Montana's Two-Year College Initiative
Progress Report
Jan-Feb 2011

1. State and team personnel changes
   John Cech officially started his position as Deputy Commissioner for Two-Year and Community College Education.

2. Upcoming activities and events related to the initiative.
   Fill in based on calendar of calls/meetings.

3. Activities and progress this month, as they relate to the following (taken from the scope of work):
   a. The goals for overall project coordination:

      Core staff at OCHE held a retreat to document progress to date on College!Now and identify next steps. The results are part of the foundation for a revised scope of work proposal being prepared for submission to Lumina.

      The Implementation Team and additional participants engaged in a successful “Action Collab Workshop” led by the Institute for Knowledge Management in Education (ISKME). The workshop focused on design thinking and rapid prototyping exercises to move toward creative solutions to the challenge of creating a comprehensive community college system. Discussion gravitated toward marketing and outreach, and the creation of a new brand for the 2-year college system. The preliminary recommendation is to leave the names of community and tribal colleges as they are, and change the colleges of technology to named colleges—without the words technology or community in the name.

      Leaders from 17 two-year colleges, including tribal colleges, are collaborating, along with the state labor department on a TAACCCT grant proposal. The proposal will focus on developmental education in math and distance delivery. The project will dovetail with College!Now—goals include expanding and improving the state’s ability to achieve better employment and education outcomes (i.e., not simply offering existing courses to more workers); and accelerating progress or reducing time to completion for low skilled workers (e.g., combining basic skills with specific career knowledge, as with Washington’s IBEST program). States are also encouraged to utilize technology to reach a broader audience or reach that audience better.
b. The goals for communications and engagement:

John has begun taking the temperature of engagement in College!Now objectives and strategies through site visits to two-year campuses.

The Implementation Team met to discuss resubmitting the communications RFP, and realized they needed to take a step back and ensure the group has a shared vision for two-year education in the state. Participants volunteered to work on subcommittees to draft a vision/mission statement for two-year education, and to draft two separate scopes of work for the RFP, one for research and one more marketing-oriented. The group subsequently met and approved the vision/mission statement, and presented it to the regents in February. The scope of work for the marketing RFP is nearly ready for posting.

c. The goals for bringing the community college mission to all two-year campuses, including activities of the four work groups:

i. Developmental

ii. Adult-friendly

iii. Adult basic literacy education (ABLE)

iv. Workforce responsiveness

The Implementation Team’s work to articulate a shared mission and vision for two-year education is essential for this strategy. The team has agreed on core components of the community college mission, and has further agreed that while the three community colleges currently provide the full mission, the COTs do not. Community college leaders have expressed willingness to assist the COTs to develop and implement the services that comprise the full mission.

Beyond this, John is in process of reinvigorating the work groups, which may involve some changes in organization or leadership and some consolidation.

d. The goals for making two-year colleges regional hubs:

...Including activities of the two work groups:

i. High School/College transitions

ii. Curriculum coordination and alignment

e. The goals for technology infrastructure, including activities of the two work groups:

i. Technology for efficiency

ii. College!Now Online

f. The goals for outcomes-based funding:

Mick Robinson, Associate Commissioner for Administration and Fiscal Affairs, continues to work through the model with campus fiscal officers, assisted by Dennis Jones of NCHEMS.