

MONTANA UNIVERSITY SYSTEM ACADEMIC PRIORITIES

and Analysis of AY 2021-22 Campus Academic Priority and Planning Statements

ACADEMIC PRIORITIES AND PLANNING STATEMENTS

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

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

How might the BOR use these reports?

OCHE and the Board can use these reports to:

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

PLANNING THEMES AND HIGHLIGHTS FROM ACROSS THE SYSTEM

- Innovation in educator-prep programming is highlighted by several campuses. **MSU Northern** for example, is working with rural superintendents in North Central Montana on a strategy to address a critical shortage of teachers and counselors in the region. Their work to date has included developing successful 2+2 educator prep programs with **Great Falls College** and nearby Tribal Colleges. In the coming year, Northern may bring forward a B.S. in Education (non-teaching), a Master of Science in the Teaching of English, and a graduate certificate in training and instruction. Similarly, **The University of Montana Western** plans to leverage its unique-in-the-state online bachelor's in early childhood education and successful distance teacher licensure offerings in collaboration with Blackfeet Community College and Little Big Horn College to create further online and distance teacher licensure options.
- Two-year and community college campuses consistently emphasized short term, often non-credit, credentials developed in collaboration with industry. For example, **Great Falls College** plans to move forward new short-term pathways in trades and health, including an associate of applied science in Renewable Energy (with stackable certificates in solar energy, HVAC, and electrical-mechanical). **Flathead Valley Community College** will move forward certificates in Cloud Computing and Cybersecurity as well as a certificate in Stone Masonry to support a new apprenticeship pathway. **Highlands College** is working with local firm Black Butte Mining to develop a certificate and associate degree pathway in Mining Technology. **Helena College**, on advice from its aviation industry advisory board, plans to establish an avionics certificate program. Separately, the college is looking to develop a non-credit banking program, in collaboration with Opportunity Bank.

- Two-year campuses also highlighted how collaborations and new program modalities might help make workforce focused programs more sustainable and widely available. **Miles Community College**, for example, will enter year two of its distributed meat processing program, which serves students across the state through a combination of online coursework and practical instruction with partner meat processing facilities. Miles is also expanding its 2+2 collaborations, with a new engineering pathway through Montana Tech. **Great Falls College**, working with **City College** and **Gallatin College** will evaluate how to expand the OneMSU Workforce Consortium, which is now offering surgical technology and respiratory care programs across the three communities. **Helena College**, leveraging GEER grant funds, will enroll the first cohort in Hamilton of students in a collaborative LPN program with **Bitterroot College**.
- **MSU Billings** is completing implementation of the strategic program alignment evaluation conducted in 2018-2020. This has involved substantial reorganization of academic programming, including phasing out of multiple programs and reinvestment in others. In the coming year, MSU-Billings will finalize the reorganization of programs and departments identified through this process, institute a continuous evaluation process for academic programs, review its general education curriculum, reorganize online learning supports to expand students access to different learning modalities, and holistically assess advising through a newly established Advising 360 task force.
- **The University of Montana's** focus centers on deepening identified *Communities of Excellence* (environment and sustainability; health and human and development; science and technology; communication and artistic expression; business and entrepreneurship; justice, policy, and public service) and the work of its University Design Team, which was charged with positioning UM for long-term success and impact. The University Design Team developed a [draft list of strategic initiatives](#) around how UM can: i) provide an education that prepares its students as both career-ready and tomorrow-proof; ii) expand its conception of education to include learners at all stages of life and career; and iii) expand the reaches of knowledge through research and graduate programs of national excellence and impact.

OVERLAP ANALYSIS

To help focus conversation on the 2021/22 forthcoming academic proposal template, OCHE has developed a short list of proposals that merit early discussion.

1. **Several campuses propose expanded offerings in Cybersecurity and Computing**
 - Flathead Valley Community College proposes to develop certificates in cybersecurity and cloud computing
 - Miles Community College proposes to develop an Associates in Cybersecurity
 - Helena College intends to revise its existing Networking Technology degree (now in moratorium) to have a greater cybersecurity focus.
2. **MSU Northern proposes an associate-level program in Meat Processing as Miles Community College enters year two of its certificate-level offering.**

3. **Several campuses are revising or developing new programs related to manufacturing and industrial technologies.**
 - MSU-Northern plans to consolidate existing Design Drafting and Manufacturing Associates degrees into an Industrial Technologies Associates of Applied Science
 - Missoula College proposes to develop a Manufacturing Processes Certificate of Applied Science
 - City College proposes to develop an Industrial Maintenance Certificate of Applied Science

4. **Both Montana State University and the University of Montana propose to expand their Music offerings**
 - Montana State University proposes to offer a Master of Music in Music Education. Currently, MSU offers a music education emphasis within the Master of Education and UM offers a Master of Music with an emphasis in Music Education.
 - The University of Montana proposes to establish a B.S., B.M., and B.F.A. in Sound Design and Technology, to replace the existing Sonic Arts track in the Media Arts B.F.A. MSU offers a related Bachelor of Arts in Music Technology.

5. **The University of Montana proposes an M.A. in Native American Studies.** Montana State University has an existing M.A. program in this area.

6. **Montana State University proposes a PhD in Public Policy and Analysis.** This would be the first public policy focused doctorate in the system. UM has in the past proposed a related Public Affairs PhD.

MONTANA’S ACADEMIC PROGRAMMING OVER TIME

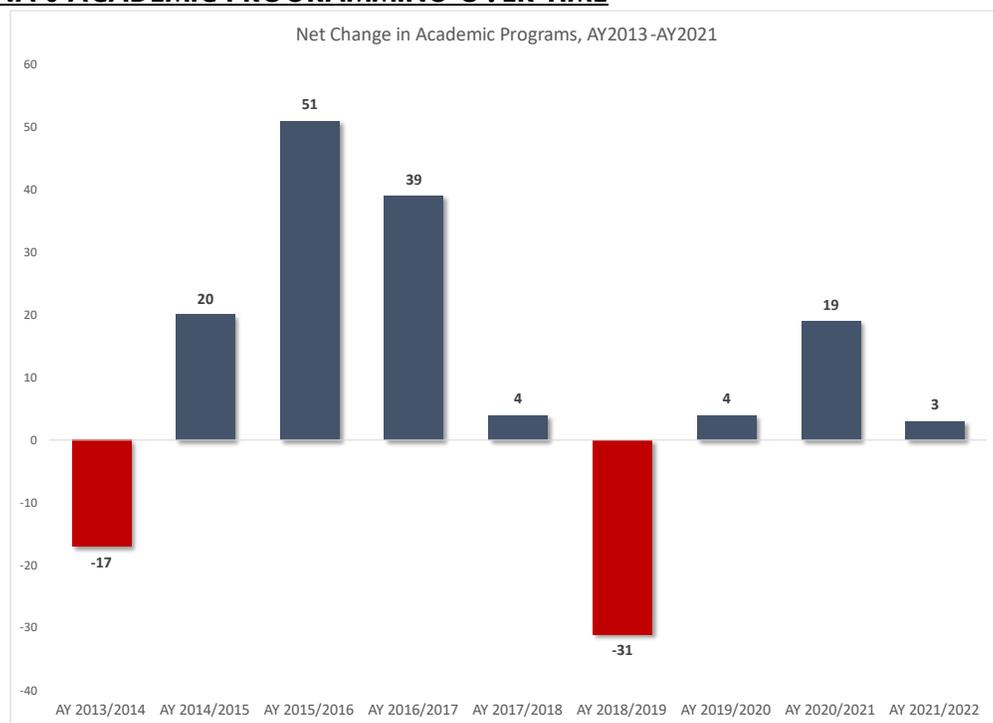


Table 1 - Source: OCHE program approval tracking. Excludes minors and options within a major from counts of new programs / moratoria. Data includes MUS institutions and community colleges.

AY 2021-2022 SYSTEM ACADEMIC PRIORITIES

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

1. Develop Tools to Support Multi-Campus Academic Collaborations

Registering students across multiple campuses presents an array of technical, logistical, financial, and accreditation-related challenges, but it also presents enormous promise to improve the efficiency, sustainability, and availability of academic programs, particularly in Montana's smaller communities. Through the work of the Seamless One MSU initiative, the state learned what is needed to make such models successful and is now moving forward with several efforts to expand our toolkit for academic collaborations. Some example efforts in the pipeline include:

- **Expansion of a pilot course-sharing platform**, which launched in Spring of 2021 and now includes the University of Montana, Missoula College, Helena College, and Miles Community College
- **Evaluation of Governor's Emergency Educational Relief (GEER) fund program models.** Collaborative programming was given priority as a part of the Governor's Emergency Educational Relief (GEER) fund. Around 1/3 of the \$6.5 M allocated by Governor Bullock to the MUS was granted to campuses to support new workforce-focused programming that has a remote learning component. Several programs receiving grants aimed to develop new hybrid modalities for trades programs or develop multi-campus collaborative program sites in health and trades fields.

2. Explore and Better Facilitate Microcredentialing and Credit for Prior Learning (including non-credit to credit pathways)

For-credit and non-credit short-courses and badges (collectively referred to as micro-credentials) are becoming increasingly common across both MUS 2- and 4-year campuses. Both the University of Montana and Montana State University have piloted badging efforts through the vendor Credly to help identify when students have validated skills that aren't well captured in the current academic transcript. Similarly, two-year institutions are increasingly being asked by industry to offer training outside of the traditional academic term model. Micro credentials promise to help translate student's skills and competencies so that they are easier to communicate to prospective employers or graduate programs. However, as these opportunities expand, we need to ensure that systems exist to make microcredentials meaningful to students and employers, to make them portable and useful as students move between institutions, and to translate non-credit microcredentials (and other forms of prior-learning) into the for-credit space.

3. Support Campuses in Ongoing Prioritization of Academic Programs

OCHE will work to provide campuses with necessary data and support as they transition their program prioritization efforts from one-off exercises into ongoing, data-informed scrutiny and evaluation of academic offerings. Recent revisions to the program approval and follow-up processes are one part of this effort.

4. Implement 3-year Program Follow-up

In 2018, the Board approved a review process for new academic programs. The first programs approved under this new requirement will reach their follow-up date next fall.