

Montana Two-Year Comprehensive Mission Expansion Plans

Seven College Summary Plan

Introduction

In 2011, the Montana University System, the Board of Regents and the Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education embarked on a comprehensive initiative to increase high-quality degree and educational certificate attainment for all Montanans. Currently only 40% of Montanans have an Associate Degree or higher. Recognizing that this places Montana last in the West and 45th in the nation in the percentage of its population 25 years of age and older who are engaged in higher education, the Regents approved a comprehensive mission and vision statement for two-year higher education. They extended this mission to seven of the state's colleges of technology and two-year programs. A key goal of this 25-month project is to make two-year education in Montana better understood and ultimately better utilized.

Seven Colleges

Bitterroot College
City College
Gallatin College
Great Falls College
Helena College
Highlands College
Missoula College

These seven colleges (Bitterroot, City, Gallatin, Great Falls, Helena, Highlands and Missoula Colleges) have each developed a plan for implementing the comprehensive two-year mission adopted by the Board of Regents. These plans are presented to provide a road map for the redefinition and expansion of the seven two-year colleges' missions and goals to better serve the educational and economic needs of the citizens of Montana.

Mission Statement

The Mission of two-year education in Montana is to provide a comprehensive, accessible, responsive, student-centered learning environment that facilitates and supports the achievement of individuals' professional and personal goals, and enhances the development of Montana's citizens, communities and economy.

Vision Statement

Montana's two-year education: Transform lives and create opportunities through educating the citizens of the state of Montana.

The Colleges will strive to increase access to higher education by providing instructional programs that meet local community needs as well as statewide workforce development goals. The colleges propose to provide services for underserved populations including adult learners, reentry students, veterans, and students who have postponed or have had their educational progress interrupted earlier in life. The Colleges can meet these needs through flexible scheduling, outreach to nontraditional students, innovative programs, targeted support services and reasonable cost.

The colleges developed these Implementation Plans through collaborative processes that included students, staff, faculty, administrators, local employers and community members. Each plan is *structured* in a similar way, but the details vary greatly, reflecting the unique characteristics of each college and its community.

Each of the college plans is organized into four chapters as follows.

1. **Introduction** - a brief description of the history and development of the College to date
2. **Data** - descriptive data on student demographics and performance measures
3. **Initiatives** - describes the action initiatives that the College has identified to implement the expanded Mission and Vision. The colleges were asked to propose initiatives that could be implemented with existing resources as well as those requiring new resources. The plans provide a local blueprint for what can be accomplished by the College if adequate resources can be secured to fund the proposed initiatives.
4. **Linkages** - how the College can develop and promote linkages to state policy priorities and other educational institutions in Montana

Through these efforts the Colleges plan to meet the Mission and Vision set forth by the Board of Regents. The Colleges will strive to provide a comprehensive, accessible, responsive, student-centered learning environment that facilitates and supports the achievement of individuals' professional and personal goals, and enhances the development of Montana's citizens, communities and economy. Working together with community, state and local leaders and partner institutions, the Colleges can continue to transform lives and create opportunities through educating the citizens of the state of Montana.

Highlights from the Colleges

Data

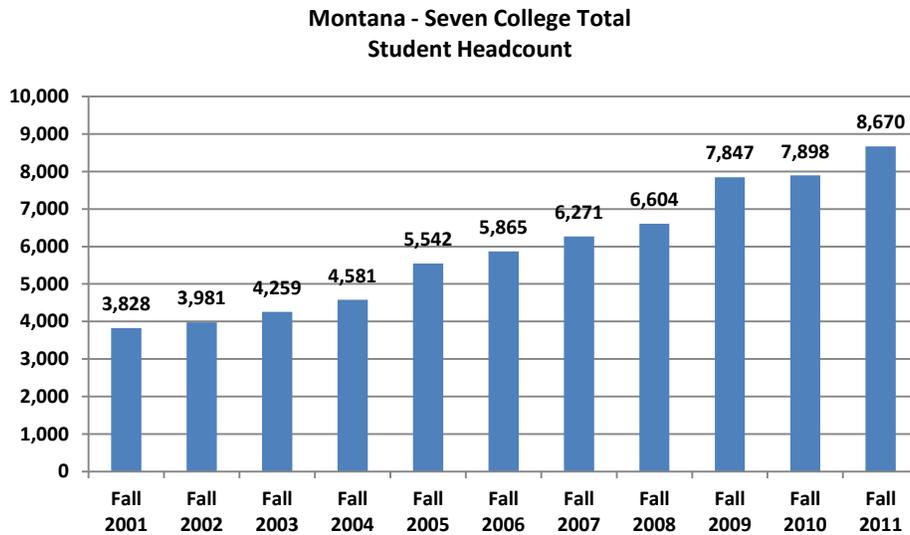
Each of the College plans contains a set of data. The direction given by the Deputy Commissioner's office was to move in the direction of using data elements included in the Voluntary Framework of Accountability (VFA). The American Association of Community Colleges developed this comprehensive system of accountability for use by two-year colleges.

The State has begun moving toward adoption of the VFA for data reporting and accountability. At the time that this project was undertaken the Commissioner's office was able to produce a significant portion of the VFA data for the seven colleges. College leadership was asked to use the data as part of their analysis in developing their plans to implement the Comprehensive Mission for two-year education in Montana.

Following are a few representative data elements, **for the seven colleges in aggregate.**

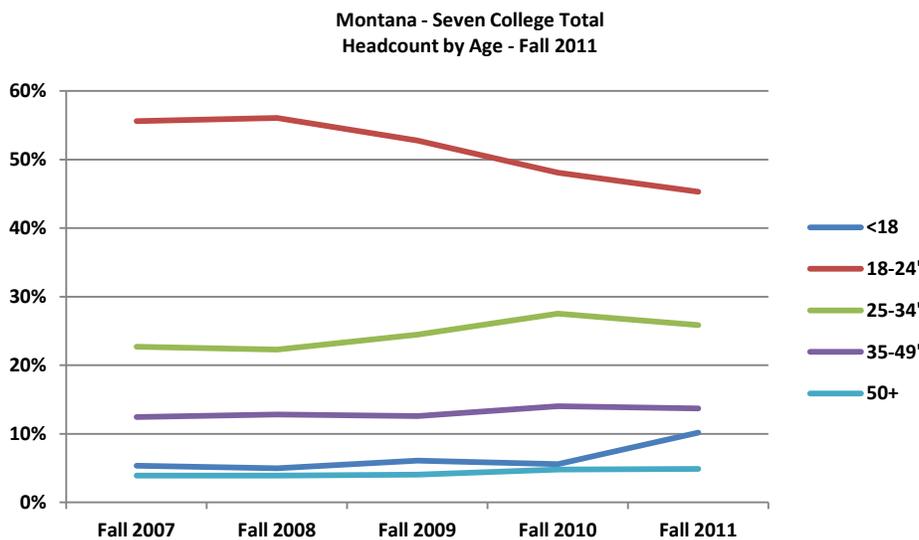
Enrollment

Student enrollment has increased steadily over the past 10 years as shown in the following chart.



Age

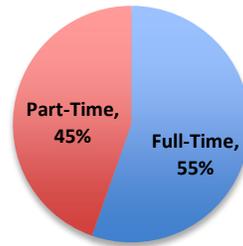
Students between 18 and 24 years of age are declining as a percentage of total students. The biggest gains are among those under 18. There is an opportunity to increase enrollment among adult learners, 25 years of age and older.



Course Load

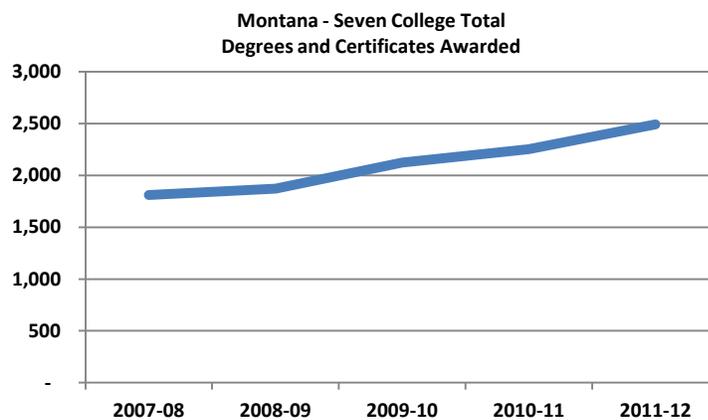
Fifty-five percent of the students attending the seven colleges are attending on a full-time basis (12 units or more per semester).

Montana - Seven College Total Course Load



Degrees and Certificates Awarded

The number of certificates awarded has increased past five

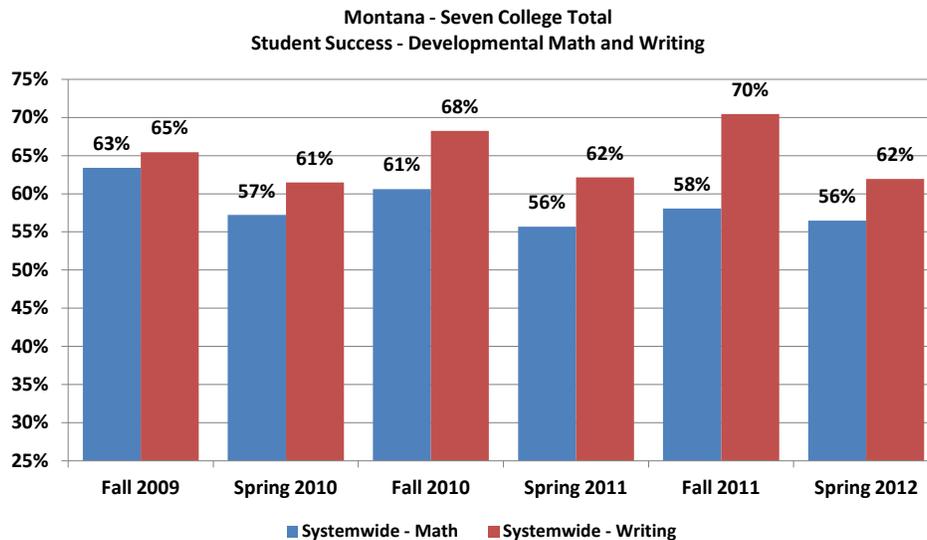


of degrees and awarded has steadily over the years.

Student Success - Developmental Math and Writing

Another area that the Colleges looked at was the success rate among students in developmental math and writing. Success is generally defined as earning a C or better in the class. Success rates in developmental math and writing have fluctuated over the past six semesters.

The VFA has a different, and more important metric. The VFA looks at the percentage of students enrolled in developmental classes who go on to succeed in a college level course in that subject. This data was not available for this project. The consulting team recommends that the State expand the use of VFA data going forward.



Initiatives

Each of the colleges was asked to develop initiatives or actions that would help realize the comprehensive mission articulated via College!NOW. The plans have been structured in such a way that the initiatives tie directly in with the *Comprehensive Mission/Vision for Two-Year Education*.

The initiatives address (and are organized by) the five **purposes** of two-year education described in the *Comprehensive Mission/Vision*. All of the colleges included initiatives for each of these purposes. These are:

- Transfer Education Through the Associate's Degree
- Workforce Development, Including Certificates and Applied Associate's Degrees
- Developmental and Adult Basic Education
- Lifelong Learning
- Community Development

Two additional categories were added. These are:

- **Branding and Marketing** - Initiatives that further the College!NOW efforts at rebranding the colleges and raising awareness in the communities they serve.
- **Other Institutional Elements** - Initiatives that address important college needs that do not fit neatly in one of the other categories. Many of these initiatives address more than one of the previously mentioned purposes.

Some of these initiatives can be accomplished with existing resources. Others require new resources for implementation. All of the initiatives include the following:

- **Name**
- **Description**
- **Outcome** - what outcome is expected if the initiative is implemented.
- **Completion Date**
- **Responsible Party** - the person/position responsible for seeing that the initiative stays on track
- **Resources Required** - some initiatives require no new resources. Some require funding for equipment, consulting support or other items. Other initiatives require additional college staff, full or part-time.
- **Strategy** - As part of College!NOW, a group of five strategies was developed and approved in September of 2011. There are a number of sub-strategies for each of the five. For each initiative in the Implementation Plans, the colleges have indicated which of the strategies (and sub-strategies) are addressed by the initiative.

Following are some examples of the initiatives from the college plans. See the individual plans for details.

Transfer Education Through the Associate's Degree

- Create guidance program for two-year to four-year transfer students to increase their completion rates at baccalaureate campuses.
- Expanding General Education classes on campus.
- Developing articulation agreements with Montana four-year institutions to facilitate transfer opportunities for students.
- Enhance course offerings and promote programs that facilitate transfer to four-year institutions for students at the College.

Workforce Development, Including Certificates and Applied Associate's Degrees

- Expanding contract training offerings.
- Increasing cooperation with employers to enhance career development and job placement.
- Provide Certificate of Science Degrees in Building Maintenance and Computer Support.
- Provide business Technology Degrees in Medical Reception, Accounting and Management-Entrepreneurship.
- Develop industry certificate programs of less than 15 credit hours.
- Expand offering of noncredit industry training courses. Offer five such classes each semester.

Developmental and Adult Basic Education

- Assess and improve current tutoring services in order to increase retention and persistence rates.
- Strengthen early grade alert system by increasing participation by faculty.
- Continue implementation of College Success Course, Strategies Course and First Year Seminar Course to boost student success and retention.
- Develop and implement self-paced developmental math courses and evaluate other models for developmental programs.
- Create Pathways for GED students into workforce credentials. Establish a GED liaison, Pathways advisor and MOU agreement.

Lifelong Learning

- Establish articulated partnership with local adult basic education and GED programming to increase student access and success among students testing below college level.
- Create support program for veteran students to increase the number of enrolled students, and rates of persistence, success and completion.
- Expand programs for continuing education through partnerships with local businesses and organizations.
- Exploring the Early College Model to increase the number of high school students graduating with college credit.
- Increase the number of high schools with formal agreements with the College for Dual Credit and Big Sky Pathways. This is intended to lead to increased enrollment of students between 18 and 24 years of age.
- Establishing a "One-MSU Footprint" including a dual-admission agreement.

Community Development

- Work with the local Advisory Council to enhance and expand events on campus that serve the local community.
- Enhancing community partnerships, especially with Tribal Colleges.
- Host events that provide intellectual, cultural, and social enrichment for the community.
- Implement and maintain processes to assess and respond to our community's ongoing and emerging educational and training needs.
- Use program advisory councils and designated liaisons to develop and maintain effective relationships with agencies, employers, and other higher education institutions to enhance student success initiatives.

Branding and Marketing

- Enhance the visibility, recognition, and growth of the college through continued marketing and branding efforts.
- Develop MOU with MSU Communications for advertising and communications services.
- Revamp college website for usability.
- Develop and implement a sustained brand awareness and marketing campaign to promote the College's opportunities, programs, and services using traditional advertising media and online advertising media.
- Develop and implement a comprehensive marketing and recruitment plan specific to different prospective student demographics, including Native American students, veterans, traditional students, and non-traditional students aged 25 and older without college degrees or in need of workforce retraining.

Other Institutional Elements

- Developing a strategic enrollment plan and revising, developing or eliminating programs.
- Develop a formalized College communication plan to advance the mission and goals of the College and College!NOW.
- Increase student persistence toward attainment of educational goals by strengthening academic planning services.
- Development of sustainable funding structure.
- Reorganization of College administration structure.