



MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY – GREAT FALLS
COLLEGE OF TECHNOLOGY

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January 10, 2012

Dr. John Cech
Deputy Commission of Two-Year Education
Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education
PO Box 203201
Helena, MT 59620-3201

Dear Dr. Cech:

Please find accompanying this letter, the Montana State University – Great Falls College of Technology plan for attainment of the comprehensive community college mission in accordance with the College!Now initiative. This college, as a stand-alone college of technology, has all of the basic elements of the comprehensive community college mission and is ready to refine its work to increase its effectiveness with that mission and to make more it visible and understandable to all.

You will find in this report, our plan to attain the full mission of the comprehensive community college, and how it is embedded within our Strategic Plan and operational plan known as Common Ground. The College has been diligently working to align its operations with the comprehensive mission, while deliberately engaging the local high school district to ensure a solid connection between K-12 and the College to better serve the citizens of Great Falls and the surrounding area. Also, you will see goals to further engage and strengthen the paths MSU-Great Falls College of Technology students have to continue their educations at the baccalaureate level. Since the College has been able to accomplish all of the basic elements of the comprehensive community college mission, it is now focused on the following three areas:

- A. Rebranding of the Colleges of Technology, which is part of College!Now, will assist in ensuring a wider understanding of that mission around the state. This rebranding is important to MSU-Great Falls' focus on articulating what it does and can do under its mission.
- B. Expand and strengthen dual enrollment, college preparation, and curricular alignment with K-12.
- C. Strengthen transfer avenues from the Colleges of Technology to the state's baccalaureate granting institutions so the pathways are clear and consistent for students who start at the Colleges of Technology, attain their AA or AS degree, and complete a baccalaureate degree

Also included with this letter is a brief version of the College's most recent "report card" on the Core Indicators it monitors in reference to its Strategic Plan.

Thank you for this opportunity to present the College's plan and supporting documents as we move forward with the mission of the comprehensive community college. I am excited to continue the work at MSU -Great Falls on College!Now. Please feel free to contact me with any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gwen Joseph".

Dr. Gwen Joseph
Interim Dean/CEO

changing lives - achieving dreams

Our Mission is to foster the success of our students and their communities through innovative, flexible learning opportunities for people of all ages, backgrounds, and aspirations resulting in self-fulfillment and competitiveness in an increasingly global society.

Mission Expansion Plan



College!Now

January 2012

MSU-Great Falls continues to demonstrate its commitment to the comprehensive community college mission as envisioned for all of the state's Colleges of Technology. MSU-Great Falls historically has embraced and embodied all of the elements of the comprehensive community college mission. **Our four core themes of Academic Preparation, Workforce Development, Transfer Preparation, and Community Development provide the institutional framework for our programming and services.** As evidenced below, we took great strides in our strategic planning process to ensure that we: created a vision, established a mission, and identified values that traditionally support a progressive comprehensive community college environment.

Vision: In the next decade, MSU – Great Falls will play a leading role in transforming the lives of our students, their communities, and the economic prosperity of Montana by responding to learner and community needs through the use of partnerships, innovation, outreach, and technology.

Mission: Our Mission is to foster the success of our students and their communities through innovative, flexible learning opportunities for people of all ages, backgrounds, and aspirations resulting in self-fulfillment and competitiveness in an increasingly global society.

Values:

- **Accountability:** we ensure our decisions are data-informed and grounded in the best interest of our students and their communities.
- **Integrity:** we value civic responsibility, high academic standards, ethical practices, and the courage to act.
- **Lifelong Learning:** we believe education is a lifelong necessity and commitment; we personify this belief by engaging and reengaging students from all generations in learning opportunities.
- **Respect:** we value differences and treat others with civility, encouraging open and honest communication.
- **Responsiveness:** we recognize and act upon opportunities to be innovative, flexible, and adaptable to our students' and communities' needs.
- **Student Success:** we are dedicated to student success and achievement; we strive to meet the educational needs of our students and their communities.

Comprehensive Community College Mission

MSU-Great Falls College of Technology's 2009-2013 Strategic Plan, with its overarching strategic priorities, guides our efforts and actions in the pursuit of realizing our vision and mission. The plan is simple, and closely aligns with both the strategic plan of the Board of Regents and the University System's two-year education agenda, College!Now. The plan currently includes four priorities that illustrate ways in which we can improve our delivery of the comprehensive community college mission. Each priority guides the College's divisions in a unified effort to move the College forward. These priorities are:

1. Increase the rate at which students succeed in developmental coursework (primarily Math and English), enroll in and successfully complete their first college- level courses in the same disciplines.

2. Increase the number of students participating in and completing programs that result in their successful transfer to a Bachelor degree program.
3. Increase the number of adult students participating in and earning a post-secondary credential.
4. Increase the number of high school students participating in early college activities leading to college credit.

Common Ground: Operationalizing the Strategic Plan

The strategic plan calls for MSU-Great Falls to work closely with partners in education, business, and industry to enable more students to succeed in achieving their educational goals. The plan is a living document reviewed each year to ensure the college's efforts are innovative, adaptable, and relevant to identified needs. This provides a foundation for a better future for the students of MSU – Great Falls, its communities, and the state of Montana.

MSU-Great Falls also employs an institutional operational plan, *Common Ground*, that focuses on specific goals and tasks undertaken by the various units of the College to achieve our strategic plan goals and performance targets. *Common Ground* is a campus-wide initiative designed to elevate our students to a higher level of achievement by strengthening the 21st Century learning experience. To reach these aspirations and continue our momentum, we must now strive to bring about deep change in the beliefs, norms, and structures of interactions between faculty, staff, and students by: setting measurable goals and targets; focusing on in-depth professional development; establishing cross-functional teams to tackle major challenges; and cultivating a safe climate for innovation.

GOAL 1: SET AND ACHIEVE INSTITUTIONAL AND STUDENT SUCCESS GOALS

We will establish clear, measurable goals for improved student success and institutional effectiveness. These will be communicated broadly and measured consistently.

Task A. Establish a new indicator that directly measures students' success through the analysis of successful course completion, looking at the percent of students who earned a C- or higher in all coursework.

Task B. Use historical data, comparative peer data, and aspirational targets, to establish FY12 goals for the College's Core Indicators of Institutional Effectiveness. Communicate these via a special focus IR newsletter during early fall term, with continued communication through a variety of modes (blurb in Weekly News, video screens, Facebook, etc.).

Task C. Identify the "Top 10 Underperforming Courses" with the smallest percentage of successful student completions, and the primary gatekeeper courses with below-average rate of student success (institutional average in FY10 is 77%), and establish multi-year goals for improvement in these rates.

Task D. Create and maintain a SharePoint site where institutional reports (e.g., core indicator reports, enrollment reports, survey reports, etc.) can be shared with the campus community. Institutional Research will also start a documentation process for all reports so that any data used in reports can be replicated.

GOAL 2: “CLOSE THE LOOP” ON THE ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING

We will systematically align institutional/instructional expectations, instructional activities, and the assessment of student learning, and institutionalize a process for capturing and analyzing student learning data.

Task A. Finalize/verify the establishment of common student learning outcomes (course objectives) for all courses at the College (e.g., all ANTH 100 courses have common outcomes regardless of instructor or modality of delivery).

Task B. Identify and/or design common assessment protocols for measuring student learning on the established learning outcomes (e.g., all ANTH 100 courses would employ the same assessment protocols for measuring student achievement of the common learning outcomes within that course).

Task C. Utilizing an institutionally adopted format (e.g., Phase IV Form), create rubrics for assessing the various levels of student learning on common learning outcomes for every course and program offered at the College.

Task D. Research, identify, and employ a college-wide system for storing student learning outcomes data and longitudinally tracking those data to guide instructional improvement and target needed interventions to improve student learning and success.

Task E. Implement the process for conducting assessments, recording student achievement of learning outcomes, and reporting those results.

GOAL 3: STRENGTHEN STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES AND PROGRAMS

We will establish intrusive student support mechanisms that will: create social relationships for students; help students clarify aspirations and enhance their commitment; develop the “College Know-How” in students; and help make college life feasible for our students.

Task A. Catalyzed by the establishment of a new advising center, redesign the advising process so that it is intrusive, streamlined, and personalized. The new advising process should be designed to utilize all campus resources, including faculty, as well as be tied to a student early alert system.

Task B. Building from the COLS 102 Pilot Course, design and implement a mandatory student success course, tied to orientation and advising, for all students new to the College. This course should include components modeled after best practices such as the development of an academic and career plan to be utilized in the advising process.

Task C. Improve the “front door” experience through innovations including a mandatory, extended, and expanded student orientation, tied to advising and the student success course that includes such things as orientation to placement testing, financial literacy education.

GOAL 4: ENHANCE AND STRENGTHEN THE LEARNING PROCESS THROUGH CURRICULAR AND PEDAGOGICAL REFORMS

Teaching is central to our mission, and thus it plays the largest role in whether or not our students succeed. We will reform and innovate in those areas with the greatest need and potential for increases student success.

Task A. Building from current research, reform and redesign the developmental education offerings to increase the percent of students who are successfully remediated for college-level coursework and at the rate in which they succeed in this process.

Task B. Implement enhanced instruction/ learning models and other reforms, including, but not limited to Supplemental Instruction, learning communities, paired courses, and/or contextualized learning, to increase the rate of student success in gatekeeper and “Top 10 Underperforming Courses.”

Task C. Establish mechanisms for predictive analysis of student success and to target intervention. This includes the establishment of a common grade reporting system, mandatory student attendance reporting/tracking, and frequent student progress feedback (e.g., quarterly grades or academic progress reports).

Task D. Increase student preparedness for online and technical courses through the development of a systematic means to evaluate incoming students’ basic computer skills, a remedial basic computer skills course, and by evaluating the current Introduction to Computer course (CAPP 120) in order to modify its curricula based upon program needs.

Task E. Research and develop a Certificate of General Studies credential and curriculum, and shepherd it through the approval process for implementation.

Task F. Research and develop a certificate program or credential to recognize the completion of pre-requisite coursework for Health Sciences Programs.

GOAL 5: STRENGTHEN EXTERNAL LINKAGES WITH K12 AND UNIVERSITY PARTNERS

We will work to improve the relationships and interconnectivity between the College and our primary partners in the K12 and four-year university sectors.

Task A. K12 - through partnership with the Great Falls Public Schools, hire and deploy pathways advisors to: offer college placement test orientation and testing in the high schools; assist with college and financial aid applications and literacy; and provide orientation and support services to college, college planning, and dual credit

Task B. Universities - establish more formalized articulation agreements to provide opportunities for general education students intending to transfer that lead them effectively into a program of study early on.

GOAL 6: IDENTIFY KEY POINTS OF SUCCESS AND CHALLENGE OUR STUDENTS FACE

We will establish interdisciplinary teams to track cohorts of entering students (first-time and transfers) along the continuum of initial engagement to student success to identify where students face irrevocable challenges in their educational journey.

Task A. Utilizing AACC’s Voluntary Framework of Accountability (VFA), identify key success points along the continuum of student success (e.g. completing developmental education, completing the first college-level course, achieving 15, 30, etc. college credits). Create cohort data sets of key student types (e.g. pre-health students, students of color, transfer students, traditional and non-traditional, etc.) and have teams follow their progress to identify areas where students struggle.

Task B. Taking the findings from above, make recommendations for improvements to services, processes or protocols to the appropriate individual or areas. Implement changes to improve student outcomes along the continuum of student success.

Although not specifically delineated in our strategic plan or specified in *Common Ground*, MSU-Great Falls is ready to move forward with the rebranding and renaming effort that will further support all of our initiatives and goals. To our campus, this is the biggest area of work in establishing our institution as a comprehensive community college.

Goals for 2012 and Beyond

As MSU-Great Falls continue to move forward with realizing the comprehensive community college mission, we will continue to focus on the following three goals:

- A. Rebranding of the Colleges of Technology, which is part of College!Now will assist in ensuring a wider understanding of that mission around the state. This rebranding is important to MSU-Great Falls’ focus on articulating what it does and can do under its mission.
- B. Expand and strengthen dual enrollment, college preparation, and curricular alignment with K-12.
- C. Strengthen transfer avenues from the Colleges of Technology to the state’s baccalaureate granting institutions so the pathways are clear and consistent for students who start at the Colleges of Technology, attain their AA or AS degree, and complete a baccalaureate degree.

Challenges and Resources:

The expanding and strengthen dual enrollment, college preparation, and curricular alignment with K-12 are challenging but promising in that our Superintendent of Public Instruction has led from her office with the adoption of the Common Core Standards that are being widely accepted in many other states as well. The Standards lend themselves well to a smooth transition to college, and over time we believe they will assist us in curricular alignment that translates to fewer students leaving high school and needing remediation in college in our state. Our local work in dual enrollment and especially with our new Pathways Advisor initiative is part of our innovative plan to encourage higher college-going rates in our community, lower remediation rates, and increase the number of students leaving high school with college credit as well.

To bolster the confidence our constituency has with the realization of the comprehensive community college mission, transfer avenues and clear connections with baccalaureate degrees are needed. As we continue to focus on this locally, we know wider support and interest is needed within the state’s baccalaureate-granting institutions such that students transferring from the Colleges of Technology with

an AA or AS degree have a smooth transition. Many of the technical barriers that have existed in this arena have already been removed or mitigated through Common Course Numbering and the creation of an application transfer vehicle between Registrar's Offices. Working on understanding and removing curricular barriers are our next steps.

Resources needed to accomplish what the MSU-Great Falls community has identified include:

- Funding to assist with rebranding elements (website redesign, signage, logo redesign, updating stationary, marketing materials, business cards, badges, etc.).
- Human resources to work on items A and B above, including release time for faculty and staff time needed to work through curricular alignment with secondary school partners as well as university system partners.

Strategic Plan Results: Mission Expansion

- In response to the need to increase success in developmental course work, the Department of Arts and Sciences was restructured and renamed (Summer 2011) to more clearly reflect its mission. The newly formed Division of Developmental Education and Transfer oversees the general education courses at the College and now has a stronger focus on success in developmental education courses as well as oversight of the Learning Center.
- In May of 2011, MSU – Great Falls initiated the movement to create a common and clear pricing strategy for dual credit/dual enrollment. At their August meeting, the Montana Board of Regents adopted a common application process and pricing structure for dual credit/dual enrollment students at Montana's Colleges of Technology, community Colleges, MSU – Northern and UM Western.
- In close collaboration with Great Falls Public Schools, MSU – Great Falls and the district established an innovative agreement to allow home school students in Great Falls to access dual credit/dual enrollment courses at the College at the discounted price reserved for students in the public schools.
- To enhance and strengthen the transfer process, the College has researched and designed a Certificate of General Studies that will go before the Montana Board of Regents for formal approval in March 2012.
- In efforts to strengthen pathways for students intending to transfer for a bachelors program to the affiliated campuses of Montana State University, MSU – Great Falls accomplished several milestones. The College entered into an innovative, new partnership with MSU – Northern that included the creation of a shared academic advisor and transfer coordinator. This position has been funded by MSU – Bozeman for three years.
- MSU – Great Falls hosted a summit in conjunction with MSU Billings faculty, staff, and administrators to explore new opportunities for transfer programming.
- MSU – Great Falls presented to MSU University Council and conducted site visits to the colleges at Montana State University to build new partnerships around transfer programming.
- MSU – Great Falls, recognizing the need to support the many adult veterans who are pursuing their educational dreams at the College, established the Veterans Center that serves military veterans from all branches.
- Great Falls Public Schools Adult Basic Literacy Education, which serves both high school age and adult learners, has seen a significant increase in numbers of attendees and numbers of GED

graduates after moving to the MSU – Great Falls campus. A record number of their GED completers have enrolled in the College.

- The Montana Institute on Educational Technology (MIET), which serves the professional development needs of K12 teachers, began in 2003 and is now a week-long annual event. The 2011 MIET featured 116 Educational Technology classes and keynotes from both Apple and Microsoft.
- In a culmination of several years of conversation and planning, MSU-Great Falls and the Great Falls Public Schools entered into another agreement to share two full-time Pathways Advisor positions that are designed as the vehicle to increase the college-going rate of youth in the Great Falls Public Schools. The two Pathways Advisors were hired and started their work in the fall of 2011, with half their time spent physically in their respective high schools and half spent working with adult populations through the ABLE program. The three main work areas outlined are: Dual enrollment, College Preparation (including prevention of college remediation), and Career Planning. The partnership is in place for three years to allow time for assessment of the accomplishment of the goals of the positions.

Please see the following document for MSU-Great Falls most recent “report card” on the Core Indicators it monitors in reference to its Strategic Plan.

