



Montana University System

Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education

560 N. Park Avenue – PO Box 203201 – Helena, Montana 59620-3201
(406) 449-9124 - FAX (406) 449-9171

MONTANA UNIVERSITY SYSTEM ACADEMIC PRIORITIES

and Analysis of AY 2025-26 Campus Academic Priority and Planning Statements

ACADEMIC PRIORITIES AND PLANNING STATEMENTS

Where do Academic Priorities and Planning Statements fit into the MUS program approval process?

The academic program approval process approved by the BOR in November 2019 requires campuses to submit an annual report to the Board on their academic priorities and planning. This statement is meant to give the Board a broad overview of campus's academic direction, provide useful context for the Board as it considers new academic proposals, and identify some of the specific program proposals that the Board may see from each campus in the coming year. The Priorities and Planning Statement also provides an opportunity for campuses to describe, in broad terms, the process they use to prioritize and review academic programming.

How might the BOR use these reports?

OCHE and the Board can use these reports to:

- Identify areas of overlap in forthcoming academic programming, so that OCHE and campuses can organize early coordination and state-level conversation.
- Evaluate the alignment between a campus's academic priorities, mission parameters, and emerging local, state, and regional needs.
- Understand campus-level procedures for reviewing and prioritizing academic programming.

PLANNING THEMES AND HIGHLIGHTS FROM ACROSS THE SYSTEM

- **Workforce- Aligned Education**
Almost every institution emphasized workforce development, specifically focusing on Montana and regional needs.
- **Stackable and Flexible Credentials**
Campuses have placed strong emphasis on ensuring that programs are stackable, modular, and in flexible modalities that allow students to enter the workforce quickly with the correct skills and build towards advanced degrees later.
- **Focus on Healthcare for Montana**
Healthcare workforce demands continue to be a large challenge in Montana. Campuses are choosing to address these demands with strategic focuses on healthcare.
- **Collaboration and Partnerships with Internal and External Partners**
Mentioned in almost every report was the desire and the focus to be responsive to the needs of students, the state of Montana, and the changing economy
- **Program Maintenance vs. Program Expansion**
While adding new programs is important, some institutions are choosing to focus on strengthening existing programs and strategic program assessment.

OVERLAP ANALYSIS

To help focus conversation on the 2025 forthcoming academic proposal template, OCHE has developed a short list of proposals that showcase areas of overlap and potential collaboration.

| Program Area | Institutions Involved |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| Plumbing | DCC, FVCC |
| Cybersecurity | UM, Great Falls College |
| Construction Trades | Montana Tech (Highlands), UMW, FVCC |
| Healthcare Programs (OT, PTA, Dental) | UM, FVCC, Helena, Great Falls |
| Business Administration & Sports Management | UM, UMW |
| Media/Entertainment Studies | UM, UMW |

AY 2025-2026 SYSTEM ACADEMIC PRIORITIES

OCHE anticipates focusing on five academic planning priorities in the coming year to ensure that the system's academic offerings are responsive to the needs of Montana students and the state economy.

1. Academic Program Review – a more intentional look at how programs are succeeding across the MUS
2. Review of Policy 301.11 and 303.1 – Definitions and outcomes of the bachelor's degree
3. AI in the Classroom
4. Dual Enrollment Pathways/Future Ready Payments
5. Review of course alignment (Math Pathways, AP/IB Alignment, CCN Rubrics)