College!Now Progress Report

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This is the first of regular quarterly progress reports I plan to provide on the Montana University System College!Now initiative. I first would like to recognize the incredible leadership and efforts from my predecessor, Dr. Mary Sheehy Moe who served as the first Deputy Commissioner for Two-Year Education and College!Now Director for Montana. Dr. Moe directed the College!Now initiative from the beginning of the grant in September 2009 through fall 2010. I began my new role as deputy commissioner on January 1, 2011 succeeding Dr. Moe.

Thanks to the fantastic planning and strategy efforts of the first 20 months of College!Now, the initiative is now poised to move into its implementation phase which will run through the remainder of the grant in December 2013. The College!Now grant implementation will be guided by a 19 member Implementation Team.

Accomplishments over the first phase of the grant include:

• Board of Regents (BOR) approval of Montana’s first Comprehensive Two-Year Mission
• BOR approval of Dual Enrollment State Guidelines
• BOR approval of phase one of a Common Approach to Dual Enrollment Tuition and Enrollment Forms
• BOR Approval of a 25-month Implementation Plan for Extending the Comprehensive Two-Year Mission to Montana’s five colleges of technology including rebranding and renaming them
• Creation of a Comprehensive Mission Task Force to guide the process of extending the comprehensive two-year mission to the five COTs including rebranding and renaming them
• Finalization of a current report summarizing the current status in relation to each of the five Colleges of Technology and the BOR approved comprehensive two-year mission
• Engaged the services of Strategies360, a Montana based communications and engagement firm to assist with the rebranding and renaming of Montana’s five Colleges of Technology and with developing statewide awareness and brand for Montana’s two-year colleges and two-year programs
• Leveraged support with the Montana’s Carl Perkins Initiative, Department of Labor, State Workforce Investment Board, and the Office of Public Instruction to develop and advance K-12 to college educational and career pathways
• Initiated a statewide 100 person two-year education discussion centered on the topic of “Student Success” facilitated by internationally recognized author, Dr. Terry O’Banion, president emeritus, League for Innovation of the Community College.

Beginning in October, five listening sessions will be held in communities where Colleges of Technology reside. These listening sessions will provide faculty, staff, students, and community members with the opportunity to engage in dialogue regarding the College!Now strategy of extending the comprehensive mission to each of the Colleges of Technology including rebranding and renaming them. In addition, the Comprehensive Mission Task Force will work with the five College of Technology campuses to develop a plan and timeline for expanding programming and services to better reflect the BOR approved comprehensive two-year mission.

Finally, Montana’s two-year colleges and two-year programs will work with the Montana Digital Academy during the fall to expand the breadth of offering of on-line dual enrollment courses to Montana’s high school students.

For questions or additional information, please feel free to contact John E. Cech, Deputy Commissioner for Two-Year and Community College Education, jcech@montana.edu or 406-444-0316.