

Montana University System

Academic Priorities and Planning Statements

2025-26

University of Montana

University of Montana Western

Montana Technological University

Helena College University of Montana

Montana State University

Montana State University Billings

Montana State University Northern

Great Falls College

Miles Community College

Flathead Valley Community College

Dawson Community College

UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA

ACADEMIC PRIORITIES AND PLANNING STATEMENT

Academic Year 2025-2026

The Montana University System (MUS) Board of Regents (BOR) has requested additional context to support the decisions they make regarding “Requests to Plan” for new academic programs and research centers/institutes. **Toward that end, we ask that each institution submit a report addressing all questions listed below, not to exceed four pages, no later than 5 p.m. on Friday, July 11, 2025.**

Separately, please fill-in the Forthcoming Academic Proposals spreadsheet describing academic programs or research centers/institutes that you anticipate may 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.

1. Provide 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 University of Montana’s priorities for AY 2025–26 focus on strengthening student success, advancing curricular relevance, and enhancing the impact of research. Our academic priorities include better managing student success in gateway courses, embedding career readiness into curricula, and improving undergraduate advising. They reflect our institutional mission of inclusive prosperity and directly support strategic objectives outlined in the FY26 Annual Playbook, particularly the goals of improving persistence and completion, aligning programs with workforce needs, and expanding access to flexible learning opportunities. Our research priorities aim to increase UM’s engagement with state and federal partners in areas of institutional strength—including mental and behavioral health, AI and cyber, environmental resilience—while investing in internal research infrastructure and faculty support. Together, these efforts serve our vision to be a Flagship for the Future by delivering high-quality, accessible education and producing knowledge that addresses complex societal challenges.

2. Provide a brief description of the process used determine these academic priorities.

The academic priorities for AY 2025–26 were developed through a collaborative, iterative planning process. Academic Affairs gathered Strategic Outlooks from each college, which were then synthesized to identify common themes and needs. These findings were shared with the Deans and Academic Officers for discussion and refinement. Input from SWOT analyses, project insights from the FY25 Playbook, and insights from our NWCCU accreditation response further informed these academic priorities.

3. Provide 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.

The University of Montana expects to move forward with several recently approved academic and research programs in the coming year that respond to both statewide needs and student demand. We will begin offering the Entertainment, Event, and Sports Management major within the B.S in Business

Administration, enroll our first class of Occupational Therapy students, continue building the Physician Associate Program, and launch the MFA in Game Design and Interactive Media. The College of Health and Missoula College will be working collaboratively in developing pathways to address the continued need for more nurses in the workforce. These initiatives aim to increase access to high-demand, high-impact career pathways while also contributing to broader strategic goals such as enrollment and state impact. We will also launch our new College of Science and reimagine the College that includes the Humanities and Social Sciences. On the research front, UM is pursuing new collaborations that reinforce our R1 status and deepen engagement with state and regional partners despite current federal funding challenges. We do not anticipate a significant number of RTPs this academic year as our current focus is on the continued maintenance of our overall academic portfolio to ensure recent strategic enrollment initiatives like Cybersecurity and Criminology can continue to grow.

4. Provide a description outlining how program modality, student population served, and campus partnerships factor into new academic or research programming.

These are core design principles for new programs at UM. The Educational Initiatives and Innovation Sector continues to do market analysis for new offerings that incorporate hybrid and online delivery to meet the needs of working adults, rural Montanans, military-connected learners, and other nontraditional student groups. Programming is being developed with attention to cultural responsiveness and inclusion for Indigenous, first-generation, and underserved students. This includes the Blackfoot Eco-Knowledge initiative to establish and expand AR/VR pedagogical approaches and our recently established Ingenious Ways of Knowing course for STEM students. Partnerships within and across campus—between academic departments, student support services, UOnline, and research units—ensure that new programs provide integrated academic and co-curricular experiences. This approach strengthens relevance, improves access, and positions UM as a flexible and inclusive platform for learning.

5. If/where applicable, provide 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.

UM continues to assess its academic portfolio using both annual and BOR review mechanisms, guided by relevance, mission alignment, and sustainability. Programs with consistently low enrollment, limited graduation outcomes, or minimal alignment with strategic goals are being continuously monitored. Units are encouraged to identify legacy offerings or resource-intensive activities that no longer serve students effectively and to reallocate effort toward high-impact, mission-aligned areas. These decisions are grounded in data, informed by shared governance, and pursued with the aim of strategic reinvestment.

6. Briefly describe any accreditation activities completed over the past year (e.g., reports submitted, responses received, accreditor recommendations) and accreditation activities planned for the upcoming year.

In 2024, the University of Montana completed its NWCCU Evaluation of Institutional Effectiveness (EIE), receiving two recommendations focused on enhancing the integration of Academic Affairs into institutional planning and strengthening learning outcomes assessment across programs. In response, UM launched initiatives tied to the FY26 Playbook that address these priorities, including refining the academic review process and developing institutional learning outcomes. We are currently preparing our NWCCU *Ad hoc* Report and visit for Spring 2026 to address progress on both recommendations. This is one of the reasons OCHE agreed to pause UM's participation in Program Review this coming year. Several programs

are also undergoing or completing discipline-specific accreditation cycles, including our new School of Physician Associate Studies.

7. Briefly describe any strategic planning activities anticipated to occur in the coming year (e.g. revision of your campus strategic plan).

UM's strategic planning work in AY 2025–26 will focus on the continued implementation of the FY26 Annual University Playbook and the development of sector-specific playbooks for Academic Affairs and Research and Creative Scholarship. These efforts aim to strengthen alignment, clarify priorities, and support ongoing mission fulfillment. In addition, we continue to refine our institutional KPIs and peer comparators. Planning efforts will also include defining institutional learning outcomes and refining our assessment framework to better demonstrate curricular relevance and program impact and support accreditation.

University of Montana Western

ACADEMIC PRIORITIES AND PLANNING STATEMENT

Academic Year 2025-2026

The Montana University System (MUS) Board of Regents (BOR) has requested additional context to support the decisions they make regarding “Requests to Plan” for new academic programs and research centers/institutes. **Toward that end, we ask that each institution submit a report addressing all questions listed below, not to exceed four pages, no later than 5 p.m. on Friday, July 11, 2025.**

Separately, please fill-in the Forthcoming Academic Proposals spreadsheet describing academic programs or research centers/institutes that you anticipate may 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.

1. Provide 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.

As a regional comprehensive university, UMW is tasked with providing “comprehensive education across the certificate, associate, and baccalaureate level in academic and professional program areas of need within the state and ... region”; to provide this comprehensive education, UMW is committed to continuing to deliver a strong liberal arts foundation alongside a growing range of academic and professional programs, in fulfillment of the charge to “contribute to economic development, social and cultural enhancement, and civic engagement” ([MT BOR policy 219.1](#)). As the United States increasingly sees colleges and universities reducing available programs, thereby limiting student choice and, ultimately, their opportunities for personal as well as professional growth, it is UMW’s goal to remain invested in a broad range of academic options for the benefit of our students (many of whom already enter the university underprepared and with limited previous opportunities), their communities, and the region more broadly.

As part of that investment and our ongoing commitment to being a “leader and innovator in experiential education” ([UMW mission statement](#)), UMW will use AY 2025-26 to reexamine, refine, and expand our current program offerings and their experiential learning opportunities, with the special aim of strengthening our traditional academic and general education programs. By revisiting our overall curriculum and its alignment with our principles of liberal and experiential education, exploring new opportunities for faculty development and community engagement, and restructuring our student support offices and procedures, we can ensure that UMW continues to fulfill its state-level institutional mission.

Additionally, the academic goals presented above feed into several projects that expand our program offerings and community partnerships through new certificates, minors, and community- and partner-centered collaborations. Collectively, these projects and the aforementioned priorities for the year contribute to the ongoing fulfillment of the first two objectives of the current strategic plan: “Objective One—Strengthening Experiential Learning” and “Objective Two—Enhancing the Whole Student Experience.” As we pursue these plans during AY 2025-26, we also aim to strengthen student services, improve academic preparation and program outcomes, and enhance the real-world readiness of our graduates in service of those same objectives.

These efforts are central to advancing UMW's institutional charge as noted above and our mission of academic excellence and innovation through the unique Experience One model.

2. Provide a brief description of the process used determine these academic priorities.

As currently structured, UMW Academic Affairs consists of four divisions—Education; Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences; Mathematics and Natural Sciences; and Professional Studies—each led by a faculty member who serves as Division Chair. The Provost's Office works directly with the Division Chairs to determine UMW's academic priorities for the year. This structure is intentionally designed to support the organic development of priorities from the ground up, encouraging input and innovation from faculty and other academic units rather than relying solely on top-down directives. Such an approach, supported by data and research provided by our administration, the MUS, and state agencies, ensures that strategic initiatives directly engage the university's own subject matter experts and their advisors and contacts in their fields, fostering a more informed, responsive, and sustainable planning process for addressing academic opportunities, emerging challenges, and student needs.

3. Provide 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.

In support of UMW's academic priorities, we hope to pursue the following:

- In the Division of Math and Natural Sciences, we are preparing proposals for two new major projects: the Working Lands and Waters Center, through which UMW faculty will work with community partners to train land and water professionals via service-learning projects and community collaboration with our Environmental Sciences and Ecology degree programs; and the Montana Dark Sky Institute, a multidisciplinary research, education, and outreach project focused on the unique night sky and nocturnal environments in Montana. In addition to these, we are also continuing exploration of a math minor leading to a teaching endorsement.
- In the Division of Professional Studies, we are interested in developing a Sprint Degree for our B.S. in Business Administration, and we are considering offering this existing program in an online modality. We are also in conversations with Little Big Horn College to develop a 2+2 program in Business Administration and in Farm & Ranch Management. Work is already underway on several potential short-term certificates to address workforce needs, such as Meat Processing, various construction trades, a Range Management or Range Rider interdisciplinary program, and Medical Billing. Finally, we are considering a new B.S. degree in Sports Administration and a certificate in personal training.
- In the Division of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences, we are continuing to explore the possibility of expanded student writing support through the addition of a writing center; additionally, we are planning several new programs in support of the growing role of media in the national and regional economy. Specifically, we are working on new minors in Media Arts, Filmmaking, and Integrated Digital Arts and certificates in Acting for the Camera and Entertainment Management.
- In the Division of Education, work continues on a potential online Master of Education degree as well as a B.S. in Industrial Trades Education. We also plan to strengthen our current role as the state Residency HUB campus in the coming year by utilizing a recently received grant for additional support training and expansion of the program's capacity.

4. Provide a description outlining how program modality, student population served, and campus partnerships factor into new academic or research programming.

When developing new academic or research programming, UMW gives careful consideration to program modality, the student populations served—including Montana residents, rural and place-bound students, first-generation students, and adult learners—and potential campus partnerships with local, state, and federal partners. Special attention is paid to alignment with experiential learning principles and the ability to effectively implement the Experience One model. UMW's faculty and their professional contacts also provide important guidance and insight as leaders in the curriculum process, further supporting alignment of academic development and workforce preparation with the needs of Montana and beyond.

5. If/where applicable, provide 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.

We are currently considering a moratorium on the Constitutional Studies interdisciplinary minor and the Sociology major and minor, with full discussions and decisions planned for the fall.

6. Briefly describe any accreditation activities completed over the past year (e.g. reports submitted, responses received, accreditor recommendations) and accreditation activities planned for the upcoming year.

Along with the submission of our annual accreditation report to NWCCU, UMW's seven-year accreditation review will occur in Spring 2026 after being postponed by one year; we had previously submitted a "Year Six, Policies, Regulations, and Financial Review" in Spring 2024. Early report drafting and support meetings have already begun and will continue throughout the fall semester.

7. Briefly describe any strategic planning activities anticipated to occur in the coming year (e.g. revision of your campus strategic plan).

We have begun a two-year process to revise our strategic plan. Our two co-chairs are currently holding meetings with a diverse group of stakeholders, including students and community members, to address the development of new mission, vision, purpose, and values statements, with these serving as the basis for further plan development beginning in the fall. We expect to complete the new strategic plan during the 2025-2026 academic year.

Montana Technological University

ACADEMIC PRIORITIES AND PLANNING STATEMENT

Academic Year 2025-2026

The Montana University System (MUS) Board of Regents (BOR) has requested additional context to support the decisions they make regarding “Requests to Plan” for new academic programs and research centers/institutes. **Toward that end, we ask that each institution submit a report addressing all questions listed below, not to exceed four pages, no later than 5 p.m. on Friday, July 11, 2025.**

Separately, please fill-in the Forthcoming Academic Proposals spreadsheet describing academic programs or research centers/institutes that you anticipate may 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.

1. **Provide 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.**

Montana Technological University’s academic priorities are guided by three overarching goals articulated in our strategic plan: **Student Success, Programs of Distinction,** and a **Healthy and Vibrant Campus Ecosystem.** These priorities align with our institutional mission and our Montana University System designation as a Special Focus Institution in STEM and Health Sciences.

Our four academic units—**Lance College of Mines and Engineering (LCME), College of Letters, Sciences, and Professional Studies (CLSPS), Graduate Programs,** and **Highlands College**—work collaboratively to integrate instruction, research, and workforce readiness. By bridging students with industry, research with application, and disciplines with shared purpose, we foster a dynamic and hands-on learning environment. This approach prepares graduates to lead, solve complex problems, and contribute meaningfully to their communities and professions.

In the coming year, our academic priorities are centered on expanding Montana Tech’s reach and impact in **energy** and **workforce development.** Under the leadership of the newly appointed Lance Energy Chair and the Interim Dean of LCME, we are advancing *Proposals to Plan* that address energy imperatives—including petroleum, electrical, nuclear, geothermal, solar, wind, and hydroelectric—building on Montana Tech’s historic and emerging strengths in extractive and sustainable energy fields.

Simultaneously, **Highlands College** is accelerating its workforce development initiatives with four new *Proposals to Plan* that extend our successful Construction Technology program, broaden health professions curricula, and launch an innovative AI training program tailored to skilled trades. These initiatives reflect our strategic commitment to meeting state and national workforce needs while offering students new pathways to economic mobility and community impact.

2. Provide a brief description of the process used determine these academic priorities.

Two major planning efforts completed over the past year—a Master Facilities Plan and the identification of priorities for an upcoming Comprehensive Campaign—directly inform institutional strategy. These efforts incorporated broad input from faculty, staff, students, alumni, and the Butte community, ensuring consultative and mission-aligned decision-making. Strategic priorities reflect a strong commitment to our legacy STEM and health sciences programs—our special focus designation—and our robust trades education offerings.

In parallel, Montana Tech continues to integrate feedback from Industrial Advisory Boards into curricular review processes, ensuring academic programs remain rigorous, industry-relevant, and aligned with workforce demands. This collaborative and iterative approach helps ensure that Montana Tech graduates are exceptionally well-prepared for high-impact careers in Montana and beyond.

3. Provide 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 the coming year, Montana Technological University will pursue several academic initiatives that reflect our institutional priorities in energy, advanced manufacturing, technological innovation, and workforce-aligned education. These efforts are grounded in our strategic goals to expand interdisciplinary programming, strengthen graduate education, and respond to the economic and workforce needs of Montana.

At the North Campus, we are advancing three new academic programs that underscore our commitment to innovation and research capacity. We intend to submit a Request to Plan for an undergraduate minor in Mechatronics—an interdisciplinary field that merges mechanical and electrical engineering and computer science—to support Montana’s growing advanced manufacturing and automation sectors. Additionally, we will submit a Request to Plan for a new Ph.D. in Energy Engineering that will leverage our core strengths in extractive industries, power systems, and energy conversion. This doctoral program will serve as a hub for cutting-edge research in areas such as critical materials, carbon management, and power systems. A third initiative under consideration is a new program in Nuclear, initially scoped as a minor or certificate, to prepare students for careers in nuclear energy and contribute to national efforts around grid resilience and energy security.

Highlands College, Montana Tech’s two-year college, will submit Requests to Plan for four new programs that align with our priorities in workforce development, applied learning, and technological fluency. Two AAS degrees in Construction Technology—Option A: Commercial Track and Option B: Restoration Track—will provide students with targeted preparation for high-demand construction careers. A new Certificate of Applied Science in Medical Skills Training will offer a rapid credential for entry into healthcare professions, directly addressing critical workforce shortages in the region. Additionally, a proposed AAS-to-BAS pathway in Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning Technologies will further Montana Tech’s strategic commitment to

embedding computing and data literacy across the curriculum, preparing graduates for digitally enabled careers in diverse sectors.

Together, these academic planning efforts demonstrate Montana Tech's unified commitment—across both campuses—to advancing educational excellence, driving economic development, and meeting the needs of Montana's industries and communities.

4. Provide a description outlining how program modality, student population served, and campus partnerships factor into new academic or research programming.

The nuclear program will involve some level of online/hyflex instruction with remote instruction from industrial and National Laboratory experts. The Mechatronics Minor and PhD in Energy Engineering will be offered as in-person instruction. Students served for all programs will be primarily engineering students enrolled at Montana Tech. If a certificate in Nuclear is offered, individuals may be able to take classes leading to a certificate without being an enrolled undergraduate or graduate student at Montana Tech. The PhD program will leverage the infrastructure (expertise and facilities) developed in support of our two existing PhD programs and MS programs.

5. If/where applicable, provide 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.

None at this time.

6. Briefly describe any accreditation activities completed over the past year (e.g. reports submitted, responses received, accreditor recommendations) and accreditation activities planned for the upcoming year.

The Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU) reaffirmed Montana Technological University's accreditation following its Spring 2024 Evaluation of Institutional Effectiveness and commended the institution for its distinctive focus on science and technology, student-centered services, collaborative culture, and commitment to experiential learning. Six recommendations were issued for improvement, prompting several assessment activities planned for the coming years. In 2025, the university will submit an ad hoc report addressing its articulation of mission-fulfillment goals and the accuracy of published materials. A 2026 ad hoc report with a visit will assess progress on institutional planning, assessment systems, and use of disaggregated student achievement data. By 2027, the university is expected to demonstrate how assessment results are used to improve student learning. These scheduled activities aim to ensure continuous improvement in institutional effectiveness, academic quality, and accountability.

7. Briefly describe any strategic planning activities anticipated to occur in the coming year (e.g. revision of your campus strategic plan).

Montana Technological University continues to advance its strategic priorities through a well-defined institutional plan guided by our mission, vision, and measurable goals. This plan includes clear objectives and key performance indicators (KPIs) in four primary areas: enrollment, retention, degree completion, and experiential learning. These KPIs were developed and refined through a comprehensive, campus-wide engagement process.

The coming year will be a pivotal period of strategic alignment and implementation, shaped by recent leadership transitions. Dr. Johnny MacLean began his tenure as Montana Tech's 13th Chancellor on June 1, 2025. Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost Tim Elgren joined the institution in July 2024, Tammy Burke assumed the role of Dean of Highlands College in June 2025, Dr. Katie Hailer, Professor and Chair of Chemistry, stepped in as Interim Vice Chancellor of Research and Dean of Graduate Studies June 1, 2025, and Dr. Jack Skinner was appointed Interim Dean of the Lance College of Mines and Engineering in August 2024. These leadership appointments position the university to sharpen its focus and advance new initiatives aligned with our core values. The Chancellor and Provost will present priorities for the coming year at the start of the new academic year.

Helena College

ACADEMIC PRIORITIES AND PLANNING STATEMENT

Academic Year 2025-2026

The Montana University System (MUS) Board of Regents (BOR) has requested additional context to support the decisions they make regarding “Requests to Plan” for new academic programs and research centers/institutes. **Toward that end, we ask that each institution submit a report addressing all questions listed below, not to exceed four pages, no later than 5 p.m. on Friday, July 11, 2025.**

Separately, please fill-in the Forthcoming Academic Proposals spreadsheet describing academic programs or research centers/institutes that you anticipate may 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.

1. Provide 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.

Helena College is focused on supporting all existing academic programs and new programs currently in development to ensure they meet the needs of the students, the community, and affiliated industry partners.

Helena College is prioritizing new academic programs that lead to in-demand careers and that require a certificate or degree and licensure, in addition to academic programs that aren’t already offered at another Montana college or university. An emphasis on programs that align with courses offered at Helena College and available resources, including space, will ensure that the College continues to fulfill its mission in assisting learners in achieving their educational and career goals while aligning with the guiding principles outlined in the [strategic plan](#).

Additional academic priorities include continued collaboration with affiliate partners to create seamless transfer opportunities (and possibly shared academic programs) for Montana students; a continued exploration of micro credentials and how they can be used to benefit Montana students and some Helena College programs; and continued partnerships and collaboration with K12 partners to better serve our students and our community.

2. Provide a brief description of the process used determine these academic priorities.

Academic priorities are determined in collaboration with Helena College faculty and staff, academic program advisory councils, and with the College’s community and industry partners. Data is used to assess both existing programs and to evaluate the need for new programs. Existing programs are fully reviewed every five years to ensure program productivity and financial stability. Programs that need more frequent review based on data are reviewed every 2-3 years to ensure they meet their intended outcomes.

3. Provide 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.

- a. Occupational Therapy Assistant (OTA) Program: The College is currently in the implementation phase for the new Occupational Therapy Assistant (OTA) program. The program has started the accreditation process with the Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education (ACOTE) and will submit the required candidacy application in April 2026. The program start date, as determined by ACOTE, is January 2027. Priorities in AY 25-26 include finalizing the program curriculum, hiring the Academic Fieldwork Coordinator and full-time OTA instructor positions, renovation of the OTA lab and office space, the ACOTE candidacy application, and promotion of the new program. The OTA program will give Montana students on healthcare pathways another option that leads directly to national certification, high demand employment opportunities, and continued educational pathways and opportunities. The new program utilizes existing general education courses, new OTA courses, and will have the same prerequisites as the ASRN program, allowing students flexibility in their pathways without loss of credits.
- b. Computer Science Transfer Pathway to UMW: Helena College and UM Western are working on a possible new transfer option for graduates of the HC Software Development AAS degree. Early discussions last year explored a pathway to a new BAS at UM Western that can be completed remotely from anywhere in Montana.
- c. Avionics: A certificate in avionics was approved in spring of 2022 as a stackable option for our existing aviation maintenance degree. Due to the change in FAA requirements for the aviation maintenance curriculum and the purchase of a new aircraft hangar to use as an instructional space, we planned a three-phase process of updating curriculum and moving our program to a new space. In the 2024-2025 academic year we completed phase 1 by updating our current aviation maintenance curriculum to align with new FAA requirements and purchasing the hangar. In 2025-2026 we will enter phase 2, the design phase of the purchased airplane hangar. Phase 2 will continue into 2026-2027 when we begin construction of the hangar to convert it into an instructional space. We will enter phase 3 in the fall of 2027 when we move our program to the aircraft hangar and begin offering the C.A.S. in avionics in the spring of 2028.
- d. Cosmetology: The College will submit the following academic proposals over the next year to continue to build upon the existing Cosmetology program:
 - i. Instructor/Teacher-Training: A 9-credit CTS designed to provide the coursework required by the Montana Board of Barbers and Cosmetologist for licensed barbers, cosmetologists, estheticians, and manicurists to become licensed instructors. The Board requirements include 90 hours/6 credits of teaching methods and 45 hours/3 credits of educational psychology for a total of 135 hours.
 - ii. Manicurist: A 10-15 credit CTS designed to provide the coursework required by the Montana Board of Barbers and Cosmetologists leading to manicurist licensure will be

created. The Board requirements include 400 hours of training, of which at least 40 hours is in theory and 360 hours in practical training. A new course prefix (NAIL) will be requested for courses in this program.

- iii. Barbering: A 30-36 credit CAS designed to provide the coursework required by the Montana Board of Barbers and Cosmetologists leading to barbering (nonchemical) licensure will be created. The Board requirements include 900 hours of training, of which at least 100 hours is in theory and 800 hours is in practical training. A RTP for a Barbering Nonchemical CAS will be forthcoming in the next 3-5 years. A new course prefix (BARB) will be requested for courses in this program.

4. Provide a description outlining how program modality, student population served, and campus partnerships factor into new academic or research programming.

Student population served, campus partnerships, and program modality are important considerations that factor into discussions about new academic programming. The College's consideration of these three areas may be best exemplified with the planning and implementation of our newest academic program, Occupational Therapy Assistant (OTA).

- a. Student Population: There are currently no OTA programs offered in the state of Montana, so Montana students wishing to enter this career field must leave the state to attend an OTA program. This in addition to the high demand for OTA's in Montana impacted the decision to start the OTA program at Helena College. It is also impacting the implementation of the program. Similar to the existing Cosmetology program, which is the only public Cosmetology program in the state, we expect the OTA program to attract students from around the state.
- b. Program Modality: A focus on program delivery and how the OTA program can serve rural students and communities has been a priority in both the planning and implementation phases of the new OTA program. Using the successful model used to deliver the Helena College LPN program to students at Bitterroot College, the OTA program hopes to utilize various course formats and schedules to allow students living in rural areas the opportunity to complete the program without moving to Helena and with minimal travel requirements. This program modality would allow students to complete their final 640 hours of fieldwork in healthcare settings and schools in their own community, thus providing a greater reach for the OTA program and impact for the state of Montana.
- c. Campus Partnerships: OTA is a CTE program that will rely heavily on campus partnerships, both with industry partners and with partner educational institutions.
 - a. Connection to industry partners around the state began in the research and planning phase of the program, both to help gauge the need for an OTA program in Montana and to establish new partnerships to support the new program and the eventual students. Relationship building with industry partners remains a priority in the implementation phase and program staff will work over the next year to finalize partnerships to ensure students can complete their required fieldwork with industry partners when the program begins in January 2027.

- b. Connection to educational partners around the state began in the research and planning phase of the program and will be prioritized in the implementation phase of the program. Ensuring the OTA program is created with pathways into and upon completion of the program is a priority so students can continue their education if and when they are ready. The program is focusing on educational partnerships that allow students with completed OTA degrees to enter as juniors, providing pathways to completion of baccalaureate degrees, and possibly, into one of the two Occupational Therapy Doctorate (OTD) programs in Montana.

5. If/where applicable, provide 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.

Helena College currently has four certificates and degrees on moratorium, all within the same IT & Programming academic program. The certificates and degrees were placed on moratorium in spring 2025 based on a faculty retirement and program data. The College is prioritizing the Software Development AAS degree in the program, which is where all students in the program are currently enrolled. The next 1-2 years will be used to assess how to best support the program and the students while continuing to ensure the program outcomes are met.

6. Briefly describe any accreditation activities completed over the past year (e.g. reports submitted, responses received, accreditor recommendations) and accreditation activities planned for the upcoming year.

NWCCU: Helena College will submit two ad hoc reports to NWCCU this year to update the Commission on progress toward addressing recommendations in the 2024 visit. The fall report focuses on structures for shared governance, and the spring report focuses on assessment and reporting practices.

ACEN: Helena College Nursing department had an accreditation site visit in March 2024. In October 2024, notice of the final decisions by the Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing (ACEN) Board of Commissioners was received. Helena College Associate Nursing program was granted continuing accreditation through spring of 2032. The nursing program had one area of strength and two areas for improvement: Area of strength –Program completion rates have been 94% or higher for the past three years. Suggestions for improvement: Program should ensure the nursing curriculum is implemented as published and that evaluation methods align with the progression of student learning outcomes. These areas for improvements were reviewed at the faculty end of semester meetings in 2024 and 2025 and will be addressed in the upcoming academic year.

ACOTE: Helena College will submit a Candidacy Application to the Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education (ACOTE) in April 2026. The Candidacy Application provides ACOTE with the institutional and programmatic information required to demonstrate that the OTA program is aligned with the ACOTE standards in three primary areas: General Requirements (institutional structure and processes, accreditation, and staffing), Content Requirements

(program curriculum and design), and Fieldwork Education (fieldwork reflects that scope and sequence of program curriculum). Upon review and approval of the Candidacy Application, Helena College will receive Candidacy Status and may admit its first class of students according to the approved ACOTE timeline. The program must have a pre-accreditation review, complete an initial on-site evaluation, and be granted Accreditation Status before its graduates will be eligible to sit for the National Board for Certification in Occupational Therapy (NBCOT) certification exam.

7. Briefly describe any strategic planning activities anticipated to occur in the coming year (e.g. revision of your campus strategic plan).

The current Helena College strategic plan is dated 2022-2027. In January 2026 we will begin preparatory activities with the campus to ensure adequate time to develop a strong plan.

Montana State University

ACADEMIC PRIORITIES AND PLANNING STATEMENT

Academic Year 2025-2026

The Montana University System (MUS) Board of Regents (BOR) has requested additional context to support the decisions they make regarding “Requests to Plan” for new academic programs and research centers/institutes. **Toward that end, we ask that each institution submit a report addressing all questions listed below, not to exceed four pages, no later than 5 p.m. on Friday, July 11, 2025.**

Separately, please fill-in the Forthcoming Academic Proposals spreadsheet describing academic programs or research centers/institutes that you anticipate may 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.

1. Provide 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.

This year’s academic priorities for MSU includes three certificate programs that are not a significant departure from current curriculum for which courses are already being taught. The three certificate programs are in-demand for workforce and professional development for Nursing and Gallatin colleges. Otherwise, there will be no substantively new programs requested this year. This year’s priorities will focus on assessing and streamlining current academic programs and assessing our current advising practices to increase retention and graduation rates for all MSU students (MUS Choosing Promise strategic plan - Goal 1.1.6).

Additionally, MSU is considering the development of departments for the Jake Jabs College of Business due to increased enrollments in the college. Gallatin College will also be prioritizing space considerations and moving design of a new building forward before considering new programs.

2. Provide a brief description of the process used to determine these academic priorities.

Academic priorities are informed using data from annual program assessments, 7-year program reviews or external accreditation reviews (reported to OCHE), employee’s needs, student interest, and fiscal and market analysis in conjunction with industry demand metered through advisory committees. These data resources inform departmental, college, and university discussions and ultimately requests to the Provost and the Executive Team that determines the final academic priorities for the year.

3. Provide 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.

MSU will continue to focus on our top priorities which are persistence, time to degree, and graduation rates of our students. Departments are revamping program curricula, streamlining

degree pathways, addressing high DFW courses, and reducing curricular complexities, including excessive prerequisites. MSU has no plans to submit substantially new academic or research programming this year beyond the RTPs that were approved in the spring of 2025. By minimizing the proliferation of new academic programs, departments will prioritize assessment and improvement of existing programs.

4. Provide a description outlining how program modality, student population served, and campus partnerships factor into new academic or research programming.

In general, program modality, student population served, and campus partnerships are standard questions on the forms in the approval process for new academic programs or research centers. Each committee and council weigh these factors in their decision to approve/disapprove.

MSU favors in-person modality and online sections are only considered where student demand dictates for particular courses. No course is offered only online (no in-person sections) unless it is part of an online program, which are primarily established to serve Montana's rural place-bound population. Student population served and campus partnerships

5. If/where applicable, provide 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.

MSU continuously reviews low to no enrollment programs and program options, with mission and employer demand in mind. This year, the Hospitality Management - Food Enterprises option will be terminated due to the lack of demand. New programs at the 3-year mark are also reviewed based on enrollment predictions and corrective action is planned where programs are falling short.

6. Briefly describe any accreditation activities completed over the past year (e.g. reports submitted, responses received, accreditor recommendations) and accreditation activities planned for the upcoming year.

MSU received accreditation reaffirmation in March of 2025 with 3 commendations and 3 recommendations. We are already addressing the 3 recommendations:

1) establish an advising assessment process. An advising assessment team of faculty, advising commons, and Gallatin College was sent to NACADA's Advising Assessment Institute and a task force was formed to develop a process for advising assessment. This task force has already set goals for the university's advising programs, made a recommendation to form a standing advising assessment committee, and develop a regular advising assessment process that will be established over the next year.

2) review the appropriateness of current comparator institutions and utilize comparative data for setting benchmarks. University Data and Analytics is working to establish a database warehouse that can be easily accessed for comparative data. We will be reevaluating our current list of peer

comparators per our accreditation recommendation. This reevaluation may lead to a request to the Board of Regents for a change.

3) assess all programs. We are working to weave externally accredited programs into annual program assessment and 7-year program review processes to consistently review the effectiveness of academic programs. We are also establishing a process for assessment of co-curricular and student support programs to inform decision-making at the institutional level on program effectiveness.

7. Briefly describe any strategic planning activities anticipated to occur in the coming year (e.g. revision of your campus strategic plan).

MSU's current strategic plan, Choosing Promise, expires in 2026. Any plans for launching a future strategic plan process will be determined by the university's new incoming president, in conjunction with the president's executive team and other campus constituents.

Montana State University Billings

ACADEMIC PRIORITIES AND PLANNING STATEMENT

Academic Year 2025-2026

The Montana University System (MUS) Board of Regents (BOR) has requested additional context to support the decisions they make regarding “Requests to Plan” for new academic programs and research centers/institutes. **Toward that end, we ask that each institution submit a report addressing all questions listed below, not to exceed four pages, no later than 5 p.m. on Friday, July 11, 2025.**

Separately, please fill-in the Forthcoming Academic Proposals spreadsheet describing academic programs or research centers/institutes that you anticipate may 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.

1. Provide 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.

Aligned with the strategic themes and objectives of MSU Billings university strategic plan (2019 – 2026), and following the framework described below under #2, the following academic priorities have been established. At the core of all these priorities are our goals to (1) design curricula that enhance student success; (2) meet market and student demand for existing programs and emerging areas; (3) meet the workforce needs of Billings, Montana, and the broader region we serve; (4) increase student access to courses needed to make timely progress toward degree completion; (5) improve the quality of our educational programs through assessment and program review processes; and (6) enhance support and opportunities for faculty to expand faculty research, scholarly, and creative activities, as well as faculty-led student research and creative works, with the goal of increasing extramural research dollars attracted to MSU Billings in support of faculty and students.

During the 2024-2025 academic year, MSU Billings made significant progress on two of its goals:

1. Instituted a required first year seminar course (COLS 108: The College Experience). This course, which will be required as a component of the general education core, will be taught for the first time in Fall 2025.). This course “provides resources, strategies, and learning environments that actively engage students in meeting their educational goals while increasing their knowledge of community, civic engagement, and service learning.”
2. Joined the MUS Course Sharing platform. MSUB began participating in Summer 2025, and is planning to scale its use of course sharing in the 2025-2026 school year. We anticipate that our involvement will meet our strategic goal (4) to increase student access to courses needed to make timely progress toward degree completion.

MSU Billings undertook a search for a new Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs in Fall 2024 and hired Dr. Lee Vartanian after a national search. Dr. Vartanian joins MSUB from Athens State University in Alabama, where he served as the Dean of the College of Education.

Additionally, MSUB is deep in preparation for its NWCCU Evaluation of Institutional Effectiveness in Fall 2025. The institution submitted its PRFR (Policy, Regulations and Financial Review) in Fall 2024, and received favorable feedback from NWCCU.

2. Provide a brief description of the process used determine these academic priorities.

At MSU Billings, we follow a collaborative, inclusive, consultative, and transparent process for establishing academic and institutional priorities, ensuring that all constituents are engaged in the decision-making process. Forthcoming program proposals follow a well-established and transparent process. We have developed a comprehensive framework and process that faculty and academic departments use to propose new programs. The Provost, Deans, Academic Senate Chair, and Senators representing their college constituents were involved in developing this framework. This process front-loads much of the conversations, background research, determination of student and employer demand for any new program, and examination of resources required in order to determine whether or not a program is a good candidate to be proposed as a new program. This process has significantly improved and elevated the quality of planning needed to bring new program proposals forward for consideration. Using this new framework and process, our faculty engage in collaborative and fact-finding conversations with Deans, Provost, and others related to the feasibility of new programs, short-term and long-term student and market demands, as well as short-term and long-term workforce needs. Relevant data are brought to consideration in determining market and workforce needs. Faculty bring initial ideas and plans to the Academic Senate, where the merits and justification for forthcoming program proposals are thoroughly discussed. Following approval by the Academic Senate, we pursue any additional steps required to seek program approval by MSU Bozeman, Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education (OCHE), and the Board of Regents.

3. Provide 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.

For AY 2025-26 no new no new academic or research programing is planned. One possible exception is the development of the Bachelor of Applied Science (BAS) in Applied Information Technology. MSUB is in a very early discussion phase for such a program. This is intended to be housed in the College of Business. The primary interest and motivation for such a program is to provide a pathway towards a 4-year degree for graduates of an AAS (initially for MSUB City College IT graduates, but ultimately also for AAS IT students for other MUS 2-year institutions and elsewhere).

4. **Provide a description outlining how program modality, student population served, and campus partnerships factor into new academic or research programming.**

The program outlined above would draw on students with an AAS degree in IT/Computer Science. Consistent with the definition of an BAS an AAS would be an admission requirement. MSUB University Campus would only provide the Upper Division and Gen Ed courses. This will require close partnership and coordination with other MUS community colleges. This in turn will likely require either fully online or Hyflex modality to serve students from other community colleges.

5. **If/where applicable, provide 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.**

MSUB graduate student enrollment has experienced a serious decline in recent years. MSUB currently supports 13 graduate programs + 1 graduate certificate. Many of these programs have consistently single digit enrollments. In the AY 2025-26 we will examine the future of these programs along the following dimensions,

- a. Identifying the target group for such programs and developing an effective marketing strategy.
- b. Consolidating overlapping programs into one program with different concentration tracts.
- c. Possible disinvestment and termination if necessary.

6. **Briefly describe any accreditation activities completed over the past year (e.g. reports submitted, responses received, accreditor recommendations) and accreditation activities planned for the upcoming year.**

Institutional Accreditation: In academic year 2024-25, MSU Billings began writing the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU) Year Seven: Evaluation of Institutional Effectiveness (EIE) report, due fall 2025. Hosting the comprehensive site visit October 8-10, 2025 is the institutional accreditation priority for the upcoming year.

MSU Billings also received feedback from the NWCCU on the review of the Year Six: Policies, Regulation and Financial Review (PRFR) report. We are pleased to report that the NWCCU issued no additional findings from that review. Additionally, MSU Billings' only outstanding recommendation from the NWCCU was marked as fulfilled during the PRFR review. MSU Billings currently has no outstanding recommendations.

Program Accreditation: During academic year 2024-25, MSU Billings hosted several program-level accreditation visits. MSU Billings' College of Business hosted the AACSB review team, the

Registered Nursing program at City College hosted a CNEA review team, and the College of Education virtually hosted a CAEP and state level review team. The College of Business and the Registered Nursing program have been re-accredited. The College of Education is awaiting the final report at this time but is expected to be re-accredited. During the upcoming academic year, the Clinical Rehabilitation and Mental Health Counseling program will undergo review by CACREP, the Paramedic program will undergo review by CAAHEP, CoAEMSP, and the Diagnostic Medical Sonography program will undergo its initial review for accreditation by the JRC-DMS.

7. Briefly describe any strategic planning activities anticipated to occur in the coming year (e.g. revision of your campus strategic plan).

Most of the [current strategic plan \(2019-2026\)](#) work has been operationalized. Related to strategic planning is the implementation of the [Retention and Graduation Plan 2022-2027](#). Early progress demonstrates positive results, with increases in retention rates overall and for specific student subpopulations. While we are encouraged by the early progress, much remains to be done, and this work will continue in the coming year and beyond. MSU Billings is excited to embark on a new strategic visioning process that will coincide with the centennial celebration. As MSUB embarks on this new era, the campus and community will work collaboratively to form a new strategic plan. A small strategic planning group, including campus wide representation and community representation, has been established. An external consultant from the Billings community will lead feedback and information sessions to guide the work. The group will begin meeting in fall 2025, while feedback and information sessions are anticipated to take place in spring 2026.

Great Falls College MSU

ACADEMIC PRIORITIES AND PLANNING STATEMENT

Academic Year 2025-2026

The Montana University System (MUS) Board of Regents (BOR) has requested additional context to support the decisions they make regarding “Requests to Plan” for new academic programs and research centers/institutes. **Toward that end, we ask that each institution submit a report addressing all questions listed below, not to exceed four pages, no later than 5 p.m. on Friday, July 11, 2025.**

Separately, please fill-in the Forthcoming Academic Proposals spreadsheet describing academic programs or research centers/institutes that you anticipate may 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.

1. Provide 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.

High-Level Overview of Academic Priorities and Alignment with Institutional Mission and Strategic Plan

Great Falls College’s current academic priorities in both instruction and research are driven by our 2022–2027 Strategic Plan and our institutional mission to support student success, meet regional workforce needs, and provide accessible, high-quality education.

Instructional Priorities

Aligned with the strategic priority to “Foster an environment that expands enrollment and celebrates student resiliency,” the college conducted a comprehensive review of program offerings in Fall 2021. This analysis identified opportunities to enhance the program mix by addressing workforce demands and offering credentials that lead to livable wages. As a result, several new programs have been launched:

Fall 2022: Office Support CAS and Office Management AAS; Substance Abuse and Addictions Counseling AAS

Fall 2023: Early Childhood Education CAS and AAS

Fall 2024: Three Veterinary Technician credentials – Veterinary Office CAS, Veterinary Assistant CTS, and Veterinary Technician AAS

Fall 2025: Addictions Counseling CTS, added in response to strong enrollment in the AAS program

Ongoing instructional initiatives include expanding stackable credentials within existing programs, improving student persistence and retention, increasing dual enrollment completions, and strengthening pathways from non-credit to credit-bearing programs.

Enrollment and Retention

In support of the priority to “Clear the path for students to accomplish their educational goals,” the college developed both a Strategic Enrollment Management Plan and a Strategic Academic Master Plan. These initiatives guide efforts to enhance recruitment, retention, and student success. Instructional support has also been improved by redesigning the Tech Essentials course to better prepare students for digital platforms like Canvas and by updating the College Success Strategies course to boost student engagement and readiness.

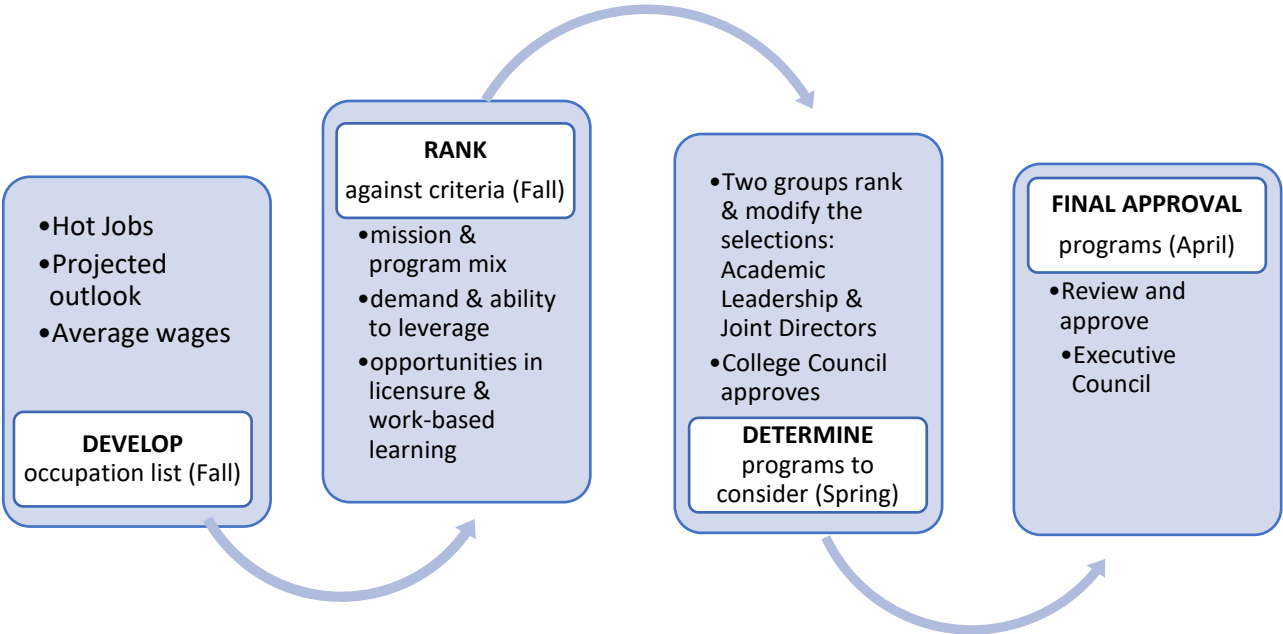
Assessment of Student Learning

The Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Committee is leading efforts to streamline program-level assessment by integrating data collection with Canvas, enabling automated reporting. Plans are in place to begin capturing institution-wide student learning outcomes starting in the 2025–26 academic year. This work directly supports the strategic goal of ensuring students achieve meaningful learning outcomes and are well-prepared for the workforce or further education.

Together, these academic initiatives reflect Great Falls College’s commitment to responsive programming, student-centered instruction, and continuous improvement, all of which are central to the institution’s mission and strategic direction.

2. Provide a brief description of the process used determine these academic priorities.

Great Falls College uses a 4-step process to determine academic priorities outlined in the visual below. The Academic Leadership team begins the process each fall by creating a list of occupations with a bright outlook and living wages to consider offering. The list of occupations is ranked against criteria developed that meets the mission of the institution, fits our current program mix, has workforce demand, and opportunities for licensure or work-based learning. The list is shared with Joint Directors and College for input and feedback, with the College Council approving what moves forward. The Executive Council has final approval of the program offerings.



3. Provide 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.

Planned New Academic and Research Programming for the Coming Year

In alignment with Great Falls College’s academic priorities—particularly expanding access, meeting workforce needs, and supporting student success—the institution is planning several new academic initiatives in the coming year.

New Credential Program

A new Certificate of Technical Studies (CTS) in Addictions Counseling will launch next year. This program builds on the strong enrollment and success of the existing Addictions Counseling AAS degree and supports the region's need for trained behavioral health professionals. It also expands stackable credential pathways, supporting both workforce entry and academic progression.

Expansion of Healthcare Programs through Distance Delivery

To improve access and meet continued demand in healthcare fields, additional distance-learning cohorts will be added for both the Dental Hygienist and Physical Therapist Assistant programs. These expansions will provide more students—particularly in rural areas—with opportunities to enter high-demand, high-wage healthcare careers, aligning with the college's commitment to educational equity and workforce responsiveness.

Development of Dual Enrollment Academies

Great Falls College is also investing in early college pathways through the development of at least five Dual Enrollment Academies over the next five years. These academies will support high school students in earning college credit and exploring career-focused education. Current and planned academies include:

- Cybersecurity – launched, currently being revised
- General Education – in progress
- Elementary Education – in progress
- Carpentry/Building Trades – targeted for Fall 2025 launch
- Pre-Health Sciences – under discussion

These academies reinforce the college's strategic goals of increasing college readiness, expanding access to underrepresented students, and building strong pipelines into high-demand fields.

Through these targeted program additions and expansions, Great Falls College continues to respond to community and industry needs, promote student success, and support the academic priorities outlined in its 2022–2027 Strategic Plan.

4. Provide a description outlining how program modality, student population served, and campus partnerships factor into new academic or research programming.

Role of Program Modality, Student Population, and Campus Partnerships in New Academic or Research Programming

At Great Falls College, the development of new academic programming is guided by a thoughtful, collaborative process that considers three key factors: the needs of our student population, the most effective program delivery modalities, and opportunities for institutional and community partnerships.

Student Population Needs

Each proposed program begins with an assessment of the student populations we aim to serve—whether traditional students, adult learners, working professionals, or high school dual enrollment participants. We evaluate regional demand, barriers to access, and opportunities for student success to ensure new offerings are responsive and inclusive.

Program Modality

Program delivery methods are carefully selected to meet the needs of our diverse student body. This year, Great Falls College aligned its program and course delivery definitions with the Montana Board of Regents' standards and published this information on our website and in Banner. By doing so, we are improving transparency and helping students better understand expectations for online, hybrid, and face-to-face learning experiences.

Partnerships with Institutions and Industry

Before launching new programs, we assess whether similar offerings exist at other Montana University System institutions and explore potential collaboration rather than duplication. We also gather feedback from industry and community stakeholders to ensure our programs are aligned with workforce needs and provide clear employment pathways for graduates.

Through this integrated approach—balancing modality, student demographics, and strategic partnerships—Great Falls College ensures that new academic programs are relevant, accessible, and impactful, in full support of our institutional mission and academic priorities.

5. If/where applicable, provide 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.

Great Falls College has seen a downward enrollment trend in the one-year accredited dental assisting program despite several years of pointed efforts to increase enrollments. The program is now under campus review and could be considered for moratorium and/or termination.

6. Briefly describe any accreditation activities completed over the past year (e.g. reports submitted, responses received, accreditor recommendations) and accreditation activities planned for the upcoming year.

Great Falls College completed a year three mid-cycle review with NWCCU. The report and findings are [here](#).

7. Briefly describe any strategic planning activities anticipated to occur in the coming year (e.g. revision of your campus strategic plan).

The current strategic plan, *Forging Futures*, provides guidance to our campus community through 2027. Progress made on the metrics identified in the plan is shared monthly at the College Council meeting. The information and progress updates are available to the public [here](#). We will begin strategic planning activities in 2026.

Miles Community College

ACADEMIC PRIORITIES AND PLANNING STATEMENT

Academic Year 2025-2026

The Montana University System (MUS) Board of Regents (BOR) has requested additional context to support the decisions they make regarding “Requests to Plan” for new academic programs and research centers/institutes. **Toward that end, we ask that each institution submit a report addressing all questions listed below, not to exceed four pages, no later than 5 p.m. on Friday, July 12, 2024.**

Separately, please fill-in the Forthcoming Academic Proposals spreadsheet describing academic programs or research centers/institutes that you anticipate may 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.

1. Provide 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 2025/26 year at Miles Community College (MCC) is focused on academic priorities that align with our community college mission to prepare student for success and provides opportunities for lifelong learning through quality programs, community outreach, workforce training and partnerships. This includes our five strategic goals under our MCC Vision 2028 which are:

1. Operate from a position of student readiness and focus on student support, engagement, and completion strategies (KPI: Dual Enrollment conversion rate, First-year to Second-year retention, graduation rate).
2. Provide a variety of course and program methods and respond to regional employer requirements (KPI: Opportunity Realized Program, Workforce Solutions Program, CTE Advisory Board Meetings).
3. Develop Resources to engage alumni and community organizations and expand and facilitate employee and student volunteerism and service-learning (KPI: Alumni Membership, Employee Involvement in Community Organizations, and Student Outreach).
4. Continue to ensure the quality and relevance of academic programs and grow external giving (KPI: Foundation Contributions, Unrestricted contributions, and Academic Programs Review).
5. Develop engagement initiatives to welcome, reward, and advance employees and foster a diverse and inclusive workplace (KPI: diversity-related learning opportunities and Professional development Resources.)

2. Provide a brief description of the process used determine these academic priorities.

The process utilized to determine academic priorities includes review of all curriculum changes via the Academic Standards Committee and approval and review as applicable via OCHE processes and final approval via MCC Board of Trustees. Intake of new academic or workforce needs comes from many partnerships with local businesses, state/national organizations, advisory boards, staff and faculty members via community organizations, non-profit partnerships and many other resources. The academic affairs assessment processes also determine changes via course assessments, program assessments and program review on a regular review cycle that is fully completed every seven years.

3. **Provide 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.**

MCC is focusing on areas of growth with our Dual Enrollment and Early College efforts which include Opportunity Realized, Pioneer Express, and the conversion of those students' enrollment into continuing to take credits and/or enroll at MCC after completing high school. Additionally, MCC is working to expand business partnerships and growing enrollment with our Workforce Outreach via Workforce Solutions and Workforce Solutions + programs. Finally, MCC continues to expand our 2+2 Pathways and articulation agreements to increase opportunities for our transfer students to continue their educational pathways to various four-year colleges and universities.

4. **If/where applicable, provide 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.**

MCC will be conducting a full Academic Program Review in 2027. Should outcome elements from that process yield areas to consider for lesser priorities and/or consideration of disinvestment they will be considered at that time.

5. **Include additional details you find relevant for the BOR to consider as they make decisions about "Requests to Plan."**

MCC is currently not requesting any times for 2025-2026 for request to plan. Should new items arise via community needs, etc., those would be brought forth at that time.

6. **Briefly describe any accreditation activities completed over the past year (e.g. reports submitted, responses received, accreditor recommendations) and accreditation activities planned for the upcoming year.**

NWCCU Mid-Cycle visit is April 20-22, 2026 (Spring 2026 Semester).

ACEN visit for ASN Nursing Program is Oct. 6-8, 2026 (Fall 2026 Semester)

Jenzabar conversion is underway, anticipating rollout after Fall 2026.

7. **Briefly describe any strategic planning activities anticipated to occur in the coming year (e.g. revision of your campus strategic plan).**

MCC is in year 3 of our 2028 Strategic Plan and actions on all strategic goals and KPIs are underway.

Flathead Valley Community College

ACADEMIC PRIORITIES AND PLANNING STATEMENT

Academic Year 2025-2026

The Montana University System (MUS) Board of Regents (BOR) has requested additional context to support the decisions they make regarding “Requests to Plan” for new academic programs and research centers/institutes. **Toward that end, we ask that each institution submit a report addressing all questions listed below, not to exceed four pages, no later than 5 p.m. on Friday, July 11, 2025.**

Separately, please fill-in the Forthcoming Academic Proposals spreadsheet describing academic programs or research centers/institutes that you anticipate may 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.

1. Provide 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 mission of Flathead Valley Community College (FVCC), as approved by the Board of Trustees, is to “promote excellence in lifelong learning, focused on student success and community needs.”

FVCC’s academic priorities are workforce and transfer programs. These priorities meet the needs of business and industry, enable students to seamlessly transfer to a four-year institution and ensure student success. FVCC’s academic priorities are directly related to and support our mission and institutional strategic plan.

2. Provide a brief description of the process used determine these academic priorities.

Academic priorities are identified through a collaborative process. FVCC collaborates with business, industry, faculty, and transfer institutions to ensure academic priorities meet stakeholder needs. Data analysis of proposed priorities includes required resources. Academic priorities are reviewed by faculty, administrative and leadership committees and then by the Board of Trustees.

3. Provide 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.

FVCC has received repeated requests from surrounding communities to explore programs in dental hygiene, airframe and power programming, veterinarian technician, ultrasound tech, respiratory therapy, plumbing, and construction. The college is exploring the requirements and resources needed for each of these programs.

4. Provide a description outlining how program modality, student population served, and campus partnerships factor into new academic or research programming.

Considerations of modality, student population, and community partnerships are a natural part of our decision-making processes regarding academic programming. These considerations flow from the interdisciplinary nature of the key committees on campus—from the individual program level where programs sit within a broader division up to the executive leadership level, academic affairs, student affairs, workforce and community partnerships work hand in hand to analyze the key elements of what will make a program, and students, successful.

5. If/where applicable, provide 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.

As part of the program review process, FVCC continually reviews programs to determine continued need. These reviews may result in a recommendation for a program moratorium or termination. For AY2025-2026, no programs are being considered for moratorium or termination.

6. Briefly describe any accreditation activities completed over the past year (e.g. reports submitted, responses received, accreditor recommendations) and accreditation activities planned for the upcoming year.

The Strategic Planning and Accreditation Council, in coordination with the data team and feedback from the campus community, created dashboards and benchmarks for the college's mission fulfillment indicators, indicators that directly align and support each of FVCC's strategic goals.

In Fall 2025, FVCC will be compiling the relevant data on its policies and procedures and submitting the appropriate reports for its NWCCU Policies, Regulations, and Financial Review (PRFR) in Spring 2026.

7. Briefly describe any strategic planning activities anticipated to occur in the coming year (e.g. revision of your campus strategic plan).

Given that the current Strategic Plan expires at the end of the spring semester 2027, initial discussions around updates to the Strategic Plan will begin in Spring 2026.

Dawson Community College

ACADEMIC PRIORITIES AND PLANNING STATEMENT

Academic Year 2025-2026

The Montana University System (MUS) Board of Regents (BOR) has requested additional context to support the decisions they make regarding “Requests to Plan” for new academic programs and research centers/institutes. **Toward that end, we ask that each institution submit a report addressing all questions listed below, not to exceed four pages, no later than 5 p.m. on Friday, July 11, 2025.**

Separately, please fill-in the Forthcoming Academic Proposals spreadsheet describing academic programs or research centers/institutes that you anticipate may 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.

1. **Provide 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.**

DCC intentionally focuses on areas of study in economic sectors that form the backbone of our frontier communities. These fields – agriculture, criminal justice, business, education and welding – have a presence in virtually every community in our service area. We continue to look at ways to improve, enhance and modify these programs to best meet the evolving needs of employers in these fields.

2. **Provide a brief description of the process used determine these academic priorities.**

Dawson Community College determines its academic priorities through a collaborative mission-driven process.

Examples of how we have focused on the current fields (listed above) include adding 911-dispatch training and work with the Montana Law Enforcement Academy to offer trainings in criminal justice. We have worked on 2+2 agreements with university partners in education and business. Our partnership with the Montana Office of Public Instruction to offer a pathway for para educators in Montana has seen great success in the early stages. The Ag department has revamped our ag-related credential programs to better align with one another in pacing and course offerings, and there have been additional fabrication options added to our welding program.

All efforts are conducted as part of a strategic planning cycle that ensures DCC can be responsive to evolving educational, economic, and community needs.

3. **Provide 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.**

DCC has held highly preliminary discussions with a prominent donor about adding programming in the plumbing field. The donor has identified possible funding, instructor and a physical location from which to offer a plumbing technology credential. DCC may pursue market interest, what credential would best meet the needs of the market and what curriculum might look like. We do not anticipate requesting to start a program within the next year.

This collaborative effort is intentionally aligned with DCC's four strategic priorities, which guide the institutional planning and decision-making efforts. This targeted approach allows DCC to remain flexible and responsive to both community needs and the evolving landscape of higher education, without the resource strain of the institution.

4. Provide a description outlining how program modality, student population served, and campus partnerships factor into new academic or research programming.

While DCC may not be actively pursuing any new programs for the coming academic year, program modality, student population served, and campus partnerships remain an important focus as we strengthen other areas.

Program modality is assessed based on student needs, geographic access, and instructional capacity. In a rural region like eastern Montana, flexible modalities are often essential to serve working adults, high school dual-enrolled students, and those in remote areas. This is achieved through online and hyflex course offerings.

Recent efforts in dual enrollment and short-term credentialing reflect the college's responsiveness to emerging student populations and workforce shifts.

Rather than developing entirely new standalone programs, DCC leverages partnerships to enhance the relevance and sustainability of its offerings. Articulation agreements, dual enrollment partnerships, and collaboration with industry partners all contribute to DCC's ability to remain impactful without duplicating efforts or straining institutional resources.

5. If/where applicable, provide 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.

One program that has seen a consistent low-enrollment status is our Early Childhood program. We have started to take steps to address this issue. This will be an ongoing focus for the upcoming academic year with looking at potential restructuring of the program. If these efforts are unsuccessful, the college may look at placing this program in moratorium in the future.

6. Briefly describe any accreditation activities completed over the past year (e.g. reports submitted, responses received, accreditor recommendations) and accreditation activities planned for the upcoming year.

During the 2024-2025 academic year, Dawson Community College had its Mid-Cycle report with visit. Through this report and visit, the college was able to speak to all five of the recommendations from the

previous year seven visit. In the report from that visit, DCC has shown progress in all of those recommended areas. There are no other major reports or visits in the upcoming year.

DCC will have to submit a Financial Resources Review in the fall of 2025 that gives the commission an update on the financial status and progress of late audits.

7. Briefly describe any strategic planning activities anticipated to occur in the coming year (e.g. revision of your campus strategic plan).

DCC's mission statement and strategic priorities were developed during a robust campus and community-wide process in 2022 with an envisioned time frame of three years. The administration has reviewed the mission and priorities and finds that they continue to be the right direction at this time. The administration has recommended to the Board of Trustees to extend the mission and priorities for an additional three years, while considering a few minor modifications. The BOT intends to conduct a consultative process to ensure continued buy-in from the campus and community before formalizing the extension in the coming months.