

ACADEMIC PRIORITIES AND PLANNING STATEMENTS

DATE: August 18, 2020

TO: Montana Board of Regents

CC: Commissioner of Higher Education
Chief Academic Officers

FROM: Brock Tessman, Deputy Commissioner for Academic, Research, and Student Affairs

RE: 2020/21 Academic Priorities and Planning Statements

Contained in this memorandum are the 2020/21 Academic Priority and Planning Statement submissions from Montana University System campuses and Montana's community colleges. These statements are meant to inform the Montana Board of Regents regarding institutions' academic directions, internal academic prioritization processes, and upcoming academic proposals.

- **Dawson Community College**
- **Flathead Valley Community College**
- **Miles Community College**
- **Montana State University Billings**
- **Montana State University Bozeman**
- **Great Falls College Montana State University**
- **Montana State University Northern**
- **The University of Montana Missoula**
- **Montana Technological University**
- **The University of Montana-Western**
- **Helena College University of Montana**

Montana University System
ACADEMIC PRIORITIES AND PLANNING STATEMENT

DAWSON COMMUNITY COLLEGE
ACADEMIC PRIORITIES AND PLANNING STATEMENT
Academic Year 2020/21

A high-level overview of your institution's current academic priorities (instruction and research), with a focus on how those priorities fit the institutional mission and current strategic plan.

Overview

Dawson Community College's MUS academic priorities for 2020-2021 are to strengthen our academic priorities by increasing our course delivery through online teaching using hybrid, HyFlex, online and face-to-face delivery modes, and continue to provide training and support for faculty, students, and staff if the need for distance and remote classes occurs due to aCOVID-19. Dawson Community College will also engage in high impact practices (HIP) review as part of the engagement of the Regent Scholar from DCC by promoting deep learning as we increase student engagement and student success. In addition, DCC intends to increase regional high school partnerships, extend our program offerings in regional communities, and increase the number of two-plus-two transfer agreements with other MUS institutions, especially Montana Tech.

Specific

Academic priorities specific to the college's three divisions are:

- General Studies:
 - Concentrate on growing enrollment and retention
 - Continue exploring transfer opportunities
 - Continue remote offering with Lewistown partnership
 - Developing and expanding guided pathways for degree programs
- Trades:
 - Continue to offer Welding, Corrosion, and Agriculture programs. The Trades Division programs continue to be reviewed and expanded with several additional program focus in developmental stages expected to go forward in the 2020-21 academic year
- Online Teaching (In response to COVID-19):
 - Instructor training and sharing innovate teaching practices to meet student success
 - Promote the use of synchronous learning tools
 - Expanded instructional strategies and universal design
 - Participate in ongoing professional development and support (hybrid, HyFlex)

A brief description of the process used to determine these academic priorities.

At DCC, new programs are planned and developed based upon local and regional employment needs. Several program related information is obtained from the President's office as the President engages with different stakeholders across the region, community members who have a commitment to supporting our institution, local economic development board, and the Montana Chamber of Commerce. In addition, the academic divisions use faculty meetings, program advisory committees, DCC alumnus and contacts with employers to determine more specific academic priorities.

A description highlighting new academic or research programing that your institution hopes to pursue in the coming year, with a focus on how those new programs will support your academic priorities.

Several applied and certification programs are in the developmental stages, with proposals expected to go forward in the 2020-21 academic year. The development of the AAS in Agriculture with multiple options will help meet technical industry needs in range management, agricultural research technology, and agricultural business management. This program is a natural extension of the work the division of agriculture have been doing at DCC all these years. This proposal has been endorsed by the advisory board.

The development of the Geospatial Information Sciences and Technology support the academic priorities of applied programs at DCC, while specifically designed for students planning to establish themselves in the GIS practice and build hands-on technical skills required for careers within the private, local, state, and federal agencies

The development and full completion of the above-mentioned programs and others will be depended on the uncertainty with COVID-19.

If/where applicable, a high-level overview of areas that will be somewhat less prioritized, including any areas in which your institution will consider disinvestment, moratorium, and/or termination.

During the 2019-20 academic year, a major catalog review was completed, and programs were identified for review based on trends in enrollment, retention and completions. That process resulted in putting two programs in moratorium.

Additional details you find relevant for the BOR to consider as they make decisions about “Requests to Plan.”

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Flathead Valley Community College
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FVCC's academic priorities are driven by our mission to support student success and community needs. We keep our course offerings aligned with the MUS CCN database as much as possible in order to support seamless transfer for students. In addition, we work closely with the community, through active advisory boards and other community groups and organizations, to identify current and upcoming workforce needs.

Currently, FVCC is working with the Kalispell Chamber and the Flathead Valley Biosciences Industry Task Force to develop a Biotechnology Technician CTS program. In addition, due to a high demand for the skill, FVCC is looking into developing a Central Sterile Processing Technician CTS program. Still in the beginning phases is a project we intend to pursue that creates a 2+2 articulation agreement for an AAS program that articulates to a bachelor's program. We are looking at this option for a Career and Technical Education Teacher Prep program and an Engineering Tech program.

This year we plan to review programs in our business division with the goal of either updating curriculum or reducing the number of business programs we offer.

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Miles Community College

ACADEMIC PRIORITIES AND PLANNING STATEMENT

Academic Year 2020/21

Miles Community College

The academic 2020/21 year at Miles Community College (MCC) is focused on academic priorities that align with our community college mission to prepare students for success and provides opportunities for lifelong learning through quality programs, community outreach, workforce training and partnerships.

The process MCC utilizes to determine academic programs includes input from faculty, staff, advisory boards, local community and regional industry feedback. This is most recently illustrated with MCC's actions to respond to local, regional and statewide demand for meat processing program and trainings. These efforts were brought forth from local meat processors, local residents and statewide organizations such as Montana Meat Processing Association, Farmers' Bureau, Farmers' Union to mention only a few. MCC is currently seeking with the support of many organizations, like those mentioned above, for grant funds to assist with offering a professional certificate program in Meat Processing that utilizes online and apprenticeship model from the Department of Agriculture and Perkins. Other examples of MCC's process to offer academic programs includes: review of programs and program prioritization process on a three to four year cycle (which includes our new general education core program started in 2019/20) and exploration of new or modifications of existing programs as dialog with faculty, staff, local organizations and/or industry demands illustrate opportunities for-credit or non-credit programs and/or workforce training.

Currently, for the 2020/21 academic year MCC is seeking to start the following academic certificates/programs:

- Professional meat processing certificate 25-29 credits pending grant applications.
- Partnerships with other industry, such as our partnership with Southeast Montana AHEC to offer CNA course for credits to their membership and partnership in credit and/or non-credit workforce training to support wind and solar energy industries (Next Era Energy) in eastern Montana area such as Colstrip, Rosebud and Custer Counties.
- Partnerships with Montana University System campus and/or community colleges to grow program access such as partnership with MSU Northern to MCC Automotive Tech Certificate prepares students to then enroll with MSU Northern the next year while still staying in Miles City to complete the MSU Northern Diesel Certificate.

- Other university campus base centers model are areas MCC is making steps to add with partnerships via GEER UP grants with FVCC with EMT and Paramedicine and Meat Processing. Montana Tech and MCC exploring areas with allied health and technical programs. MCC Phlebotomy certificate and Bismarck State College Medical Lab Tech all from the MCC campus partnership has grown over the last couple of years and is now working via National Science Foundation grant to expand and offer sonography.

MCC will be entering its fourth year after completing the Program Prioritization Review in 2017. Therefore our program reviews and program prioritization process will begin another cycle during 2020/21 academic year. This will certainly result in some program changes that include: program redesign, modifications, reduction in credit/course load for programs, and programs to be considered for disinvesting or put on moratorium.

MCC is focusing on expanding our “start here go anywhere” ideology to partner with industry and other higher education institutions to provide a full array of curriculum, programs and pathways to pursue education and training for the citizens of Miles City, eastern Montana to start and achieve their educational and career aspirations!

Montana University System
ACADEMIC PRIORITIES AND PLANNING STATEMENT

MSU Billings

ACADEMIC PRIORITIES AND PLANNING STATEMENT

Academic Year 2020/21

Overview of MSU Billings Current Academic Priorities

To meet the MSU Billings institutional mission of delivering a transformative education that empowers students from diverse backgrounds to succeed, MSU Billings will focus academic priorities on restructuring, online teaching and learning, and applied programs and research during the 2020-2021 academic year.

Restructuring efforts will include revising curriculum, administrative organization and procedures to address issues illuminated by the recent MSU Billings strategic program alignment process. In addition to the programs identified for moratorium, most programs will continue with a curricular review and likely revisions over the next year. A number of revisions including the BA in English and Minor in Native American Studies are anticipated to result in significant changes. Dr. Billie Kingfisher Jr. will join MSU Billings as a faculty member in Fall 2020 and will coordinate revisions to the Native American Studies minor. Restructuring efforts will have a focus on collaboration. These efforts will include strengthening synergies that exist between academic departments and student success divisions, reviewing and revising general-education curriculum with a focus on common themes and assessment, and reenvisioning advising through a collaborative assessment of student success models, revision of course-maps, and expanding access to various course modalities. These restructuring efforts directly support the MSU Billings mission and strategic plan with a particular focus on objectives 1.3 Elevate programmatic offerings to be responsive to student and community needs, 1.4 Reimagine general education to enhance student learning, and 2.2 Improve student retention and graduation rates.

Online teaching and learning efforts will include sharing innovation in teaching that is resulting from the faculty response to COVID-19. While MSU Billings is already a leader in online education, these changes, have extended the reach of online learning and MSU Billings sees great opportunity to promote the use of synchronous learning tools and expanded instructional strategies and universal design. Adapting best practices for disciplines such as those in scientific and health care fields has great potential to further support students and the region. During the summer of 2020, MSU Billings faculty had the opportunity to participate in professional development regarding best practices in Hybrid, HyFlex, Face to Face and Online learning. Additionally, the E-Learning department is developing ongoing professional development and support, including the designation of college-specific faculty fellows for the 2020-2021 academic year. Additional efforts include development of online student success resources, information, and academic support services. MSU Billings sees great potential for continued priorities in online teaching and learning to support students who work in our community and care for family members as well as addressing the needs of Eastern and Central Montana. These online teaching and learning efforts directly support the MSU Billings mission and strategic plan with a particular focus on objectives 1.1 Develop and implement best practice teaching techniques, 1.2 Enhance development opportunities to empower faculty as educators and scholars, 1.3 Elevate programmatic offerings to be responsive to student and community needs, 1.4 Reimagine general education to enhance student learning, and 2.2 Improve student retention and graduation rates.

Applied programs and research efforts will focus on interdisciplinary collaborations that support workforce development and strengthen Montana. One focus of these efforts will include enhancing and developing interdisciplinary programming and partnerships, as well as ways to foster and support research collaboration. Collaborative research initiatives are being led at the college level with a focus on leveraging faculty scholarship and community efforts. With the college and department level reorganization that occurred last year at MSU Billings, there is a great opportunity for examining intersections and common interests.

To determine academic priorities, MSU Billings requested input from academic divisions including college deans and academic directors, and used documents generated by the recent strategic program alignment

process. This information was synthesized into a draft, and final revisions to the document were made after further review by members of both academic and student success divisions.

New academic and research programming is being led at the college level with collaborative projects and initiatives that support applied programs and online teaching and learning. The Institute for Neurodiversity and Applied Behavior Analysis will bring together graduate-level faculty and students from mental health stakeholders from programs such as rehabilitation and human services, health care services, special education and psychology. In addition to providing space for clinical services, the institute will be a place for innovation, scholarship, and community. There will be opportunities for distance students to engage and for tele-health to support central and eastern Montana. The MSU Billings Center for Teaching and Learning will enter the program planning process with a request to plan in Spring 2021. A taskforce has been established with faculty, staff and student stakeholders to determine specific recommendations. The MSU Billings Center for Teaching and Learning will support academic priorities including collaboration for restructuring curriculum and programs and online teaching and learning.

Several applied programs are in the development stages, with proposals expected to go forward in the 2020-2021 academic year. The development of an AAS in General and Vascular Sonography will help meet employment needs in the Billings, MT area and in regional VA facilities because there is a significant need for Vascular Sonographers to scan our aging Veterans. The VA facility in Billings has offered to be a clinical site for our students. This program is a natural extension of the existing Radiologic Technology Program and complements the existing focus on applied programs at MSU Billings. The development of a “bridge program” for Associate’s of Science Nursing degree students to start taking the general education classes required for the RN-to-BSN program will support students planning to immediately transfer into the RN-to-BSN program upon successful completion of their ASN degree and passing the NCLEX. The development of an Interdisciplinary Minor will support academic priorities to focus on restructuring and online teaching and learning. It will be led by the College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences as a collaboration among colleges and will include participation from International Studies and the Honors Program. The Masters of Arts in Art Therapy and Counseling supports the academic priorities of applied programs within the MSU Billings graduate-level scholarship areas of focus in mental and behavioral health as well as online teaching and learning. This program is expected to proceed with a request to plan in spring or summer of 2021.

Two colleges will pursue restructuring within the 2020-2021 academic year. The College of Education will pursue reorganization with a proposal to split into two departments with one focused on special education. The College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences will pursue internal departmental restructuring based on strategic program alignment outcomes.

Areas that will be somewhat less prioritized include outcomes from the MSU Billings Strategic Program Alignment process which after intensive review, identified a number of programs to be phased out across all colleges. Programs were identified for intensive review based on trends in enrollment, retention and completions. In this process, concentrations, options, emphases and non-degree plans of study were included as distinct units of analysis. This means that while the outcomes include more than 80 “programs” identified to be phased out, almost half of these will be processed as internal changes to continuing degree programs. Termination paperwork will be completed in Fall 2020, and the outcomes from the Strategic Program Alignment Process will be a major focus of priorities surrounding restructuring curriculum, administrative organization, and a focus on online teaching and learning.

Additional relevant details for the MUS Board of Regents include some additional context for this year’s academic priorities and planning. MSU Billings is at a transition point with both the past and coming year

focused on restructuring and reducing programming that is not sustainably addressing student needs. Future priorities are expected to include more balanced, but strategic, growth initiatives. The strategic program alignment process undertaken by MSU Billings over the past two years was a major driver of the current academic priorities. In this process, a faculty-committee generated framework was used to guide the classification of programs as maintain, integrate/invigorate, or phase out; programs were further assessed systematically and flagged for intensive review based on enrollment, retention and completion trends. Together these processes culminated in identification of programs that will be maintained or phased out, as well as identification of needed revisions. The outcomes of this process include completing the termination/moratorium process, and revising programmatic offerings to be responsive to student and community needs.

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ACADEMIC PRIORITIES AND PLANNING STATEMENT

Montana State University
ACADEMIC PRIORITIES AND PLANNING STATEMENT
Academic Year 2020/21

The Montana University System (MUS) Board of Regents (BOR) has requested additional context to support the decisions it makes regarding “Requests to Plan” for new academic programs and research centers/institutes (<https://mus.edu/borpol/bor300/303-1.pdf>). Toward that end, the BOR asks that, each year, institutions submit a report, of no more than three pages, eight weeks prior to the July BOR Meeting. This report should include:

- A high-level overview of an institution’s current academic priorities (instruction and research), with a focus on how those priorities fit the institutional mission and current strategic plan.
- A brief description of the process used determine these academic priorities.
- A description highlighting new academic or research programming that an institution hopes to pursue in the coming year, with a focus on how those new programs will support academic priorities.
- If/where applicable, a high-level overview of areas that will be somewhat less prioritized, including any areas in which an institution will consider disinvestment, moratorium, and/or termination.
- Additional details relevant for the BOR to consider as it makes decisions about “Requests to Plan.”

Separately, please fill in the [Forthcoming Academic Proposals](#) spreadsheet describing academic programs or research centers/institutes anticipated to proceed to the “Request to Plan” portion of the approval process in the next year. Please include contact information for a campus lead on each anticipated proposal. A proposal need not be listed in this report to proceed to the “Request to Plan” stage. However, listing proposals likely to move forward is an appreciated courtesy intended to encourage early communication and collaboration.

Montana State University

Montana State University is a comprehensive doctorate-granting university with very high research activity. MSU’s more than 16,700 students pursue Associates, Bachelors, Masters and Doctoral degrees and options in areas as diverse as Engineering, Nursing, Photography, Environmental Sciences, History, Criminology, Literature, Education, Business, Welding, and Landscape Design, to name just a few. MSU’s Strategic Plan guides decision-making, planning and investments in all areas of the university but is particularly important for prioritizing new academic programs. MSU has an extensive proposal review process that provides opportunities for input from departmental and college faculty, Faculty Senate, the deans and other administrators to align new programs with the strategic plan and with the interests of the state and region. MSU is the largest university and the largest research and development entity in Montana.

I. A high-level overview of your institution’s current academic priorities (instruction and research), with a focus on how those priorities fit the institutional mission and current strategic plan

The academic priorities for Montana State University align with the university’s strategic plan, *Choosing Promise*. The plan consists of three areas of intentional focus, each supported by several goals, objectives and metrics.

Choosing Promise: Montana State University's Strategic Plan

INTENTIONAL FOCUS 1: Drive Transformational Learning Experiences Creating Outstanding Educational Outcomes for All Students

Montana State University students are challenged and changed by their active participation in high quality, innovative experiences at both the undergraduate and graduate level, becoming learned professionals and global citizens.

GOAL 1.1: Broaden access for underrepresented populations and increase academic success for all students through excellence in undergraduate education.

As the state's land-grant university, Montana State University invites participation in exceptional higher education, widens participation of under-represented student populations and improves student success outcomes overall.

GOAL 1.2: Expand high-quality graduate education

Montana State University will enroll and graduate more degree-seeking students at the graduate level and enhance the quality of graduate degree programs.

GOAL 1.3: Implement evidence-based, high quality, high impact teaching and learning practices for every student

Montana State University improves the curricular and co-curricular experience with demonstrated educational practices integrated with discovery and engagement that enhance learning and develops engaged global citizens and informed professionals.

INTENTIONAL FOCUS 2: Improve Lives and Society through Research, Creativity and Scholarship

Montana State University faculty, staff and students are known nationally and internationally for discovering, applying, testing and sharing knowledge and creative works that expand understanding and positively impact lives and society.

GOAL 2.1: Enhance the significance and impact of scholarship

Montana State University research and creative activity demonstrates impact on the state's and the world's pressing challenges through the application of our discoveries in communities, industry and organizations, as well as through academic indicators of the expansion of knowledge.

GOAL 2.2: Expand interdisciplinary scholarship

Montana State University's interdisciplinary expertise as the University of the Yellowstone™ carries unique possibilities for inference, translation and impact. Our research and creative activity throughout the university increasingly spans traditional disciplinary boundaries to solve the world's pressing challenges.

GOAL 2.3: Strengthen institutional reputation in scholarship

Montana State University's success in scholarship results in increased state, national and international prominence.

GOAL 2.4: Elevate expectations for scholarship

Montana State University faculty, staff and students hold themselves to the highest standards of research and creative outcomes.

INTENTIONAL FOCUS 3: Expand Mutually Beneficial and Responsive Engagement for the Advancement of Montana

Montana State University students, faculty and staff work together and with partners across the state and around the world to enhance the well-being of individuals, organizations and communities.

GOAL 3.1: Increase mutually beneficial collaborations with Tribal nations and partners

Montana State University works cooperatively with Tribal governments, colleges, community groups and Indigenous students to develop and achieve beneficial outcomes.

GOAL 3.2: Grow mutually beneficial partnerships across Montana

Montana State University and its partners attain collaboratively defined outcomes that improve the lives and livelihoods of Montanans.

GOAL 3.3: Foster a culture of collaboration, continuous improvement and individual growth

Montana State University and its students, faculty and staff engage in a reciprocal relationship that values each member and improves the university environment.

II. A brief description of the process used determine these academic priorities

Montana State's strategic plan *Choosing Promise* was developed over 12 months with widespread participation across the campus and local community. A 10-member strategic planning committee, comprising faculty, staff, administrators and a student, met regularly to design, receive feedback and revise the plan. Hundreds of stakeholders on and off campus drafted and commented on language through an ongoing anonymous web forum; multiple public charrettes; one-on-one meetings; departmental, affinity, employee and student governance group meetings; and email submissions. The final plan adopted by University Council in November 2018 features a mission statement, vision, core values, three areas of intentional focus and attendant goals, metrics and actions.

Choosing Promise specifies university-level direction, outcomes and actions and leaves room for more local and specific goal-setting and action in alignment with the university's goals. During 2019, colleges and other units across campus developed their own alignment documents with input from their stakeholders. Strategic investment proposals must include evidence of alignment with the plan as well as assessment strategies. The university-level direction lends scope to academic programming; student activities; student, faculty and staff services; and administrative support. Hence, it serves as the academic plan to guide and align new developments in academic planning across colleges.

III. A description highlighting new academic or research programing that your institution hopes to pursue in the coming year, with a focus on how those new programs will support your academic priorities

Montana State University's plan to develop new academic programs and research centers/institutes are described in the accompanying forthcoming academic proposals spreadsheet that was submitted in conjunction with this planning statement. Each planned program is aligned with the university's strategic plan

and mission. The spreadsheet provides specific designations that link each proposed program directly with one or more intentional focus goals.

IV. If/where applicable, a high-level overview of areas that will be somewhat less prioritized, including any areas in which your institution will consider disinvestment, moratorium and/or termination

Montana State University regularly reviews undergraduate and graduate academic programs, which includes examining key performance indicators that provide longitudinal measures of student enrollment. Although disinvestment or reallocation of resources from programs experiencing diminishing enrollment are options, our initial efforts are focused on evaluating potential reasons for declines and implementing necessary adjustments and enhancements in the curriculum, marketing or other structural aspects of the program that could improve student interest and enrollments.

V. Additional details you find relevant for the BOR to consider as they make decisions about Requests to Plan

Montana State University's plan for new degrees and options in the next academic year includes proposals for interdisciplinary programs at the bachelor, master and doctoral levels and new doctoral programs where MSU has strong and productive master's programs. The proposed programs will build on MSU's strengths across the arts, humanities, social sciences, natural sciences and professional programs.

Montana University System
ACADEMIC PRIORITIES AND PLANNING STATEMENT

GREAT FALLS COLLEGE - MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY

ACADEMIC PRIORITIES AND PLANNING STATEMENT

Academic Year 2020/21

A high-level overview of your institution's current academic priorities (instruction and research), with a focus on how those priorities fit the institutional mission and current strategic plan.

Overview

Great Falls College MSU's academic priorities for 2020-21 are to strengthen the high impact practices we have implemented, including the 8-Week Advantage; every student having a purpose, plan, and path; increase overall retention rates; increase visibility at regional high schools; increase the number of transfer agreements; in partnership with MSUN, strengthen education degree and grow business degree offerings on the Great Falls campus; and continue to provide training and support for faculty, students, and staff if the need for distance and remote classes occurs due to COVID-19.

Specific

Academic priorities specific to the college's three divisions are:

- General Studies:
 - Concentrate on enrollment and retention
 - Continue exploring transfer opportunities
 - Respond to the growing need for Computer Technology graduates

- Health Sciences:
 - Meet enrollment capacities in all healthcare programs
 - Grow enrollment in Health Information Coding Specialist and Health Information Technology, both continue to be offered 100% online
 - Continue remote offering of shared teaching models for surgical technician program with Gallatin and City Colleges
 - Continue statewide LPN program in partnership with healthcare providers to fill their local employment FTE with local residents
 - Reinstate the Respiratory Care program with a shared teaching model with City College and Gallatin College and regional health care providers

- Trades:
 - Continue to offer Welding, Industrial Technician and Renewable Energy programs. The Trades Division programs were recently prioritized through our Program Review process.

[A brief description of the process used to determine these academic priorities.](#)

At the 10,000' level, new programs are planned and developed based upon local and regional employment needs. The college has a subscription with Emsi and works with the MT DLI. Additional information is gleaned through the CEO/Dean's membership on the boards of the Great Falls Area Chamber of Commerce, the Great Falls Development Authority, and the Montana Chamber of Commerce.

Academic divisions use division-wide meetings, program advisory committees and contacts with employers to determine more specific academic priorities.

Great Falls College MSU changed its program review process to mirror what was used for academic prioritization in 2016. Each college program is reviewed every five years and an annual snapshot of every program is used each budget cycle.

Through these processes two programs were placed in moratorium during the 2019-20 academic year.

The College Planning, Budget and Analysis Committee is a shared governance body that oversees strategic planning and makes recommendations to the Executive Team on resource allocation. The committee reviews academic and non-academic program review reports in making recommendations. The committee includes representatives of all academic and non-academic departments and divisions, faculty, staff, and students.

[A description highlighting new academic or research programming that your institution hopes to pursue in the coming year, with a focus on how those new programs will support your academic priorities.](#)

There are currently no plans to develop a new program in the upcoming year due to the academic priorities described above and uncertainty with COVID-19.

[If/where applicable, a high-level overview of areas that will be somewhat less prioritized, including any areas in which your institution will consider disinvestment, moratorium, and/or termination.](#)

During the 2018-20 academic years, a major catalog cleanup was completed resulting in terminating programs previously placed in moratorium. The programs that remain are the result of the program review process. This eliminated low priority programs.

[Additional details you find relevant for the BOR to consider as they make decisions about "Requests to Plan."](#)

Montana University System
ACADEMIC PRIORITIES AND PLANNING STATEMENT

Montana State University Northern
ACADEMIC PRIORITIES AND PLANNING STATEMENT
Academic Year 2020-21

MSUN Mission Statement

MSU-Northern provides higher education to students for professional and technical careers through an institution dedicated to teaching and the pursuit of knowledge.

Approved by the Board of Regents on May 2016.

MSUN Core Themes

1. Provide liberal arts, professional and technical programs that serve a diverse student population.
2. Promote student centered and culturally enriched environment which fosters student success.
3. Partner with external entities to enhance and expand learning experiences.

MSUN's strategic plan builds on our Mission and includes a priority goal of reaching 1500 students to ensure institutional stability and sustainability. To build our capacity and serve the largest geographic region in the state, MSUN has and continues to provide relevant, quality academic programs that address the needs of the region and the state. Our history of providing education, technical, and regionally relevant high-quality programming drives our academic priorities and planning. Our Strategic plan notes that "MSUN is proud to be ranked the #1 school in Montana for economic mobility, and #15 in the nation. A significant number of MSUN's graduates start college in the bottom 20 percent of income distribution, and go on to reach the top 20 percent. MSU-Northern graduates also have better workforce outcomes right out of college than graduates from other four-year colleges in the state. Northern provides an Education that Works."

MSUN's academic priorities are driven by the four goals in MSUN's strategic Plan; 1. Stability; 2. Quality and Efficiency; 3. Engagement; 4. Collaboration. The academic priorities are developed through the campus strategic planning process that outlines opportunities existing programmatic expansion and growth and to identify potential programmatic opportunities through our collaborative efforts with industry partners. Strategically, we are moving to having 100% of our academic programs have advisory boards that meet at least twice a year and include input on industry needs.

Academic program proposals are largely based on the input from our industry partners through the active input from our Advisory Boards. These priorities are also vetted through the College faculty, Academic Senate and other relevant committees on campus (e.g., Graduate Committee, Marketing Committee, etc.). The Student Senate also is involved in the development of our academic priorities.

MSUN has identified three particular areas of academic priority for the next academic year based on the goals and strategies of our strategic plan. These programmatic areas are clustered around rebuilding our education and related programs, workforce development, and expanding program areas that meet local and state level industry needs.

Education and related programs have historically been a strength at MSUN and is evidenced by the number and scope of teachers and counselors within our region that have received their training from MSUN. The Education program had suffered decline over the past 10 years due to a variety of factors. After forming an Education Advisory Board and working with the Rural Superintends group within the region, MSUN set a priority to expand our Education program to address a critical shortage of teachers and counselors. To date, we have increased the number of education students enrolled in our education programs by 400%. These efforts have been successful through collaboratively working with Great Falls College to initiate a 2+2 cohort in

Great Falls, collaborating with two tribal colleges to initiate a 2+2 grant funded program, and collaborating with the regional school districts. There are several Education related program priorities that we are proposing for this academic year that address the specific needs of the region and in which we have faculty expertise to develop.

Another area of strategic academic growth that we are proposing is the add a minor in Graphics Design. We are rebuilding our capacity in this area and students and industry have identified the need to provide expertise in graphics design as an adjunct to other majors offered on campus – e.g., business and marketing, integrated health sciences, criminal justice, and community leadership.

And finally, we have strong academic programming in the agricultural sciences and agricultural mechanics that connect closely with our agriculture industry in the region. In this area we identifying strategic opportunities in precision agriculture, meat processing, equine studies. These academic priorities have been strongly supported by our local and state industries and economic development partners.

Montana University System
ACADEMIC PRIORITIES AND PLANNING STATEMENT

University of Montana-Missoula
ACADEMIC PRIORITIES AND PLANNING STATEMENT
Academic Year 2020/21

A high-level overview of your institution's current academic priorities (instruction and research), with a focus on how those priorities fit the institutional mission and current strategic plan.

A University of Montana education intersects across disciplines to prepare every graduate to excel in the areas of problem-solving, adaptability, communication, critical thinking, collaboration, creativity, and ethical reasoning. These 21st Century skills will best prepare future learners, regardless of major or credential, to be flexible leaders in a rapidly changing world. UM is committed to fostering and developing a learning environment and research community focused on challenges and opportunities that are of importance to Montana (partnering with place) and the wider world (internationalization and global impacts). Because such challenges and opportunities will certainly change over time, UM will engage in key areas that are complex and/or systemic in nature while emphasizing the 21st Century skills necessary in facing these challenges and opportunities. Leveraging the strengths of our faculty, staff, students and wider community, we remain optimistically committed to our long-standing tradition of excellence, to inclusive prosperity, to economic viability, and to strengths in the sciences, social sciences, humanities, arts, and professional areas.

All of our academic and research priorities will be tracked and reviewed through an operating rhythm that emphasizes our [5 Priorities for Action](#). As the implementation vehicle of our Strategic Planning and Assessment Cycle, these 5 Priorities for Action remain foundational in our strategic planning and accreditation efforts.

Montana has experienced significant changes in its economy in recent years. Some industries have receded and the job ecosystem in Montana will follow national trends in becoming more automated and centralized. New industries have emerged and others are challenged by changing technologies, regulations, demographics and societal changes. COVID-19 has accelerated or accentuated most of these shifts. Technology both promises and threatens to drive further change. This creates new workforce challenges and opportunities for Montana businesses, government, nonprofits and, in turn, for Montanans seeking meaningful employment.

With an understanding of this landscape and as a result of University Design Team discussions (described below), UM will continue to emphasize six interdisciplinary Communities of Excellence (also described below). UM has deep interdisciplinary capabilities, a proven track-record delivering premium 21st Century skills and experiential learning, and engagement that fosters the adaptive, innovative and entrepreneurial mindset that can equip the workforce, employers, and community to succeed in a period of accelerated disruption.

Key Principles and Practices

Running through all six of these Communities of Excellence will be the following key principles and practices, which we see as vital components in an education that prepares students for a changing landscape:

- **Impact:** We will identify, measure, and improve the impact of our work. This encompasses student success, research, and community and civic engagement.
- **Interdisciplinarity:** We recognize that delivering impact in our Communities of Excellence requires interdisciplinary collaboration and the **inclusion** of diverse perspectives. Our foundational knowledge and research in the humanities and sciences in combination with our professional disciplines provide powerful opportunities to deepen our understanding and appreciation of as well as our **impact** on the world around us.
- **Inclusivity and Inclusion:** We will **innovate** in our learning, research, student life, and operating practices to ensure that *all* students, faculty, staff, and community members can fully participate. In particular and drawing upon Montana's rich history and place, we will seek to **advancing Montana's**

Indigenous Communities in collaboration and consultation with tribal communities. UM is committed to providing a better understanding of and support for the First Peoples of Montana.

- **Inquiry:** We will foster a culture of inquiry, curiosity, and creativity in all our work.
- **Innovation:** Innovation hinges on our ability to make connections and navigate ambiguity by deploying 21st century skills towards an **impactful** and meaningful end.

Communities of Excellence

In the spring of 2018, the University Planning Committee (UPC) identified six areas of interdisciplinary focus at UM as Communities of Excellence. The Communities of Excellence represent UM's intersections of strength and opportunity and provide an organizing principle under which our academic priorities fall:

- **Environment & Sustainability**

We promote good stewardship by fostering knowledge of and respect for the integrity and beauty of the ecological systems in Montana and around the world. UM sits in the heart of the Rocky Mountains surrounded by vast areas of public lands and protected wilderness. Montana really is the "Last Best Place," and this setting uniquely positions UM for excellence in a breadth of basic and applied natural sciences related to understanding: how animals and plants adapt to the alpine and grassland habitats of the Rocky Mountains; how to conserve and manage wildlife populations and the environments they live in; and how these fragile habitats and the organisms they contain are affected by climate change. UM will continue to provide world class scientific research and transformative student experiences in these fields, fostering interdisciplinary approaches that encourage environmental and sustainability learning, research and collaboration across disciplines. A wide range of nationally recognized programs are joined by exciting new programming, events and curricula from across the UM landscape to engage our rich sense of place and its Rocky mountain heritage. By extension, UM will adopt sustainable practices in business, government, and the community.

- **Health & Human Development**

We enhance the physical, mental, and emotional health and intelligence of our communities, working with regional and international partners to serve diverse populations. The University of Montana will continue to serve as the region's premier destination for students interested in pursuing health careers, including undergraduate pre-medical sciences, six two-year degree programs, and nearly ten undergraduate and post-graduate accredited degree programs. UM engages in world class clinical and basic research in the health and biomedical sciences. Given its setting, UM is the home to the Family Medicine Residency of Western Montana, the Area Health Education Center, and UM Health & Medicine, to facilitate clinical and hospital partnerships while being uniquely positioned to tackle problems related to rural health, enhancing the quality of healthcare provided to Montanans and beyond into the Pacific Northwest.

- **Communication & Artistic Expression**

We cultivate the production, analysis, and appreciation of diverse forms of human expression essential to developing citizens, leaders, artists, advocates, and creators. UM supports learning, skills, research, and creative scholarship that are fundamental components of a well-rounded, creative, and adaptive workforce. Doctors must practice with empathy. Business executives must think imaginatively. Civic leaders must serve with ethical integrity. These skills are fundamental outcomes of the cross-disciplinary mindset fostered by our community. If the business executive, the doctor, and the civil servant are enriched by their experiences in the arts and media, students in the arts and media need

exposure to the wealth of knowledge available across campus. Classical musicians must explore commercial music. Contemporary dancers must apply human physiology. Legislative reporters must comprehend political theory. This includes untapped potential in technical and workforce-related credentials in the arts, media, and communication.

- **Business & Entrepreneurship**

We prepare students to seize economic opportunities in entrepreneurial and business focused endeavors. In addition to preparing students, we connect them with members of our learning community, and economic development in the state of Montana. We help students and the greater state of Montana by promoting entrepreneurship, innovation, creativity, initiative, and partnerships. Additionally, we aid the creation and growth of business and economic development by recognizing workforce demands and preparing students for these unmet needs.

- **Justice, Policy & Public Service**

We develop citizens who serve their communities and participate in democratic governance through advocacy, dialogue, dissent, and ethical decision making. UM is committed to furthering social and racial justice at the University and in Montana. We will research access to education, health, and economic opportunity in rural and Indigenous communities and develop academic offerings that span history, philosophy, public policy, and administration and law, among others. UM's deep grounding in the humanities, policy, and professional fields will provide multi- and inter-disciplinary opportunities for the entire UM community to understand current systemic inequities and their historical contexts. These opportunities to understand will in turn lead to positive change as students, faculty, and staff remedy complex, "wicked problems."

- **Science & Technology**

We explore the nature of the physical and natural world through systematic observation, computation, and experimentation and sustain research and technology. We are able to compete on the world market for new knowledge and advance ideas and applications that enhance local, regional, and national economies and communities. UM features world class researchers, centers, field stations and an unparalleled natural environment. Students learn ethical inquiry and how to create and communicate knowledge. Science and Technology related courses, certificates, and degree programs can be found throughout every college at the University of Montana. Our community amplifies the innovative science and technology discoveries and discourse currently happening at UM and facilitates new conversations, big ideas, and collaborations across disciplines.

The University of Montana-Missoula Mission Statement

The University of Montana transforms lives by providing a high-quality and accessible education and by generating world-class research and creative scholarship in an exceptional place. We integrate the liberal arts and sciences into undergraduate, graduate, and professional studies to shape global citizens who are creative and agile learners committed to expanding the boundaries of knowledge and to building and sustaining diverse communities.

A brief description of the process used to determine these academic priorities.

Beginning their work in May, 2020, the [University Design Team \(UDT\)](#), comprised of UM students, faculty, and staff, has been deliberately exploring how we can best position UM for long-term success and impact. Drawing

upon the perspectives of our campus community, as well as of our external stakeholders – including community leaders, business leaders, admitted students and prospective students – the UDT is considering the challenges and opportunities faced by institutions of higher education and will identify design principles and potential strategies to position UM as a flagship for America's future. The UDT and our wider campus community will continue to explore how UM can best:

- provide an education that prepares our students as both career-ready and tomorrow-proof;
- expand our conception of education to include learners at all stages of life and career; and
- expand the reaches of knowledge through research and graduate programs of national excellence and impact.

A description highlighting new academic or research programing that your institution hopes to pursue in the coming year, with a focus on how those new programs will support your academic priorities.

In support of our Academic Priorities, below are the programs UM plans to pursue this year. The first four degrees relate to Health and Medicine, and there are also strong connections to the Future of Work.

- Non-Professional option in Pharmaceutical Sciences BS
- Integrative Physiology and Rehabilitation Sciences PhD
- Option in Human Physiology in the Integrative Physiology BS
- Skaggs Center for Telehealth and Precision Medicine
- Computer Science PhD
- General Studies certificate
- Brewing CAS and certificate
- UM Democracy Project
- Montana Repertory Theatre

If/where applicable, a high-level overview of areas that will be somewhat less prioritized, including any areas in which your institution will consider disinvestment, moratorium, and/or termination.

Programs that have been placed in moratoria this last month include the Facilities Management Certificate, the Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning (HVAC) Certificate, and the Film Studies minor. As we review our budget and student demands for academic programs across campus, additional moratoria and terminations may be added to this list.

Montana University System
ACADEMIC PRIORITIES AND PLANNING STATEMENT

MONTANA TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY
ACADEMIC PRIORITIES AND PLANNING STATEMENT
Academic Year 2020/21

Academic Priorities

With the installation of Dr. Les Cook as the Chancellor of Montana Technological University we have embarked upon an ambitious strategy to fully realize our “Special Focus” designation as a premier science and engineering institution dedicated to meeting the changing needs of society. During this upcoming year we anticipate engaging in creating a new strategic plan and campus master plan that will move us forward and ensure our success in meeting the needs of our students and the citizens of Montana.

Montana Tech has long been known for preparing our graduates for successful careers in a variety of STEM fields. The foundation of our success is our suite of high-quality academic programs taught by excellent faculty who are focused on student success. As we consider changes to our academic portfolio, we do not strive to be all things to all people, but continue to focus on those programs that are central to our core and can address workforce needs in Montana and the nation.

A primary focus in the upcoming year is a complete assessment of our program portfolio at Highlands College and making changes based upon this assessment. In a number of areas, Highlands College has struggled with enrollment and offering/developing programs that meet local and regional workforce needs. This includes non-credit and certificate offerings. In July we are bringing in a consultant to perform a comprehensive review of our academic portfolio in relation to workforce needs and enrollment growth. We will continue to work with this consultant throughout the academic year to design and implement curricular changes that will ensure that we have the appropriate program offerings that meet workforce needs.

Process for Determining Academic Priorities

During the spring and fall of the 2018 Montana Tech went through a program prioritization process that resulted in an Alignment Plan. This plan continues to guide us in performing program reviews and developing new programs.

One of the most significant outcomes of the Alignment Plan was an approach (process) that relied upon data and metrics to inform decisions and recommendations. The decision was made to continue this process on an annual basis. Every year, the deans and provost conduct a data-rich, performance review of all programs. This review informs the colleges and university as to those programs that need additional investment and those that need reductions and possibly elimination. This process is transparent and engages the campus community.

The development of new academic programs has a well-defined internal process that involves faculty, department heads, deans, and the provost. In order for a new academic program proposal to move forward, it must be mission appropriate, meet a specific workforce need and demonstrate potential for current and long-term enrollment growth. We are well aware that the creation of new programs requires the allocation of scarce and precious resources. With this in mind, we are strategic in expanding and developing our academic offerings into those areas that have strong growth potential and are mission appropriate.

New Academic and Research Programming

In the School of Mines and Engineering (SME) we anticipate developing MS degrees in two areas. First, we need to replace the MS in General Engineering (MSGE) into two degrees: a MS in Mechanical Engineering and a MS in Civil Engineering. The MSGE has historically and currently serves students in the CE and ME areas. It has solid enrollment. Once the BS in CE and ME are officially ABET accredited (Fall 2020), we will be dropping the BS in General Engineering degree. The MSGE will no longer be connected to an accredited BS degree which

is the norm with ABET programs. Without this change, students will have issues with professional licensure, and the degree titles should match the curriculum.

Second, we will be proposing to start an MS in Geological Engineering with an option in Hydrogeology. This MS builds upon our strengths in this area and partnerships with the Montana Bureau of Mines and Geology.

Concomitant with developing the MS in Geological Engineering, we are considering the merging of the Geophysical Engineering department with the Geological Engineering department. This new department would be the heart of our geosciences expertise at Tech. If the merger occurs, we will consider a new name for the department reflective of all programs in the department. This merger would allow for curricular streamlining, foster collaboration between faculty, and reduce operating costs.

In the College of Letters Sciences and Professional Studies (CLSPS), we do not anticipate developing any new academic programs. Expansion of the nursing program is well underway and will continue through the academic year, which includes bringing a new simulation center online. As part of the strategic planning process, it is likely that we will be making programmatic and curricular adjustments (no new programs) in CLSPS to build upon our growing reputation as an outstanding university for health and health-related preparation and careers.

The past several years have been focused on increasing the breadth and quality of our graduate options. We have been very successful in this regard, but we have not done as well as we would like in growing these programs. This relatively slow growth is due to historically limited efforts on marketing and recruiting. This year, we will be developing a comprehensive recruiting and marketing strategy for our graduate programs.

Academic Program Change in Emphasis

We anticipate that the results of our comprehensive evaluation of Highlands College that we will increase our emphasis and investment in workforce preparation. This will be a combination of two-year degrees in our existing trades program, cybersecurity, as well as certificates and non-credit offerings in partnership with business and industry. Changes that occur at Highlands will result in an institution that offers a small number of high quality programs that prepare students to be workforce ready.

In all academic areas, we will continue to adjust our programs to account for student and workforce demands as per the process described earlier in this document. We have demonstrated that we are prepared to make difficult programmatic and personnel changes and will continue to do so in the future when needed.

Montana University System
ACADEMIC PRIORITIES AND PLANNING STATEMENT

The University of Montana Western
ACADEMIC PRIORITIES AND PLANNING STATEMENT
Academic Year 2020/21

The University of Montana Western is a leader and innovator in experiential education. We educate undergraduate students through immersive practices in their field of study, we strive for continuous improvement, and we achieve evidence-supported student learning and achievement outcomes. Our academic priorities for the future are focused on this mission. We continue to hone the specifics of our priorities as we conclude our strategic planning process this year.

We are committed to teaching, learning and student success. To that end, we offer Experience One (X1), an educational program unique in public higher education. Students take one course at a time, allowing them not only to focus on a single area of exploration, but to engage in real-world, hands-on learning which frequently includes learning experiences in the community, places of business, national parks, fields and streams. Our graduates are highly competitive, whether entering the job market or pursuing graduate studies.

Our vision for the future is to be recognized as the leader in innovative experiential education. One possibility we are exploring is to create an Experience One Institute. We hope to fund this through our current fundraising campaign. The Experience One Institute will build on success to strengthen and expand in order to meet the educational needs of students and the workforce needs of the state of Montana.

The Experience One Institute will strive for continuous improvement in experiential educational opportunities and support evidence-supported student learning and achievement outcomes. The X1 Institute will promote interdisciplinary programs, innovative curriculum, stackable credentials, lifelong learning opportunities, flexible pathways to degree, and the use of high impact practices. We will develop a First Year Experience to forge a deeper connection with students and encourage learning experiences both in and out of the classroom. We will expand our partnerships for economic development, our research and philanthropic funding, and partnerships with tribal communities.

Division Structure

In 2018, UMW restructured its academic departments into four divisions:

- **Division of Humanities and Social Sciences** consisting of the English Department, the Fine Arts Department, and the History, Philosophy and Social Sciences Department,
- **Division of Business, Technology, Equine Studies and Health and Human Performance** consisting of the Business and Technology Department, Equine Studies Department and Health and Human Performance Department,
- **Division of Mathematics and Natural Sciences** consisting of the Mathematics Department, Biology Department, and the Environmental Sciences Department, and
- **Division of Education** consisting of the Education Department with programs in Early Childhood, Elementary, Secondary, K-12, and Post-Baccalaureate education.

This division restructuring has allowed for increased opportunities for collaboration and plans for more interdisciplinary courses, course pairings, and programs. We will strengthen our existing offerings by updating curriculum and program requirements, and by developing new innovative flexible curriculum that includes stackable credentials (micro-credentials, certificates, minors, and majors) and multiple pathways. Updating our curriculum and offerings to meet the needs of tomorrow does not mean we will simply add programs. As we develop plans for the future, we will examine the programs of today and determine their viability in the future.

Division of Humanities and Social Sciences

The division is working to strengthen existing programs, including, notably the relatively new Certificate, Associate, and Bachelor's degree programs in Glass, as well as History, Psychology, and English, which each

hired new faculty this year to fill existing lines. The Drama and Music programs have also been growing their production calendars with support from Dillon's Bank of Commerce.

The Division plans to pursue several new interdisciplinary certificates and minors that build on existing strengths within the faculty, provide greater breadth in the curriculum, and meet the needs and interests of our students. Adding more breadth in our program offerings will benefit recruitment and retention efforts in the arts, humanities, and social sciences.

Division of Business, Technology, Equine Studies, and Health and Human Performance

The division houses several unique programs such as the Farm and Ranch Management minor, the Guide and Outfitter Management minor, and the BS in Natural Horsemanship. These programs are unique to Montana and have a great potential to attract new students to UMW. The BS in Natural Horsemanship is unique to the United States. The division is focused on fully developing its new programs while supporting and revising its existing programs. The division also collaborates with the Education division and is working on revising its secondary education curriculum to allow more flexibility for students.

Division of Mathematics and Natural Sciences

The common thread that runs through the departments that make up the division of mathematics and natural science is a commitment to facilitating undergraduate research by

- training and mentoring in essential research methodologies throughout the curriculum,
- offering widespread and varied research experiences at the capstone level, and
- encouraging students' lifelong development of a research mindset and practice by helping them to effectively identify both professional and advanced study opportunities for them to pursue as they are approaching and once they have reached their post-graduation lives.

The division will focus on expanding integrated research opportunities that blend sophisticated approaches to data analysis and modeling with the existing scientific priorities already established by the biology and environmental science departments.

Division of Education

The Education program at The University of Montana Western is the oldest in the state. It is also one of the best in preparing teachers for careers in Pre-Kindergarten through twelfth grade. All eighteen programs are grounded in experiential education and offer a variety of pathways to prepare students for a wide range of careers. The early childhood education (ECE) program offers options ranging from a four-year BS degree to a one year on-line certificate. The ECE program offers both on-campus and online courses for all of its certificates and degrees. Both modes of delivery are highly experiential in nature, including numerous opportunities for field experiences, combined with coaches who supervise and support students' learning in the field.

The Division houses the successful Indigenous Centered Education Project, a collaboration initially between UMW and Blackfeet Community College, designed to increase the number of Native American teachers who serve indigenous students. The program has been expanded to include Little Big Horn College, and additional plans are underway to further expand indigenous education programs, in partnership with other schools and tribal colleges.

With the current and predicted shortage of teachers in Montana, the division is looking into improved pathways toward licensure for both new and returning students. The recent addition of a fully-online post-baccalaureate certificate program is an example of this ongoing effort.

Micro-credentials

The University of Montana Western, in collaboration with the University at Buffalo SUNY, was awarded a grant from the National Science Foundation to implement and study micro-credentials. As a result, we have initiated a number of micro-credential pilot projects, for instance, using micro-credentials to document student interns' demonstrations of 21st Century Skills in the workplace. Future directions include micro-credential collaborations with other organizations and academic programs, as well as further recognition of skills demonstrated outside formal classrooms. This will directly support our vision to be a leader in innovative experiential education.

First Year Experience

Nation-wide research on First Year Experience (FYE) programs consistently supports positive student success in both the curricular and co-curricular environment. As a pioneer in experiential learning and an institution that values learning both in and outside the classroom, a FYE is a natural addition to the Experience One Institute. The FYE will be built on the concept of connections: student connection with faculty, staff, and administration; connection with the campus both in and outside the classroom; and connection with learning strategies and opportunities. We will pilot a FYE in Fall 2020 and plan to fully integrate a FYE in the Experience One program in the future.

Research

The university's unique schedule, programs, location, and commitments to undergraduate research and experiential education create unique opportunities for student/faculty research. Faculty research interests focus on field-oriented projects that engage students in project development, data collection and analysis. Dillon's location in the High Divide region of Montana offers unparalleled opportunities for environmental science and biology students to conduct field-based research studying climate change, water quality, range quality, and wildlife and fish habitat. Health and human performance students conduct kinesiology research in the department's dedicated performance lab. Education students perform participatory action research on teaching and learning in secondary and postsecondary classrooms across the state. Faculty pursue extramural funds to support their independent research, class-based research projects, and student research internships.

Partnerships for Economic Development

We thrive on partnerships and on our differences. We offer the only bachelor's degree in Natural Horsemanship, which we do in collaboration with the Montana Center for Horsemanship. We partner with Pima to offer the only vet tech program in Montana. These are unique and successful programs. Our partnerships not only support these unique degree programs, but also provide opportunities for student internships, collaborative projects for students and faculty, and a multitude of learning opportunities. We will strengthen our existing partnerships and create new partnerships for economic and rural community development. Among our current partners are: Montana Center for Horsemanship, Pima, Helix, multiple Outdoor Enterprise Management and Farm and Ranch Management partners, Idaho National Laboratories, Barrett Hospital, various arts groups, Bank of Commerce, Stockman Bank, Pioneer Federal Savings and Loan, multiple state and private outdoor resource and environmental conversation organizations, and Road Scholar.

Montana University System
ACADEMIC PRIORITIES AND PLANNING STATEMENT

Helena College

ACADEMIC PRIORITIES AND PLANNING STATEMENT

Academic Year 2020-2021

Helena College is committed to providing access to and support of lifelong educational opportunities to our diverse community. The College has been involved in an intensive Strategic Enrollment Planning process since April 2018, a process which institutional priorities are identified using data and assessment. The Strategic Enrollment Planning process involves all areas of the College, with employees on the Steering Committee driving the process. The steering committee works to ensure that priorities identified fit both the institutional mission and the current strategic plan, with the College's core themes used as key performance indicators in the initial research used to identify institutional priorities. The following report highlights academic priorities that will be prioritized over the next 12-18 months.

Guided Pathways: Providing quality transfer opportunities to students and student transfer success have always been a priority at Helena College and through the Strategic Enrollment Planning process, they have been identified as a primary area of focus for the General Education division for the upcoming academic year. Using the Guided Pathways approach, faculty and student affairs will clearly map out academic programs to create educationally coherent pathways, each with clearly defined learning outcomes that build across curriculum and are aligned with requirements for further education and career advancement in the given field. Program maps provide clarity on the sequence of courses necessary to complete a program of study, using the most direct route possible, in addition to information needed to facilitate seamless transfer within the MUS. Program pathways will have greater connection to career, both in career exploration opportunities for students early in their academic career, and in a connection to possible employers in transfer pathways that can help students in advancement within their chosen fields. In addition to creating academic maps for academic programs that currently exist, the faculty and student affairs team will research in-demand transfer pathways that do not currently exist at Helena College to determine whether or not the pathway can be added at Helena College. This academic priority connects directly with Strategic Goal 1 *Partner for Student Success* and Strategic Goal 2 *Integrate Planning and Assessment*.

Certificate of General Studies: The College will explore adding a Certificate of General Studies within the next academic year. The certificate will be a completion of the Helena College General Education Core, which aligns with the MUS General Education Core. Not only will this allow for better tracking of completion of the General Education core, it will allow students in technical and trades program to earn an additional certificate for completion of the general education core, which is needed when pursuing a Bachelors in Trades Management. This academic priority connects directly with Strategic Goal 1 *Partner for Student Success*, Strategic Goal 2 *Integrate Planning and Assessment*, and Strategic Goal 4 *Support the Community*.

AA and AS Degrees Online: Both the Associate of Arts and the Associate of Science degrees can be completed fully online at Helena College. The College will complete the necessary documentation for OCHE, BOR, NWCCU and DOE for both degrees to be recognized as fully online. This academic priority connects directly with Strategic Goal 1 *Partner for Student Success*, Strategic Goal 2 *Integrate Planning and Assessment*, and Strategic Goal 4 *Support the Community*.

Administrative Support & Management Program: The Administrative Support & Management program was placed on moratorium in spring 2020 due to steady decrease in enrollment. A priority for the next 12 months, in addition to teaching out the students currently in the program, will be to research possible program opportunities using data from both DOLI and local area employers. This program contains two AAS degrees and three CAS opportunities, all in the areas of medical administrative support, legal support, and administrative support. The goal over the next academic year will be to determine whether this program is meeting the needs of local employers and whether it provides quality educational opportunities for students leading to employment. If not, the College will work to identify new opportunities for educational programs based on the local needs assessment. This academic priority connects directly with Strategic Goal 1 *Partner for*

Student Success, Strategic Goal 2 Integrate Planning and Assessment, and Strategic Goal 4 Support the Community.

Computer Technology Program: The Computer Technology program has been a long-established program at Helena College that is well-regarded with local employers. The program currently includes two AAS degree options, one in Networking and one in Programming. The program has seen a decrease in enrollment in the past two years, indicating the need for review to ensure that the degree options are meeting the needs of both students and employers. A priority over the next 12 months will be to assess the needs of local employers and students to determine possible program changes. The College will also research adding a transfer option in Computer Science and determine whether a transfer pathway is something that should be explored. This academic priority connects directly with Strategic Goal 1 *Partner for Student Success*, Strategic Goal 2 *Integrate Planning and Assessment*, and Strategic Goal 4 *Support the Community*.

Criminal Justice Program: Helena College has had an articulation agreement with MSU Northern in the Criminal Justice program for the past several years. The Criminal Justice pathway is popular, allowing students to complete either an AA or an AS at Helena College before moving on to MSU Northern to complete a BS in Criminal Justice. The College has recently partnered with the Montana State Prison to promote the Criminal Justice pathway, which is beneficial for current employees interested in advancing their careers within their field. MSP employs hundreds of people in Montana, the majority of which begin their careers with only a high school diploma. Due to the need for educational opportunities in the criminal justice field and to the partnership with MSP, the College will pursue a named AA degree in Pre-Criminal Justice within the next academic year. This academic priority connects directly with Strategic Goal 1 *Partner for Student Success*, Strategic Goal 2 *Integrate Planning and Assessment*, and Strategic Goal 4 *Support the Community*.

Fire & Rescue Program: The Fire & Rescue program at Helena College is currently reviewing the current AAS degree option to ensure that it continues to meet the needs for both students and employers in Montana. With feedback from both the program advisory council and industry partners, and from data gathered in a program review/assessment completed in AY 2018-2019, changes in the program are needed. Program changes will focus on implementing work-based learning experiences throughout the program, allowing for greater transfer opportunities by changing the current AAS degree to a named AS degree, and embedding certifications (both industry certifications and Certificate of Technical Science) into the degree pathway. Work on this program has already begun and a Request to Plan form will be submitted at the end of July 2020. This academic priority connects directly with Strategic Goal 1 *Partner for Student Success*, Goal 2 *Integrate Planning and Assessment*, and Strategic Goal 4 *Support the Community*.

LPN Program: Helena College's nursing program has been ranked #1 nationally, based on graduate passage rate of the NCLEX (National Council Licensure Examination) and employment rates for recent graduates. The 3-semester Certificate of Applied Science Practical Nursing (LPN) option admits students once a year in the spring semester. To meet the needs of rural communities, Helena College plans to move the didactic portion of the Practical Nursing CAS online beginning Spring, 2022. The lab and clinical portions of the program will be conducted in collaboration with the rural critical access hospitals. In addition to completing all necessary documentation for OCHE, BOR, NWCCU and DOE, the next year will be spent moving the didactic portion of the curriculum online and planning clinical and lab experiences for online students in their rural areas. This academic priority connects directly with Strategic Goal 1 *Partner for Student Success*, Goal 2 *Integrate Planning and Assessment*, and Goal 4 *Support the Community*.