



Montana University System
Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education

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March 26, 2003

TO: Montana Board of Regents
FROM: Ron Sexton, Chancellor MSU-Billings and Chair of the Task Force
RE: Progress Report for Task Force on Two-Year Education in Montana

The Task Force convened January 8 to formulate more recommendations and actions.

Running Start: Members agreed two-year institutions should proceed with *Running Start Programs* and other initiatives to involve their communities and partnerships.

Workforce Investment Act Funds: Joyce Scott distributed the latest policy guidelines for allocation of \$800,000 from Commerce for Workforce Training Grants through June. Guidelines target business and industry, incumbent workers or jobs that exist or are needed. Applications must come from businesses. Likely areas of demand include energy/gas industries, timber products, health care, construction and craft areas, or homeland security; geographic locations include Billings, Kalispell, Helena, Great Falls, Missoula/Libby, etc. Mary Moe directed attention to the need for partnerships to meet health care needs.

Following the meeting, OCHE staff determined that they could effectively broker proposals across institutions and in communities. Arlene Parisot's report on the first effort is attached.

Skilled Trades: Greg Kegel reported MSU-N is working with plumbers to provide a skills-based apprenticeship program. There is a need for more information on the high demand apprenticeship programs for Montana.

Task Force Members returned to earlier recommendations not yet presented to the Regents and endorsed them, as follows:

Developmental Programs. Helping students overcome delays/difficulties in their learning. Two-year colleges address a broad range of developmental and remedial needs and would benefit from the sharing expertise and resources across institutions. The Task Force recommends two-year developmental educators identify effective developmental practices/programs, assess demonstration projects now underway, and suggest a funding mechanism.

Partnership Models. The Task Force recommends MUS two-year education representatives and other two-year institutions wishing to participate in partnerships using exemplary practices identify how to coordinate, disseminate and replicate these models.

Study of Funding Mechanisms. Two-year education functions such as workforce training and incumbent worker training and outreach for economic development require new funding mechanisms. The MUS should identify an appropriate peer group for the Colleges of Technology and a funding model.

Economic Impact: George Dennison shared data about the annual economic impact of MUS campuses on their communities. Campuses spent \$480 million in communities in FY 02. In light of this, would it be possible to ask a 1-1.5 mill levy to fund outreach activity in specific regions?

PR/Advertising/Image Building: Members agreed two-year education needs better press, especially about linkages with jobs. Institutions are economic generators, and local communities need to recognize that and make a contribution. There is need for research on advantages of two-year education including employability, starting salaries, and lifetime earnings advantages. Draft of sample national data attached could be the basis of a fact sheet about two-year education in MT.

Clusters Strategy and Implications: Dave Gibson reported on work of the Office of Economic Opportunity to use a Cluster concept to identify linkages between businesses: common skills sets, technologies, and marketing themes across inter-related sectors, as a tool for economic development. RTS and consultant Stu Rosenfeld are examining industrial groups and workable strategies across the state. *Clusters* are defined as geographically bound areas of similar economic activity. RTS will recommend how to strengthen existing clusters, promote nascent technologies, revitalize declining or mature industries, promote scientific/technological development, create clusters, and develop new partnerships around clusters.

Tech Prep Report and Resultant Action Plan: George Burns reported on the role of Tech Prep in connecting high schools and two-year programs around the state. There are now 2,200 classes in 160 high schools that articulate to 306 post-secondary courses. About 10 percent of those taking Tech Prep courses in high school claim the credit in college. Members wondered if it would be useful to study Tech Prep at the receiving institutions.

Two-Year Governance: In view of continuing discussions about governance of two-year education, staff asked the two universities to report on their investments in integrating and supporting the Colleges of Technology as part of the MUS. The Report is attached.

Pc: Commissioner Krause
Deputy Commissioner Scott
Director Parisot