



8060 165th Avenue N.E., Suite 100
Redmond, WA 98052-3981
425 558 4224
Fax: 425 376 0396
www.nwccu.org

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MSU-BILLINGS

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January 30, 2009

Chancellor's Office

Dr. Ronald P. Sexton
Chancellor
Montana State University-Billings
1500 University Drive
Billings, MT 59101-0298

Dear Chancellor ~~Sexton~~ ^{Ron}:

On behalf of the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities, I am pleased to report that the accreditation of Montana State University-Billings has been reaffirmed on the basis of the Fall 2008 Comprehensive Evaluation. Congratulations on receiving this continued recognition.

The policy of the Commission is not to grant accreditation for a definite number of years. Instead, accreditation must be reaffirmed periodically. Each institution is required to conduct a self-study and be visited by a full evaluation committee at least once every ten years, and during the fifth year, the College is to submit an interim report and be visited by one or more Commission representatives. In the case of Montana State University-Billings, the Commission requests that the University prepare a focused interim report and host one or more Commission representatives in spring 2010 to address Recommendations 1, 2, 3, and 4 of the Fall 2008 Comprehensive Evaluation Report. A copy of the Recommendations is enclosed for your reference.

In reaffirming accreditation, the Commission finds that Recommendations 2, 3, and 4 of the Fall 2008 Comprehensive Evaluation Report are areas where Montana State University-Billings substantially meets the Commission's criteria for accreditation, but need improvement. However, the Commission finds that Recommendation 1 of the Fall 2008 Comprehensive Evaluation Report is an area where the University does not meet the Commission's criteria for accreditation. According to U.S. Department of Education Regulation 34 CFR 602.20 and Commission Policy A-18, *Commission Action Regarding Institutional Compliance Within Specified Period* (enclosed), the Commission requires that Montana State University-Billings take appropriate action to ensure that Recommendation 1 is addressed and resolved within the prescribed two-year period.

In the unlikely event the Commission should conclude that an institution is in danger of being unable to fulfill its mission and goals or to continue to meet the Eligibility Requirements, Standards or related Policies for accreditation, the Commission reserves the right to request that the institution receive an evaluation committee for a special review.

Chancellor Ronald P. Sexton
January 30, 2009
Page Two


The Commission commends the University for its outstanding care for students that is so obviously a value of the faculty and staff. Further, the Commission applauds the University for its exceptional formation of strategic partnerships with constituencies throughout the region. Moreover, the Commission commends the University for the extremely successful completion of its capital campaign.

Again, congratulations on receiving this recognition.

We will write in fall 2009 regarding the Spring 2010 Focused Interim Report and visit.

Best wishes for a rewarding year.

Sincerely,



Sandra E. Elman
President

SEE:mf

Enclosures: Recommendations
Policy A-18

cc: Dr. D'Ann Campell, Provost
Dr. Stephen Barrett, Board Chair
Dr. Geoffrey Gamble, President, Montana State University-Bozeman
Dr. Sheila Stearns, Commissioner of Higher Education, Montana University System

Comprehensive Evaluation Report
Fall 2008
Montana State University-Billings
Recommendations

1. The Committee acknowledges the progress made implementing educational program planning and assessment, but it did not find evidence that this effort is yet truly University-wide in operation and that it encompasses all of its offerings. The Committee therefore recommends that steps be taken to ensure that all academic programs are fully completing the process of learning outcomes definition, evaluation, analysis of results, and demonstration that on the basis of such evaluation, curricular and pedagogical changes are made as needed (Standard 2.B.1; Policy 2.2).

2. The Committee recommends that the University establish a systematic and widely communicated procedure for the evaluation of all faculty, including part-time instructors, individuals on Letters of Appointment, and others with teaching responsibilities (Standard 4.A.5, 4.A.10; Policy 4.1).

3. In light of the multi-institutional governance structure currently in place, whereby MSU-Billings reports to the Montana Board of Regents through MSU-Bozeman, the Committee recommends that the Board of Regents and these institutions engage in a comprehensive review of the mission and operation of MSU-Billings so that the distinctive identity of the institution is established, that it is clearly communicated to its constituencies, that its authority to operate within its assigned mission is ensured, and that its relationship with other Montana public postsecondary institutions is clarified (Standards 1.A.1, 6.A.4, 6.B.5 and 7.A.1).

4. Acknowledging the University's admirable commitment to serving the higher educational needs of its region, and, moreover, the commitment of its faculty, staff, administration, and Foundation to meet that mission, the Committee nonetheless observes that resources – both human and financial – are limited. Particularly, given the institution's dependence on enrollment and the continuing demographic challenges, the Committee recommends that steps be taken to evaluate and better match resources with mission and operations (Standards 1.A.4, 1.B.2, 1.B.4, 5.A.2, and 7.B.5).

Commission on Colleges and Universities
Northwest Association of Schools and of Colleges and Universities

Policy A-18 Commission Action Regarding Institutional Compliance Within Specified Period

If the Commission determines that an institution it accredits is not in compliance with a Commission standard for accreditation, the Commission will immediately initiate adverse action against the institution or require the institution to take appropriate action to bring itself into compliance within a time period that shall not exceed: 1) twelve months, if the longest program offered by the institution, is less than one year in length; 2) eighteen months, if the longest program offered by the institution, is at least one year, but less than two years, in length; or 3) two years, if the longest program offered by the institution, is at least two years in length.

The Commission may extend the period for compliance noted above should it reasonably expect that, based upon the institution's progress toward meeting the Commission's standard for accreditation, the institution will come into full compliance within a reasonable timeframe. Should an institution deem that as a result of mitigating circumstances it is not able to comply with the standard for accreditation within the specified period of time, the institution may submit a written request to the Commission for additional time to come into compliance with the standard for accreditation. The request is to be submitted prior to the time limit for corrective action set forth by the Commission, provide a detailed explanation of the reasons why the institution cannot comply with the standard for accreditation within the designated time period, and demonstrate that the institution is making good progress in meeting the standard for accreditation. Following a review of the request, the Commission will make a determination as to whether the institution has based its request on valid reasons. If the Commission determines that the institution has substantiated good cause for not complying within the specified time period and is making good progress to come into compliance, the Commission will extend the period for achieving compliance and stipulate requirements for continuing oversight of the institution's accreditation during the extension.

Adopted 1997/Revised 2002