yes No

If yes, what is the amount? \$ _____

8. *How will the campus fund the program?*

All of the courses required for this program are already being taught on-campus for existing programs and have unused course capacity. The relatively minor costs of administering and marketing the program will come out of existing campus resources.

In the third year of the program, if projected student numbers materialize, there may be a need to hire one additional faculty member. That is shown in the budget with a cost of \$55,500, including salary plus benefits.

9. *If internal reallocation is necessary, name the sources.*

There will be internal reallocation of faculty resources to serve this new option area instead of the existing area of study (related area) within the Environmental Science option.