

Montana University System
REQUEST TO PLAN FORM – ACADEMIC, ADMINISTRATIVE OR RESEARCH UNIT

ITEM 221-1006-R1125**Meeting Date****Item Name**Center/Institute/Unit Title: **Center for Human-Centered AI**Campus: **University of Montana-Missoula**

Expected Final Submission Date:

Contact Name/Info: **Zach Rossmiller - zachary.rossmiller@umontana.edu**

This form is meant to increase communication, collaboration, and problem-solving opportunities throughout the MUS in the center/institute development process. The completed form should exceed 2-3 pages. For more information regarding the center/institute approval process, please visit <http://mus.edu/che/arsa/academicproposals.asp>.

1) Provide a brief description of the new center/institute (unit).

The Center for Human-Centered AI will serve as a convener and collaborator across the Montana University System and beyond. Internally, it will connect faculty and staff across disciplines—education, business, computer science, humanities, health, and the creative arts—to develop shared approaches for integrating AI into teaching, learning, and research.

System-wide, the Center will build pathways for collaboration with other MUS campuses, including course sharing, faculty development, and joint research initiatives. It will also engage K–12 partners, statewide digital learning initiatives, and tribal colleges to expand access to AI education and support seamless pathways from secondary to postsecondary learning.

The Center will cultivate strong relationships with Montana employers and industry partners to align academic programs with workforce needs, co-develop applied research projects, and create opportunities for internships and experiential learning. At the national level, the Center will position UM and MUS to participate in regional and federal AI research and education networks, enhancing competitiveness for external funding and partnerships.

2) Describe the need for the center/institute. Specifically, how the center/institute meets current student, state, and industry research or community engagement needs. (Please cite sources in an addendum to this document).

Artificial intelligence is rapidly transforming education, research, and workforce expectations nationwide. For Montana, the stakes are particularly high: our state must prepare students not just to use AI but to shape it responsibly and innovatively. Employers are increasingly identifying AI literacy, critical thinking, and ethical reasoning as essential skills for graduates entering the workforce.

At the same time, AI is reshaping how faculty conduct research and how students learn. Without a coordinated statewide approach, efforts risk becoming fragmented, leaving institutions and communities behind. The Center will meet this need by serving as a hub for AI education and research across the MUS, ensuring that every Montana student and faculty member has equitable access to training, tools, and opportunities.

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This work builds on the momentum of The Future Project, which since 2023 has engaged hundreds of faculty, staff, and students in shaping UM's approach to AI. By formalizing that work in a Center, UM will ensure Montana has a durable structure to advance innovation, prepare an AI-ready workforce, and lead responsibly in this critical space.

3) Describe how the center/institute fits with the institutional mission, strategic plan, and the existing MUS and institutional portfolios (refer to the most recent institutional Academic Priorities and Planning Statement).

The University of Montana's mission emphasizes whole-person education, ethical leadership, and service to community. The Center directly advances these priorities by equipping students with AI competencies while ensuring education remains human-centered and value-driven.

UM's AI Commitment underscores the importance of equitable access, transparency, academic integrity, and faculty development. These principles will guide the Center's work, ensuring that the adoption of AI strengthens academic freedom, dignity, and human creativity.

At the MUS level, the Center aligns with system goals to expand research capacity, foster innovation, and support workforce readiness. By situating UM as the statewide hub for AI, the Center will complement existing institutional strengths and fill an emerging gap in MUS's academic and research portfolio.

4) Describe any opportunities for collaboration you have identified or initiated either within the institution or between MUS institutions (i.e. articulation, course-sharing, research collaboration). Include potential contacts and their institutional affiliation.

The Center is envisioned not as a single-campus initiative, but as a collaborative, statewide resource for the Montana University System. From the outset, its design and activities will be shaped through partnerships between the University of Montana, Montana State University, and affiliate campuses across the MUS. This ensures the Center is a unifying effort that strengthens all institutions rather than creating competition among them.

Collaboration will include course-sharing and curriculum development across campuses, joint faculty research initiatives, and coordinated professional development for instructors. By pooling expertise and resources, MUS institutions can collectively accelerate AI integration into teaching and research in ways no single campus could achieve alone.

The Center will also engage K–12 partners, statewide digital learning initiatives, and Montana's tribal colleges, ensuring broad and equitable access to AI education. Employers and industry partners will be integral collaborators, helping align programs with workforce needs and offering applied research opportunities. Finally, at the national level, the Center will position MUS institutions to participate jointly in federal AI consortia and compete collaboratively for large-scale research and education grants.

The Center will be housed at UM but function as a system-level resource, with governance and programming designed to ensure participation from MSU and affiliate campuses.

5) Describe any significant new financial resources (staff and/or facilities) needed to launch and sustain the center/institute. How do you anticipate supporting this new center/institute/unit

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The Center will launch using existing resources, drawing on UM’s current faculty expertise, administrative capacity, and digital infrastructure. Faculty affiliates across disciplines will contribute through joint appointments and research collaborations, while existing classrooms, labs, and IT resources will provide the foundation for teaching and research initiatives.

Over time, the Center will coordinate with MUS partners to identify shared infrastructure needs and pursue external support to enhance capacity. Competitive federal grants, philanthropic support, and industry partnerships will be pursued to grow the Center’s impact and ensure long-term sustainability.

By relying on existing resources at the outset and scaling responsibly through collaboration and external funding, the Center will be both financially prudent and strategically positioned to maximize impact statewide.

Addendum: Supporting Sources

National & Global Context

- **National Science Foundation (NSF).** *National AI Research Institutes Program Solicitation*. 2023.
Highlights the national priority of expanding AI research and education infrastructure to strengthen U.S. competitiveness and workforce development.
- **EDUCAUSE.** *2024 Horizon Report: Teaching and Learning Edition*. EDUCAUSE, 2024.
Identifies artificial intelligence as the leading force reshaping pedagogy, assessment, and faculty development in higher education.
- **World Economic Forum (WEF).** *Future of Jobs Report 2023*. Geneva: WEF, 2023.
Projects that AI and digital skills are among the fastest-growing competencies demanded by employers across industries.

Montana Context

- **University of Montana.** *The Future Project*. Accessed October 2025. <https://umontana.ai/future>
UM’s university-wide initiative launched in 2023, guiding deliberative exploration of AI’s role in teaching, learning, and Montana’s workforce.
 - **University of Montana.** *AI Commitment*. Accessed October 2025. <https://umontana.ai/commitment>
Outlines UM’s principles for responsible AI adoption, emphasizing human flourishing, equitable access, and academic integrity.
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*Not applicable to the Community Colleges.	