

REQUEST TO PLAN MEMORANDUM

DATE: April 11, 2022

TO: Chief Academic Officers, Montana University System

FROM: Brock Tessman, Deputy Commissioner for Academic, Research, and Student Affairs

RE: May 2022 Request to Plan Proposals

The campuses of the Montana University System have proposed new academic programs or changes under the Request to Plan process authorized by the Montana Board of Regents. The proposals are being sent to you for your review and approval. If you have concerns about a particular proposal, you should share those concerns with your colleagues at that institution and try to come to some understanding. If you cannot resolve your concerns, raise them at the Chief Academic Officer's conference call on April 27th. Issues not resolved at that meeting should be submitted in writing to OCHE by noon on Friday, April 29th. If no concerns are received, OCHE will assume that the proposals have your approval.

Requests to Plan

Montana State University Billings:

- Request to plan an AAS in Medical Coding and Insurance Billing
[Item #2701-0522](#)

Montana Technological University:

- Request to plan an A.A.S. in Mining Technology
[Item #1501-R0522](#)

The University of Montana-Western:

- Request to plan a Center for Experiential Education (CEE)
[Item #1601-R0522](#)

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ITEM 2701-L10422**Meeting Date May, 2022****Item Name Request Authorization to plan an AAS in Medical Coding and Insurance Billing**

Program/Center/Institute Title: **Medical Coding and Insurance Billing Specialist** Planned 6-digit CIP code: **51.0713**
A.A.S.

Campus, School/Department: **MSU-Billings City College/ Health Occupations** Expected Final Submission Date: **Fall 2022**

Contact Name/Info: **Vern Gagnon vgagnon@msubillings.edu 406-247-3043 & Melissa Bergerson**
melissa.bergerson@msubillings.edu 406-247-3089

This form is meant to increase communication, collaboration, and problem-solving opportunities throughout the MUS in the program/center/institute development process. The completed form should not be more than 2-3 pages. For more information regarding the program/center/institute approval process, please visit <http://mus.edu/che/arsa/academicproposals.asp>.

1) Provide a description of the program/center/institute.

MSU-Billings City College currently offers a Certificate of Applied Science in Medical Coding and Insurance Billing. We are proposing to build upon this and develop a Medical Coding and Insurance Billing Specialist Associate of Applied Science degree. The Medical Coding and Insurance Billing Specialist A.A.S will prepare students for entry-level employment in a professional medical office setting, clinic, outpatient hospital, health insurance company, or independent medical billing company. It prepares students with the technical skills to analyze health records, translate medical documentation regarding diagnoses, procedures, services, and medical supplies into codes required for payment from insurance carriers and/or government payers. It also prepares students to utilize national coding guidelines and regulations to meet compliance requirements, and to maintain all aspects of the revenue cycle from initial data entry through the appeals process. Additionally, students will learn how to identify the major components of common commercial, managed care, and federal insurance plans in the United States. Lastly, students will be introduced to the basics in healthcare delivery, medical law, ethics and review the “soft skills” necessary to work in a professional medical office such as communication, teamwork, critical thinking, positive attitude, and work ethic. The Medical Coding A.A.S. will serve as a pathway for students to continue their education towards a Bachelor of Science.

2) Describe the need for the program/center/institute. Specifically, how the program/center/institute meets current student, state, and workforce demands. (Please cite sources).

According to the bureau of labor and statistics, medical coding and billing specialists fall into the category of Medical Records and Health Information Specialists which has an expected growth rate of 9% from 2020-2030. <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/medical-records-and-health-information-technicians.htm>

Healthcare is an ever changing and fast-growing industry, the business side of healthcare is no exception. As the cost of health care rises along with advancements in technology, the increased need for certified medical coding and billing specialists is growing. According to the AAPC’s salary market research among their members they indicate that despite the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, the unemployment rate for healthcare business professionals is down and salaries are up. Salaries continue to increase with a college education. <https://www.aapc.com/blog/83734-2021-salary-survey-shows-market-rebound/>

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While it varies among employers whether an associate degree is required, having an associate degree, and being certified in medical coding/billing is favored among employers. An Associate of Applied Science degree in addition to a professional certification, increases an employee's salary offerings and opens doors to incremental salary gains.

Through informal surveying of current and past students, there was a consistent level of interest in learning more about the billing aspect of healthcare. Having a Medical Coding and Insurance Billing Specialist Associate of Applied Science degree, allows us to incorporate more specialized billing courses and fulfil student demands. The current certificate program does not allow for additional courses to meet this need and primarily focuses on medical coding.

Allowing our students, the option to complete an Associate of Applied Science degree in Medical Coding and Insurance Billing along with preparing them to take the national AAPC CPC exam for certification gives them a competitive edge in the job market.

3) Describe any significant new resources (financial, staff, facility, new curricula) needed to launch and sustain the program/center/institute.

The request for a new Associate's of Applied Science degree will include adding two new courses to be taught by the current medical coding faculty. One of the courses is an already established course in the Common Course Numbering System, taught currently at the University of Montana Missoula and Flathead Valley Community College. The other course will be a new course at MSUB City College and new in the Common Course Numbering System. Historically the Medical Coding and Insurance Billing Certificate of Applied Science has functioned with one full-time faculty and two adjunct instructors. The proposed A.A.S. will continue with this model and only requires the department to restructure the courses taught in the spring, summer and fall semesters with existing faculty. The A.A.S. will remain an entirely online program which permits the possibility of reaching across Montana and state lines.

Students who complete the medical coding and insurance billing program either through the C.A.S or A.A.S are preparing to take the American Academy of Professional Coder's (AAPC) Certified Professional Coder (CPC) national credentialing exam. By purchasing a curriculum license from the AAPC within the program operational budget, we will be able to provide the most up to date and accurate instruction for our students. Licensing the educational curriculum through the AAPC benefits both students and instructors by creating curriculum that is specifically aligned to the professional credential exams. This also opens doors to expanding curriculum opportunities for additional professional credentials with the AAPC in the future. AAPC's curriculum has the flexibility to be used in multiple classroom modalities (f2f, online, hybrid). Medical coding and billing guidelines change every year, sometimes multiple times a year and it is imperative that the most up to date information is being taught. The AAPC curriculum is developed by the same organization that writes the national AAPC CPC exams and helps to increase student pass rates. Licensing with the AAPC also has a financial benefit to our students with deep discounts on textbooks as well as the three required coding manuals and student membership fees. Students are required to become members of the AAPC in order to sit for their credentialing exam. Currently, the full-time faculty and one adjunct faculty are certified AAPC approved instructors and have the qualifications to teach AAPC curriculum. As an AAPC licensee, we will have the ability to market our program with the AAPC logo, flyers and featured on the AAPC website showing potential students that we are trusted source for classroom-based training.

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MSUB will request three separate course fees to be added. The first two course fees will be shared between AHMS 160 and 162 because the same materials are required for both courses. The two course fees will include access to the AAPC licensed curriculum, the AAPC textbook/workbook and the 3 required coding manuals. This fee will be approximately \$400 per course. The third course fee will be tied to AHMS 250 for the initial annual AAPC student membership and AAPC CPC exam voucher. This fee will be approximately \$500. AAPC membership is required to sit for the AAPC CPC certification exam. This allows the students to cover the costs of the required 3 coding manuals, AAPC membership and the national AAPC CPC certification exam within their tuition and fees instead of paying out of pocket. These expenses are a burden for students to pay out of pocket and often hinders their success in following through with the national certification process once they complete our program. There are no other capital equipment needs at this time.

4) Describe any efforts or opportunities you have identified for collaboration either within the institution or between MUS institutions (i.e., articulation, course-sharing, research collaboration).

We have reached out to Kristine Hancke, Health Information Coding Specialist Program Director at Montana State University Great Falls College, Michelle Boller, Director of the Medical Information Technology at the University of Montana and Brittnee Broom who oversees the Medical Billing Coding Insurance program at Salish Kootenai College. Each director is supportive of our efforts to create an associate of applied science degree in Medical Coding and Insurance Billing and are willing to collaborate and advise in program and course development. Although our programs differ in credentials, we do have some commonalities such as online course modality offerings and similar general courses.

We have also reached out to Brenda Rudolph, the Medical Coding A.A.S. program director at Flathead Valley Community College. Brenda is also supportive of our efforts to create Medical Coding and Insurance Billing Specialist A.A.S. degree. Her current program is looking to move towards alignment with the AAPC CPC credentialing exam and is in need of qualified instructors to teach it. She has expressed interest in partnering with our program to allow her students to gain specific AAPC CPC medical coding education through the courses that we offer. Having our program online and accessible has the potential to facilitate this.

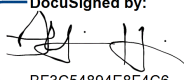

5) Describe how the program/center/institute fits with the institutional mission, strategic plan, existing institutional program array, and academic priorities as described in the most recent Academic Priorities and Planning Statement.

The Associate of Applied Science Medical Coding and Insurance Specialist Degree option fits within the institutional mission and strategic plan framework of Montana State University Billings. It will be housed within the Nursing and Health Occupations Division and is an extension of a well-established program. It aligns clearly with City College's Mission that is, "dedicated to the development of workforce capacity by providing top quality learning opportunities and services to meet a variety of career choices and customer needs by being responsive, flexible and market-driven."

Collaborating with other Montana University System programs will enhance program development and course offerings with the potential to course share with other MUS programs. Licensing AAPC curriculum ensures our instructors are AAPC approved to teach the necessary curriculum and skills while they continue their education and commitment to best teaching techniques with the requirement of 8 CEUs per year in related education. Expanding our curriculum offering will align with the current and future student needs. This will help prepare students for the competitive job market by aligning their skill set with employment demands. Having the courses fully online allows us to reach students throughout Montana and beyond our state lines with potential to increase

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student enrollment. Providing an online A.A.S. in addition to the current C.A.S. will support and attract students who would like to further their education and remain competitive in this field of health care. Students who have previously completed the C.A.S. may apply those credits to the plan of study for the proposed A.A.S. The online modality will allow students the flexibility to work around their current work and family life. Lastly, our faculty are members of the local AAPC chapter and maintain a strong relationship with them. We will encourage student participation with the local chapter and this program will aid in student membership through course delivery and AAPC membership course fees. Our community partners and beyond are looking for prospective new hires that have the necessary skills and education to be successful in this field; having a Medical Coding and Insurance Billing Specialist Associate of Applied Science will fulfil this need.

<u>Signature/Date</u>	
Chief Academic Officer: DocuSigned by: <i>Dr. Sep Eskandari</i> 151D5B91B28F4B0...	3/14/2022
Chief Research Officer*:	
Chief Executive Officer: DocuSigned by:  BF3C54894E8F4C6...	3/14/2022
Flagship Provost**: DocuSigned by: <i>Robert Mokwa</i> 212A28411AC04BD...	3/28/2022 10:15 AM MD
Flagship President**: DocuSigned by:  7D6A4CE96C3F415...	3/28/2022 10:15 AM MD
<small>*Center/Institute Proposal only **Not applicable to the Community Colleges.</small>	

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ITEM 1501-LII0522

Meeting Date - May 2022

Request for authorization to add an Associate of Applied Science in Mining Technology

Program/Center/Institute Title: **Mining Technology CAS, AAS**

Planned 6-digit CIP code: **15.0901**

Campus, School/Department: **Highlands College**

Expected Final Submission Date: **January 2024**

Contact Name/Info: **Michelle Morley, Director Associate of Science & Workforce Development**

This form is meant to increase communication, collaboration, and problem-solving opportunities throughout the MUS in the program/center/institute development process. The completed form should not be more than 2-3 pages. For more information regarding the program/center/institute approval process, please visit <http://mus.edu/che/arsa/academicproposals.asp>.

1) Provide a description of the program/center/institute.

Highlands College is submitting this request to plan for an Associate of Applied Science in Mining Technology. Similar to the other two-year programs offered through Highlands College, the Mining Technology program will be structured to provide students the ability to exit at multiple points through the completion of a two-semester Certificate of Applied Science; or a two-year Associate of Applied Science. The Mining Technology CAS and AAS will provide students with the technical knowledge and skills they will need to work in the mining industry. Utilizing the rich history of mining education at Montana Technological University, the Mining Technology program will emphasize training in mining operations, maintenance and safety.

2) Describe the need for the program/center/institute. Specifically, how the program/center/institute meets current student, state, and workforce demands. (Please cite sources).

The demand for skilled mine operators and miners continues to grow in the state of Montana and nationwide. Working with mining companies such as Sandfire America-Black Butte Copper and Sibanye Stillwater, the need to provide training and education to Montana citizens who want to pursue careers in the mining industry has been identified. Currently there are few mining technology programs offered nationwide and there aren't any in Montana to assist in upskilling and training mine operators and miners. The proposed program fulfills an important niche in Montana and compliments the Mining Engineering program already offered at Montana Technological University.

3) Describe any significant new resources (financial, staff, facility, new curricula) needed to launch and sustain the program/center/institute.

The majority of the Mining Technology program could be completed utilizing the facilities and faculty already in place, however, there will be a need to hire one more faculty to help cover the additional coursework related to Mining that does not have an engineering focus. The general education courses that would be needed to fulfill the Associate of Applied Science requirements are already in place and are not expected to strain the current faculty teaching load.

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4) Describe any efforts or opportunities you have identified for collaboration either within the institution or between MUS institutions (i.e. articulation, course-sharing, research collaboration).

The Mining Technology program will be a collaboration with the Mining Engineering Department at Montana Tech. Several of the courses will be shared with both Mining Engineering and Mining Technology students taking the classes together. This will provide students from both programs to work together in an educational setting to solve problems before entering the workforce and encountering challenges without an understanding of how to work together.

5) Describe how the program/center/institute fits with the institutional mission, strategic plan, existing institutional program array, and academic priorities as described in the most recent Academic Priorities and Planning Statement.

The proposed Mining Technology program supports the mission of Montana Tech to provide workforce development education. Utilizing the facilities in place such as the labs in the on-campus underground mine and industry partnerships such as the one with Sandfire America-Black Butte Copper, students will learn from a curriculum combining theory with hands-on learning. The Mining Technology program will advance the following strategic goals:

- Promote student success by providing an affordable education allowing students in Montana the ability to utilize multiple exit and re-entry points designed to meet the training needs of the student for entry into the mining industry.
- Be program of distinction as the only mining technology program in Montana.
- Deliver hands-on experiential learning with access to labs in the on-campus underground mine as well as through industry partnerships with Sandfire America-Black Butte Copper through Department of Labor and Industry recognized mining apprenticeships.

Signature/Date

Chief Academic Officer:  4/4/22

Chief Research Officer*:

Chief Executive Officer:  4/21/22

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Flagship Provost:**

Flagship President:**

*Center/Institute Proposal only

**Not applicable to the Community Colleges.

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ITEM 200-1601-R0522

Meeting Date: May 2022

Item Name: Request for authorization to plan a Center for Experiential Education (CEE)

Program/Center/Institute Title: **Center for Experiential Education (CEE)**

Planned 6-digit CIP code:

Campus, School/Department: **University of Montana Western**

Expected Final Submission Date:

Contact Name/Info: **Brian Elliott, Chair of the CEE**

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1) Provide a description of the program/center/institute.

The Center for Experiential Education at UMW would serve as the primary source for faculty professional development.

2) Describe the need for the program/center/institute. Specifically, how the program/center/institute meets current student, state, and workforce demands. (Please cite sources).

The University of Montana Western prides itself on its grounding in experiential learning. However, faculty teaching at Western often have to develop experiential approaches without specific training and/or support. The CEE is an effort to more efficiently and effectively promote experiential approaches to teaching and learning. By better supporting faculty, students will benefit from improved educational experiences.

Additionally, the CEE will serve to streamline pedagogical responses to student needs, as the director of the CEE will work closely with student support services. For example, if Disability Services communicates a noticeable percentage of students identified as needing interventions related to autism, the CEE could respond with appropriate faculty development to address ways to support students with autism. Again, better trained faculty will be better able to meet students' needs.

3) Describe any significant new resources (financial, staff, facility, new curricula) needed to launch and sustain the program/center/institute.

The CEE would need a small, on-going budget to support professional development opportunities and resources, approximately \$5,000 per AY. The CEE would be directed by a faculty member who would receive a one-course release per semester to oversee the CEE. A classroom space is also necessary to house the CEE.

4) Describe any efforts or opportunities you have identified for collaboration either within the institution or between MUS institutions (i.e. articulation, course-sharing, research collaboration).

The CEE would work with all Divisions on campus, as well as all distance faculty. The CEE would also absorb the Teaching Development Committee, which has served to coordinate professional development for more than a decade. Finally, administrative units with direct ties to education and student support, such as the Office of Equity

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and Inclusion (currently in development), would collaborate with CEE on programming for faculty development as described above.



5) Describe how the program/center/institute fits with the institutional mission, strategic plan, existing institutional program array, and academic priorities as described in the most recent Academic Priorities and Planning Statement.

Experiential education is at the core of what we do at the University of Montana Western, as noted in both the mission and vision, which read as follows:

MISSION: As a leader and innovator in *experiential education*, the University of Montana Western educates undergraduate students through immersive practices in their field of study, strives for continuous improvement, and achieves evidence- supported student learning and achievement outcomes.

VISION: The University of Montana Western will be recognized as the leader in innovative *experiential education*.

The CEE would exist to serve in fulfilling the mission and vision of the University of Montana Western.

<u>Signature/Date</u>
Chief Academic Officer: 
Chief Research Officer*:
Chief Executive Officer: 
Flagship Provost**:
Flagship President**:
<small>*Center/Institute Proposal only **Not applicable to the Community Colleges.</small>