

## **Montana Postsecondary Educational Institution Complaint Process**

The Department of Education's Program Integrity rules (34 CFR 600.9(a)(1)) require each state to have a process for receiving, reviewing, and responding to complaints regarding the program integrity of postsecondary educational institutions delivering educational services in that state.

Complaints regarding program integrity may include one or more of the following categories:

- Complaints that allege a violation of state consumer protection laws, including fraud and false advertising;
- Complaints that allege a violation of a state law or rule relating to the licensure of postsecondary universities; and/or
- Complaints relating to the quality of education or other State or accreditation requirements.

Each institution must tell students how they can initiate complaints in the state where the student receives instruction.

Montana state law (Mont. Code Ann. §§ 20-15-103 and 20-25-201) designates and authorizes the Montana University System colleges and universities, together with the named community college districts, to provide postsecondary education in the State of Montana under the authority and control of the Board of Regents of the Montana University System. Those institutions are as follows:

- Montana State University – Bozeman
- Montana State University – Billings
- City College at Montana State University - Billings
- Montana State University – Northern
- Great Falls College – Montana State University
- The University of Montana – Missoula
- Missoula College – University of Montana
- Helena College – University of Montana
- Montana Technological University
- Highlands College of Montana Tech

- The University of Montana – Western
- Dawson Community College
- Flathead Valley Community College
- Miles Community College

These institutions are accredited by the [Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities](#), 8060 165th Avenue NE, Suite 200, Redmond, Washington 98052, (425) 558-4224. Evidence of each institution’s accreditation can be found at <https://nwccu.org/member-institutions/directory/>

## **HOW TO FILE A COMPLAINT:**

### ***Montana University System Institutions and Montana community colleges***

Students and prospective students of the Montana University System and Montana community colleges are required to first address program integrity complaints, including, if applicable, complaints related to *State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement* standards, through the applicable institution’s internal complaint or review procedures. Campus specific information can be found by clicking on the following links:

- [Montana State University – Bozeman](#)
- [Montana State University – Billings](#)
- [City College at Montana State University – Billings](#)
- [Montana State University – Northern](#)
- [Great Falls College – Montana State University](#)
- [The University of Montana – Missoula](#)
- [Missoula College – University of Montana](#)
- [Helena College – University of Montana](#)
- [Montana Technological University](#)
- [Highlands College of Montana Tech](#)
- [The University of Montana Western](#)
- [Dawson Community College](#)

- [Flathead Valley Community College](#)
- [Miles Community College](#)

Program integrity complaints that remain unresolved at the college or university level may be further pursued in the following manners:

- An unresolved program integrity complaint may be directed to the Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education for review and referral to the appropriate agency, or for resolution ([Board of Regents' Policy 221](#)).
- Complaints concerning broad institutional academic practices, such as those that raise issues regarding an institution's ability to meet accreditation standards, may be filed with the [Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities](#).
- Complaints concerning consumer protection violations should be directed to the [Montana Department of Justice Office of Consumer Protection](#).
- Individuals enrolled in an online or distance course with the Montana University System and residing outside of the State of Montana may also have an opportunity to utilize the complaint processes in their state of residence. See the [list of information](#) regarding the complaint processes of other states.

### ***Institutions Outside the Montana University System and Montana Community Colleges***

Individuals with complaints regarding institutions that are operating in Montana, but are not part of the Montana University System or duly organized community colleges, have the following options:

- Use the internal complaint processes of the applicable institution.
- Complaints concerning consumer protection violations should be directed to the [Montana Department of Justice Office of Consumer Protection](#).
- Complaints concerning proper licensure under Montana law (see [Board of Regents' Policy 221](#)) may be directed to the Montana University System Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education, 560 N. Park Avenue, PO Box 203201, Helena, Montana 59620-3201, 406-449-9124, [stateauthorization@montana.edu](mailto:stateauthorization@montana.edu).
- Complaints against a Montana State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA)-approved institution brought may be directed to the Montana University System

Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education, 560 N. Park Avenue, PO Box 203201, Helena, Montana 59620-3201, 406-449-9124, stateauthorization@montana.edu, if:

- The student files the complaint within two years of the incident about which the complaint is made;
  - The complaint has already gone through the authorized institution's internal complaint process; and
  - The complaint is a formal assertion in writing that the terms of SARA, or of laws, standards, or regulations incorporated by SARA, are being violated by a person, institution, state, agency, or other organization or entity operating under the terms of SARA.
    - Grade appeals/grievances and student code of conduct related complaints are not eligible for review.
- Complaints concerning broad institutional academic practices, such as those that raise issues regarding the institution's ability to meet accreditation standards, may be directed to the applicable institution's accrediting agency.