

Montana Energy Institute (MEI)

An MUS Initiative- Prepared May 2012

Background

Montana's history is one of the discovery and use of natural resources. The future of Montana is again being dramatically shaped by its natural resources: in particular by the increased demand for State energy resources including petroleum, coal, natural gas, solar, geothermal, hydroelectric, and wind. It is imperative that the State lead in guiding the thoughtful stewardship of these resources.

The Montana Energy Institute (MEI) will promote and conduct research, education, and workforce development in support of Montana's energy resources. The Institute will be administered on the Montana Tech campus, with work conducted under a theme of collaboration, by all appropriate MUS units. Research will be focused on MUS strengths that include, but are not limited to, natural resource engineering, power engineering, geosciences, environmental science, restoration ecology, natural resource conservation, wildlife management, resource business management, environmental policy and economics, and energy related workforce development.

Institute Structure and Partners

The MEI will be administratively located on the Montana Tech campus. Historically Montana Tech has led the State in producing graduates and research that support development of the state's energy resources and in the environmental management of coal, gas, and oil resources and research and education related to remediation, restoration, ecology, and business practices regarding energy resources. In this context Montana Tech is highly qualified in providing leadership for the Institute and in leading the collaborative MUS consortium.

Initially the MEI staff will consist of a Director and an Administrative Assistant. The MEI will establish an inaugural board of MUS campus administrators, faculty, and researchers to quickly develop an external advisory body that includes academic, Federal, State, and industrial representation to advise and guide the MEI in determining research, educational, and workforce needs, and to provide guidance in funding priorities. In addition, the Board will be expected to develop a consortium of State agencies, academic affiliates, and private sector partners to leverage State funding by providing additional funding and research expertise. Opportunities for partnering may also include providing student career opportunities, input on workforce needs, and the use of specialized research equipment.

Energy research, education, and work force development currently occurs throughout the state with a number of individual efforts and organized centers. The MEI will provide program focus for leveraging MUS and State research and educational expertise related to energy. Work will be conducted at existing statewide MUS or partner locations. This collaboration will also include developing graduate and research programs to leverage MUS course and degree offerings and develop new inter-unit courses and degree offerings where needed.