

***Gallatin College* of Montana State University**

A Vision for Two-Year Postsecondary Education in the Gallatin Valley

Two-year education is increasingly recognized as an important affordable option, particularly for the large number of individuals not currently participating in postsecondary education. For several years, but as recently as an April 5, 2009 Bozeman *Daily Chronicle* article, Gallatin Valley residents have voiced the need for expanding the two-year college and workforce development opportunities available locally. Bozeman and the Gallatin Valley, one of the state's largest and fastest growing communities has historically lacked two-year college options. Montana State University-Bozeman (MSU) is the only unit of the Montana University System (MUS) without a co-located two-year college in its mission or its structure.

Background

In response to MSU and the Gallatin Valley's need, MSU-Great Falls began to offer some professional and continuing education, workforce development, customized training, and AAS degree programs in Computer Information Technology fields in 1996. At the request of President Gamble, in 2004 MSU-Great Falls expanded offerings to include both developmental/remedial education coursework to serve MSU-Bozeman students, and applied academic programs. MSU-Great Falls has been extraordinarily helpful in providing curricula and two-year postsecondary expertise. As an institution, MSU-Great Falls is immersed in two-year education with a reputation for innovation, student-centeredness, and community responsiveness. Their foresight, support and commitment have resulted in substantial progress in two-year education that would not otherwise exist in the Gallatin Valley.

Although MSU-Great Falls' operation in Bozeman has been successful with full enrollment in three degree programs and developmental courses in Math, English, and the first year seminar, there is demand for a more extensive two-year college mission in the Gallatin Valley. Currently, in Fall 2009, the COT in Bozeman is serving 290 FTE (~ 776 headcount) MSU-Bozeman students in developmental education and applied degree and certificate programs. Success and retention rates for MSU-Bozeman students admitted on academic probation and required to take developmental coursework taught by the COT have improved. On the workforce side, state-level data, anecdotal data, and Gallatin Valley focus groups confirm demands for skilled workers in many sectors, particularly in healthcare and light manufacturing. In fact, workforce shortages in some healthcare areas are affecting the ability to provide services in the Gallatin Valley. Pathways for local high school graduates who are interested in workforce programs or are not academically prepared to start college are virtually non-existent in the Gallatin Valley. Further, it has been recognized in Montana that fully deploying the two-year college mission is a promising strategy that can be undertaken to get more Montanans to go to college and to complete a college degree. For reasons of cost effectiveness and affordability, opportunities for a different student population, and community responsiveness, two-year college programs must be expanded to better meet the needs of the Gallatin Valley.

The knowledge base and resulting ability of the Bozeman campus to meet these needs has grown significantly over the past decade. Beginning in the mid-1990s, the Bozeman operation has relied significantly on the content and pedagogical expertise of MSU-Great Falls. The COT in Bozeman has developed local two-year expertise as it has slowly expanded its programs. At the same time, the

distance from Great Falls matters – in time expended, responsiveness, and in the perception of ownership. The economy is different as well—both for students who are turning to two-year postsecondary educational opportunities, and for a tight state budget. Great Falls residents have expressed some frustration in stretching their already limited resources to serve the Gallatin Valley. Further, the faculty and staff of the COT in Bozeman recognize they serve a different demographic with different workforce needs. The COT in Bozeman Advisory Board has expressed the belief that there would be greater local “buy-in” if the college was a local effort in and for the Gallatin Valley. Its organizational structure, its staffing and its functions, have evolved toward a more independent, locally-guided and locally accountable entity.

Vision for Two-Year Postsecondary Education in the Gallatin Valley

The success of the COT in Bozeman does not reside solely in MSU-Great Falls. This effort grew out of collaboration and use of existing resources – some within MSU and some recruited locally by MSU-Great Falls, and still others that are delivered via distance from the MSU-Great Falls. MSU has its own expertise, resources, and community connections that provide a unique environment for the incubation of two-year education. In fact, it was through the close collaborative efforts of both MSU and MSU-Great Falls staff that the COT in Bozeman has succeeded. While other communities in the state also have argued the need for two-year education, the Gallatin Valley differs significantly in that it already has an institution of the MUS within the community and is the largest economic hub of the state without its own two-year college.

A key concept of two-year education is local responsiveness and control. Combined with the existing resources available through MSU, it is evident that effective and efficient two-year offerings in the Gallatin Valley, responsive to the community and the issues it faces, would best be closely integrated with MSU-Bozeman. MSU offers physical, human and fiscal resources a two-year college in the Gallatin Valley could utilize if it were affiliated more directly, an existing student population more likely to persist to completion with expanded two-year options, and an investment and engagement from the local community with an established brand, presence and reputation. A partnership with and transition to MSU-Bozeman makes sense for the Gallatin Valley in that it offers programmatic and pedagogic expertise, efficiency and sharing of resources, expanded programs, better quality services for students, and an active partnership for program articulation and transfer (other examples of why a transitional partnership with MSU makes sense are included in the attached talking points).

There are distinct differences between the educational approaches of a comprehensive, PhD granting residential university and those of a community college – one not better than the other, but different. MSU-Bozeman’s reputation and experience is as a nationally known, academically rigorous, research university. The vision for two-year postsecondary education in the Gallatin Valley therefore needs to be one that utilizes the resources of the larger university, but retains the values, approaches and identity of the community college. While benefits will be realized with an organizational and infrastructural partnership with MSU, a two-year college in the Gallatin Valley, named here ***Gallatin College of Montana State University***, can only be successful if the following characteristics and design are assured:

1. *Gallatin College* of Montana State University should be an integrated college within the structure of MSU-Bozeman. However, its integration should be for internal resource sharing and operational efficiencies and not necessarily educational approaches. Therefore, the College’s organizational structure will differ from the other colleges within MSU in that it would:
 - a. Be branded separately and with more independent distinction than a traditional college within the University, hence the title *Gallatin College*;

- b. Be led by an executive-level position with sufficient authority and independence to direct the community college;
 - c. Have appropriate faculty and staff employment guidelines for the College's mission;
 - d. Have a streamlined curriculum approval and review process appropriate to the College's mission; and
 - e. Receive a budget allocation through the University process, but have an internal committee for alignment of budget allocation and college planning.
2. Externally, in the longer term, *Gallatin College* will be branded and function as a comprehensive community college. It will:
- a. Develop a dedicated campus/facility located with proximity to MSU, even potentially on MSU property, yet separate enough to encourage and facilitate access;
 - b. Build from MSU's reputation, but have a unique brand and promotional materials;
 - c. Be guided by a local advisory board comprised of community and regional leaders with an investment and interest in two-year education;
 - d. Submit substantive change documents and seek approval for expanded mission from the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities; and
 - e. Be accredited through MSU-Bozeman's campus accreditation process.
3. Finally, *Gallatin College* will offer the major components of the community college mission and be structured to match the two-year college design in Montana. It will:
- a. Serve as the regional hub for partnerships with Valley secondary education districts to offer a full array of high school to college and ABE/GED to college programs.
 - b. Be an open admissions institution;
 - c. Have a tuition, fee and state support structure similar to that of other two-year institutions in the state;
 - d. Provide all developmental/remedial coursework for Gallatin, Park, and surrounding counties;
 - e. Offer workforce development degree and certificate programs (AAS and CAS) in response to community needs; and
 - f. Offer a limited Montana University System Core, Associate of Arts, and Associate of Science degrees to accommodate students intending to transfer to MSU or any other four-year institution;

This is the vision for *Gallatin College* of Montana State University. While it will take a continuation of the significant planning, passion, innovation, collaboration, resources and time that have been the hallmark of the two-year effort in the Gallatin Valley, the administrative transfer is attainable in a one horizon and is a necessary step for the future delivery of the full two-year mission in the Gallatin Valley.

Talking Points
Why a Transition to MSU-Bozeman makes sense

- No or fewer ‘turf’ issues as **part of one institution**.
- Greater access to **resources and facilities**—we’re seeking efficiency for taxpayers.
 - MSU has a bigger pool of resources and extensive facilities given its comprehensive mission
 - Infrastructure/Efficiency – IT, phones, mail could come through MSU.
 - Classrooms with adequate technology.
- Ability to utilize MSU’s resources for the development of or access to **new facilities** for two-year programming.
 - MSU currently owns land that would be appropriate for a commuter campus, yet close enough to MSU to continue to serve MSU’s developmental student population.
 - Resources and facilities are local and currently under-utilized in evenings and weekends.
 - Utilize MSU facilities and classrooms for some courses and programs in the evenings and on weekends. This partnership allows for more affordable initial facilities/campus, ensuring equal access and priority with other MSU Colleges.
- **Personnel Resources.**
 - Adequate funding for services and support staff.
 - Salaries commensurate with cost of living in Bozeman.
 - Adjunct faculty: Wage parity with MSU adjuncts given it’s the same labor pool and a competitive market (both pay and benefits issues).
- **MSU services made available for students**—housing for two-year program students is a good way to entice students into two year programs.
 - Local student services—Registrar, Financial Aid, Cashier, Admissions
 - Advantage of living in residence halls. There are many students in the state who seek the applied and/or developmental nature of a two-year college, but want the traditional college experience of on-campus living in to go with it. The co-located institutions can offer that experience to students, drawing more students to the two-year system.
- **Student-friendly** movement within MSU rather than between MSU and the COT.
 - Identical academic calendar and dates for tuition payment, drop/add deadlines, etc.
 - Reduces current confusion for students over MSU-MSU COT Great Falls-Bozeman COT issue.
 - Eliminates frustration and inefficiency for transfer from MSU to workforce programs.
- **Retention initiative** for MSU students.
 - Best-practice programming for developmental education. Bozeman has learned a great deal from Great Falls over the past decade and especially since 2003.
 - Increased access since so many students in Montana start at a four-year institution and ‘reverse transfer’ to a two year institution. This would allow for ‘retention’ of students who then transfer to a one- or two-year program. Co-located COTs exist and rely on four-year universities for many services and supports.
 - Two year/four year partnerships—increases and promotes access.
- **Greater Gallatin Valley buy-in**
 - Community investment and community accountability.
 - Legislators—currently rely on Great Falls/Cascade County legislators to ascertain resources to meet the workforce needs in the Gallatin Valley—they aren’t invested in the Gallatin Valley.

- Take advantage of **MSU's brand/reputation**.
 - MSU has a long established presence and reputation in the community.
 - Bozeman also has a strong appeal to non-residents. Although we don't seek to 'meet their needs' per se, budget issues promote developing programs that attract non-resident students.