

PROPOSAL TO MERGE TITLE II "TECH PREP" FUNDS INTO PERKINS ALLOCATION

Public Hearing Document

Proposal

To recommend to the Montana Board of Regents of Higher Education that Montana's State Plan for 2008-2012 be modified to discontinue the separately administered Title II "Tech Prep" grant and merge the federal funding previously awarded to Montana through Title II "Tech Prep" into the general Perkins allocation for Montana.

Background

- When Montana adopted its State Plan for Perkins IV in 2006, the state made the decision not to merge previously discrete Title II Tech Prep funding into the general Perkins funding for Montana. Instead, Montana chose a consortium approach with a continued separation of Tech Prep from Perkins funding. Through its standard RFP process, the Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education (OCHE) and the Office of Public Instruction (OPI) laid out a vision for "the new Tech Prep" called Big Sky Pathways and selected the "Peaks to Plains" consortium proposed by Flathead Valley Community College and MSU-Billings College of Technology to oversee the three-year Big Sky Pathways grant.
- In December 2009, the two campuses notified Montana's Deputy Commissioner for Two-year Education that they were not interested in continuing the "Peaks to Plains" Consortium upon expiration of the grant. In June 2010, the three-year timeframe of the grant expired.
- Twenty-six states have merged their Title II Tech Prep funding into their Perkins allocation. Indicators from the Office of Adult and Vocational Education suggest that all states will be expected to include Tech Prep funding into their total Perkins allocation by July 2011.
- In consultation with the State Plan Advisory Committee incorporated in Montana's Career Technical Education (CTE) Advisory Council, the State Executive Leadership Team (SELT) has also concluded that merging the funds is the best long-term approach for Montana. This proposed change has been presented to the Montana's CTE Advisory Council, the chief executive officers on the Two-Year Education Council, and other stakeholder groups. No concerns about the proposal have emerged in these discussions.
- Because this modification represents a major change in Montana's State Plan, **a public hearing on this proposal has been scheduled for Wednesday, October 6, 2010, from 4 - 5 p.m.** The hearing will be conducted via MetNet at the following locations: Flathead Valley Community College, University of Montana-Missoula College of Technology, UM-Helena, Montana Tech College of Technology, MSU-Billings College of Technology, MSU-Great Falls, MSU-Northern, and Miles Community College. (Specific information about these locations are appended to this document.) Written comments must be submitted by Monday, October 18, 2010, to:

Director of Perkins Programs
Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education
2500 Broadway
Helena, MT 59620

Advantages to the Merging of Title II "Tech Prep" into the General Perkins Grant

1. **A More Holistic Approach to High School/College Transitions.** The main objective of Title II Tech Prep is to create the programs, services, and professional development necessary to pave career pathways from secondary to post-secondary to employment. With its emphasis on programs of study, this is also a major

objective of the Perkins grant administered by the Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education, in collaboration with the Office of Public Instruction. Thanks to the progress made through professional development provided by the Peaks to Plains Consortium between 2007 and 2010, the career awareness and program planning tools developed with Perkins funding for the Montana Career Information System, the statewide articulation of secondary and postsecondary career/technical courses through coordination with OCHE's Transfer Initiative and other advances in the last three years, the once-distinct roles of Tech Prep and Perkins have become more and more integrated. The merging of the two projects at this point brings parallel projects into a single, holistic approach that ensures consistency and reduces confusion in the field.

2. **Increased Resources at the Local Level.** "Rolling up" Tech Prep into Perkins IV would result in an addition of approximately \$458,817.00/year to the state's Perkins funds, a 9% increase over the present funding level. As with all Perkins funding, 85% of that additional \$458,817.00 would be added by formula to Local Perkins Grants at both the secondary and post-secondary levels. The remaining 15% of the Tech Prep funding would supplement Perkins budgets through the existing formula at OPI and OCHE. (Because the OCHE revenues associated with administering the Title II "Tech Prep" grant would no longer accrue, OCHE's administrative budget would decrease slightly, while OPI's would increase slightly.)
3. **Simpler Accountability Requirements.** Both Perkins and Tech Prep grants have extensive accountability requirements, which add significantly to workloads locally and at the state level. Reducing the reporting requirements to the Perkins requirements only would reduce redundancy and free up valuable employee time.

Specific Modifications to Montana's State Plan

Red-lined changes to the sections of the State Plan affected by this proposal are attached. In short, they include:

1. Removing references to Tech Prep in the Introduction (p. 2)
2. Redacting Section V. Tech Prep Program in its entirety (pp. 55-60)
3. Adding Public Hearing Comments and Responses to Appendices

Proposed Specific Revisions to Montana's State Plan

1. Updating of the Tech Prep overview in the Introduction (p. 2, below)

~~Tech Prep will be shifted from a regional service area approach to having a single Tech Prep consortium with statewide activities around six broad career fields. Members of the consortium will focus on developing model programs of study (known as *Big Sky Pathways*) that will be adopted by partners in the consortium, and will also be available for use by other school districts and two-year postsecondary institutions within Montana.~~

Beginning in FY 2012, Montana will merge its Title II Tech Prep funding with its general Perkins allocation and coordinate all efforts to develop programs of study through state and local Perkins activities.

2. Redacting Section V. Tech Prep Program in its entirety (pp. 55-60, below)

~~V. TECH PREP PROGRAMS~~

~~5.1 Process for Awarding Tech-Prep Consortium~~

~~As noted in the introduction of the State Plan, Montana is launching an effort to move to a new organizational system for CTE, using a tiered approach involving six career fields, 16 career clusters, and a number of career pathways—called *Big Sky Pathways*.~~

~~A reformulated Tech Prep system, launched in Fall of 2007, will be a key player in Montana's updated CTE delivery system. The statewide Tech Prep consortium, known as the Big Sky Pathways Consortium, will take a leadership role in developing and supporting Big Sky Pathways with each of the Career Clusters.~~

~~Through a competitive process, one statewide Tech Prep consortium was created. Flathead Valley Community College is the lead institution for the Big Sky Pathways Consortium, and its partner from the eastern region of the state is Montana State University Billings College of Technology. This single consortium is designed to provide administrative leadership for Tech Prep; function as a clearinghouse for information and resources; designate other postsecondary institutions in the state to develop specific career clusters and related pathways; and provide the model for development of Big Sky Pathways (programs of study) for local Perkins projects. The consortium will utilize the following six Career Fields and their respective Tech Prep *Big Sky Pathways* for Montana:~~

- ~~—Agriculture and Natural Resources~~
- ~~—Engineering and Industrial Technology~~
- ~~—Health and Related Services~~

- ~~Social and Human Services~~
- ~~Business, Management and Information Systems~~
- ~~Arts and Communications~~

To make this work, Montana established a ~~State CTE Executive Leadership Team~~ representing administrative leadership for secondary and postsecondary to provide oversight of Title I and Title II funds. Also, a State CTE Advisory Committee will be appointed in 2008 to provide consultation to the ~~State CTE Executive Leadership Team~~ and its staff. Its membership will represent state agencies, adult education, business and industry, teachers and faculty, counselors, administrators and community stakeholders.

5.2 Special Considerations for Tech Prep applications

Section 204(d) indicates that special consideration will be given to applications that—

1. *“provide for effective employment placement activities or the transfer of students to baccalaureate or advanced degree programs;*
2. *are developed in consultation with business, industry, institutions of higher education, and labor organizations;*
3. *address effectively the issues of school dropout prevention and re-entry, and the needs of special populations;*
4. *provide education and training in an area or skill, including an emerging technology, in which there is a significant workforce shortage based on the data provided by the eligible entity in the state;*
5. *demonstrate how tech prep programs will help students meet high academic and employability competencies; and*
6. *demonstrate success in, or provide assurances of, coordination and integration with eligible recipients described in part C of title I.*

The grant award was based upon the potential of the applicant to create an effective Tech Prep program. It was important for the applicant to indicate:

- ~~the extent to which career clusters and pathways have previously been developed at their institution thus enabling the institution to further develop programs of study;~~
- ~~how the programs of study will lead to employment and/or degree programs;~~
- ~~a clear design as to how business, industry, labor, institutions of higher education including 4 year institutions, secondary schools and other pertinent parties will be included in the work of developing programs of study;~~
- ~~how the institution will address issues of drop-out prevention and serve the explicit needs of special populations;~~
- ~~whether and where there are significant workforce shortages using national, state or regional employment trend data;~~
- ~~how the grant will be used to help students achieve high academic and employability competencies such as those identified in industry standards and pertinent exit standards of student performance; and,~~
- ~~how the grant will be fiscally managed.~~

5.3 Equitable Distribution among Tech Prep Consortium participants

For the purposes of Perkins IV implementation, all of Montana is rural. For this reason the grant applicant demonstrated its institution would deliver distance learning to enhance the work of the Tech Prep program and specifically contribute to the development of *Big Sky Pathways*.

5.4 Consortium Requirements

Consortium requirements are addressed through 5.4.1 to 5.4.8.

5.4.1 Required Articulation Agreements Among Consortium Participants

The Tech Prep grantee is required to develop articulation agreements. These articulation agreements will not be geographically oriented but instead will be organized around the Career Field/clusters/*Big Sky Pathways*. This new system of articulation will be statewide as applicable, and may result in multiple institutions of higher education having a shared articulation agreement with multiple secondary schools and allowing for (or requiring) transfer of credit among the participating postsecondary institutions.

5.4.2 Tech Prep Program of Study

OPI specialists are already assigned a specific number of secondary schools that they monitor. It will be the responsibility of the specialists to ensure that each school that participates in the consortium is also offering a qualified *Big Sky Pathway* that meets the criteria for section 203(e)(2)(A)-(G) of Title II of the Act as well as the general definition of Program of Study from Title I of the Act.

During the start-up year of the *Big Sky Pathways Consortium*, OCHE staff will coordinate its activities and provide technical assistance as necessary. Each of the statewide *Big Sky Pathways* will have a specific OPI/OCHE program specialist assigned to work with developing the programs within his/her expertise, e.g.: Health Sciences Specialist—health sciences Career Field and Cluster/*Big Sky Pathways*.

5.4.3 Funding Requirements

Section 203(e)(3) of Perkins IV states that all Tech Prep Grant applicants must:

- “(A) meet academic standards developed by the State;
 - “(B) link secondary schools and 2-year postsecondary institutions, and if possible and practicable, 4-year institutions of higher education, through—
 - “(i) nonduplicative sequences of courses in career fields;
 - “(ii) the use of articulation agreements; and
 - “(iii) the investigation of opportunities for tech prep secondary education students to enroll concurrently in secondary education and postsecondary education coursework;
 - “(C) use, if appropriate and available, work-based or worksite learning experiences in conjunction with business and all aspects of an industry; and
 - “(D) use educational technology and distance learning, as appropriate, to involve all the participants in the consortium more fully in the development and operation of programs;
- To meet these requirements, the *Big Sky Pathways Consortium* indicated how it will:
- Fashion *Big Sky Pathways* and related articulation agreements that are built upon secondary courses that are properly accredited and postsecondary courses that clearly carry out appropriately rigorous expectations and demands;

- Create articulation agreements that carefully align course content between secondary and postsecondary courses that are non-duplicative in nature;
- Create a specific plan for carrying out the articulation requirements in the particular consortium;
- Explain how dual enrollment opportunities will be created, how students will be determined eligible for participation in dual enrollment courses, and how these opportunities will be clearly communicated to teachers, secondary students and parents; and
- How opportunities for work-based or worksite learning will be made available, and what criteria will be created to ensure that work-based or worksite learning will meet program objectives and how employers will be engaged to participate in such activities.

5.4.4 Tech Prep In-service Professional Development

Perkins IV states that each Tech Prep program shall include in-service professional development for teachers, faculty, and administrators that:

- “(A) supports effective implementation of tech prep programs;
- “(B) supports joint training in the tech prep consortium;
- “(C) supports the needs, expectations, and methods of business and all aspects of an industry;
- “(D) supports the use of contextual and applied curricula, instruction, and assessment;
- “(E) supports the use and application of technology; and
- “(F) assists in accessing and utilizing data, information available pursuant to section 118, and information on student achievement, including assessments.

The consortium has provided details regarding the above requirement, keeping in mind that Perkins IV professional development requirements are more “in depth” than what was required in the prior legislation. In Montana some of this more intensive and sustained professional development is already in effect. It has been designed to assist secondary and to some degree postsecondary teachers and instructors through programs that are offered through several days of study in a variety of CTE fields and that lead to participants achieving industrial level standards of competency. State agencies may also make available funding from other Perkins funds to assist in enhancing this technical assistance and professional development.

5.4.5 Tech Prep Professional Development for Counselors

The professional development of school counselors has for some years been a priority of the Montana’s Tech Prep program. The new Tech Prep Consortium is expected to keep a strong focus on the continued professional development of school counselors and, where possible, attempt to assist in the preparation of new school counselors. Ways of addressing the career education elements of counselor development must be explicitly noted in meeting this requirement. Professional development requirements activities are offered in compliance with title I of Perkins IV will be closely coordinated with those efforts carried out under the Tech Prep program.

5.4.6 Assurance of Tech Prep Equal Access

Perkins IV gives extensive attention to the quality of educational and support services provided

to special populations, including ensuring equal access to a full range of technical preparation programs. The Consortium will explicitly address how the needs of these special populations will be addressed using specific examples and methods. Activities under this section will be closely coordinated with activities and standards for equal access expressed in section 3.1.1 of this plan.

5.4.7 Preparatory Services

The Big Sky Pathways Consortium has identified how it will ensure that each articulated program offers preparatory services, including:

- Academic support services, offered during summer months and/or concurrently with program participation, to allow students to handle the challenging academic and technical skill content of *Big Sky Pathways*;
- Career exploration and career planning services, including the development of a personalized student plan for college and career, that allow students to make well informed decisions about transitions to postsecondary education and training and advancement to high skill, high wage employment; and
- Other supports, such as financial planning for college costs, college admissions, and support for employability skills, to help students, particularly those who are from economically disadvantaged background or facing other barriers, to succeed in secondary education and to advance to postsecondary education and to high skill, high wage employment.

5.4.8 Coordination of Tech Prep Programs

The major function of the Big Sky Pathways Consortium is the development of *Big Sky Pathways*. This is to be done in coordination with OPI/OCHE program specialists within prescribed cluster areas to inform the development of programs of study.

5.5 Consortium Agreement for Levels of Performance

The Big Sky Pathways Consortium will report data on the performance indicators under section 113(b) of the Act in coordination with the OCHE Data Specialist. For the purposes of title II, they will also gather and report the additional performance data on students who are enrolled in a *Big Sky Pathway* under the direct jurisdiction of the Consortium:

In Section 3(26) of the Act, a “secondary” Tech Prep student is “*one who has enrolled in two courses in the secondary education component of a tech prep program,*” and in Section 3(23), a “postsecondary” Tech Prep student is “*one who has completed the secondary component of a Tech Prep program; and has enrolled in the postsecondary component of a Tech Prep program.*”

To gather data on these students at the secondary and postsecondary levels, participating secondary schools and postsecondary institutions consortium will need to provide this data to Flathead Valley Community College for incorporation into the State Database. Using these definitions of participating Tech Prep students, the consortium will gather and report data on the following indicators, using processes developed by the Partner Agencies:

- The number of secondary education tech prep students and postsecondary education tech prep students served.
- The number and percent of secondary education Tech Prep students enrolled in the

Tech Prep program that

- enroll in postsecondary education
 - enroll in postsecondary education in the same field or major as the secondary education tech prep students were enrolled at the secondary level;
 - complete a state or industry recognized certification or licensure;
 - successfully complete, as a secondary school student, courses that award postsecondary credit at the secondary level; and
 - enroll in remedial mathematics, writing, or reading courses upon entering postsecondary education.
- The number and percent of postsecondary education tech prep students who are placed in a related field of employment not later than 12 months after graduation from the tech prep program;
- Complete a State or industry recognized certification or licensure;
 - Complete a 2 year degree or certificate program within the normal time for completion of such program; and
 - Complete a baccalaureate degree program within the normal time for completion of such program.

This data will be transmitted to the Big Sky Pathways Consortium Project Director for review. Partner Agencies and Tech Prep consortium will determine existing sources that can be used for collection of data on the Tech Prep performance indicators, as well as for which indicators current data is non-existent or not sufficient.

Once specific definitions and measurement approaches have been selected, the consortium will begin gathering the new data in a pilot phase beginning with students who participate in *Big Sky Pathways* beginning in school year 2008-2009. Benchmark data will be established, to the extent possible, based on data gathered from students participating in or completing a secondary portion of a *Big Sky Pathways* in spring of 2009. Based on benchmark data, the Partner Agencies will negotiate performance targets with the Consortium for students due to complete the secondary portion of their Big Sky Pathway in Spring 2010. Performance targets will be renegotiated for school years 2011 and 2012, based on continuous improvement criteria. As soon as feasible, benchmark data will be collected for postsecondary program completers, and performance targets will be established.