1. State and team personnel changes

John Cech began his transition into the role of Deputy Commissioner for Two-Year and Community College Education. He officially starts January 1, but had a series of orientation meetings and calls, attended the National Productivity Conference with the State team, began leading Implementation Team calls, and participated in the SPEC evaluation check-in call and a discussion with ISKME to plan their visit to Montana. Anne Clark has stepped up her involvement at John’s request, and is analyzing data from Sheila Stearns’ fall community listening sessions and helping John plan data collection as he begins visiting campuses across the State to gauge stakeholder engagement and determine if any mid-course corrections are needed in project strategies.

John has also contracted with Pam Fisher (who worked for 30 years with California community colleges) to assist the team with re-writing of the communications RFP. Finally, John has been appointed to serve on the search committee for Montana Tech’s new Chancellor, to replace Frank Gilmore when he retires in June 2011. This will be a key position for Montana’s productivity agenda, following the hiring of Waded Cruzado at MSU, Royce Engstrom at UM, and Rolf Groseth at MSU-Billings—all of whom have been very supportive of College!Now and the productivity agenda.

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:

      Coordination efforts focused on leadership transition during this period.

      State team for National Productivity Conference included Sheila Stearns, John Cech, Tom Gibson, Joyce Silverthorne, Pat Wise, Bob Nystuen, and Judy Heiman. Conference was valuable sharing Montana’s progress, collecting new ideas, gauging our progress vis-à-vis other states, and connecting with colleagues across the country who may be able to assist with various aspects of our work. Overall assessment is that while some states have made remarkable progress on their productivity agendas and have already implemented major reforms (for example statewide approaches to developmental education or performance
funding), others are in earlier stages, and Montana is somewhere near the middle.

b. **The goals for communications and engagement:**

State College!Now leadership has decided to postpone the RFP for a new communications consultant. They expect to issue a new RFP in January. The team was not satisfied with the RFP that was published initially, especially following many compromises with the State Procurement Office. It will be well worth trading off a delay of a month or two for an RFP better designed to meet the project’s needs.

As for public policy engagement, Governor Schweitzer released his Executive Budget November 15 with positive proposals for education—including incentives to advance College!Now priorities. Total General Fund Executive Budget support for higher education increased more than 9 percent, compared to just over a 2 percent increase in total GF spending. Potential new funding for dual enrollment is contingent on higher education resolving differences in fee structures for dual enrollment students. This will encourage colleges to resolve a sticking point for College!Now Online and 2-year college participation in the Montana Digital Academy (MTDA). Budgeted funding was also included to continue the MTDA, help Miles and Dawson Community Colleges refine reporting (now that they’ve converted to MSU’s Banner system), and to cover increased enrollment at the community colleges.

President Jane Karas and Regent Jeanine Pease attended the White House Summit on Community Colleges in October, and reported on the summit at the November Board of Regents’ meeting. They highlighted the themes of the summit, including increased completion, particularly at two-year institutions.

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

i. Developmental

ii. Adult-friendly

iii. Adult basic literacy education (ABLE)

iv. Workforce responsiveness

   Work group activity has slowed during the transition, and is expected to resume after regrouping in the new year.

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

The Implementation Team held both teleconference and in-person meetings to further discuss issues related to regional hubs implementation. The group was not in favor of any of the regional maps as presented and believes the regions should be generally defined by the areas currently serviced by the Two-Year campuses. In order to fully address the access perspective of the project, we will also be working to identify the service area gaps that presently exist in
delivering the College Mission, as well as to identify how we will address those service gaps using the regional hub concept.

...Including activities of the two work groups:

i. High School/College transitions

ii. Curriculum coordination and alignment

A Common Course Numbering Transfer Guide covering over 50 disciplines and including all MUS institutions, the community colleges, and the tribal colleges has been completed and posted on the MUS website. The systemwide course numbering policy assures that equivalent courses at different campuses will have the same title, number, and prefix, and that all such equivalent courses will be accepted in transfer as if they had been taken at the receiving campus. This new tool should help reduce time to degree for students pursuing two-year to four-year transfer. This new approach to faculty working with each other across campus lines has tremendously facilitated campuses and students in the transfer degree completion track, as well as in preparation for select four year degree options, reducing time-to-graduation and redundancy of course completion.

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

i. Technology for efficiency

Banner implementation at Miles and Dawson community colleges, and integration for MUS campuses, remain on schedule for going live Spring 2011. Tyler Trevor is leading the effort to develop system-wide data standards for critical data elements, and the first group of data elements approved includes the Session Codes as they relate to the courses at all of the campuses. The Session Codes clearly identify they type of course and modality of delivery in order to be able to report enrollments by course in each type of delivery mode, across all of the campuses.

ii. College!Now Online (formerly: Virtual community college)

Tom Gibson, Director of e-Learning Business Development at OCHE, took over this effort upon Mary’s retirement.

In reporting to the Board of Regents on distance learning in the Montana University System, Tyler Trevor noted that MUS adopted a common learning management system for all of the MSU campuses and Flathead Valley Community College (Desire to Learn) and a common learning management system for all of the UM campuses (Moodle); instituted systemwide strategic planning and assessment of distance learning efforts; eliminated on-campus fees for “solely” online students; and centralized advertising efforts for online courses and programs. These accomplishments include the MUS-governed colleges of technology and college programs, as well as the community colleges.
The College!Now Online aspect of this project will also entail a new web page presence at the Montana University System web site, to facilitate easy, single point access to the Montana Digital Academy dual credit courses and registration, as well as to samples of high demand transfer credit and work force development courses and programs available 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. We anticipate that some portion of the FY 2012 budget distribution to the MUS campuses and community colleges will be based upon a yet-to-be-determine factor associated with college course completion. As our experience with academic performance based budgeting grows in the ensuing years, we anticipate that we will likely be able to extend that performance factor to include certificate and degree completions within identified time parameters.