

November 16-17, 2023

From: Interim Deputy Commissioner Joe Thiel
To: Board of Regents

Please see below for an executive overview of the Request to Plan items that are being proposed for your review and action at the November 2023 meeting of the Board of Regents. These items have been submitted by the campuses and reviewed by the Chief Academic Officers of the Montana University System and community colleges. OCHE staff has reviewed the items and provided a short analysis below relying on information submitted by the campuses. For more information and specific details on each item, please see the supporting documentation included on the Academic, Research, and Student Affairs Committee agenda.

Montana State University Bozeman

Request to Plan to a minor in Precision Agriculture and Land Management System

The proposed program would provide a unique cross-disciplinary program designed to offer data infrastructure within agriculture sciences. The program would serve students who see their future in the development of precision land management technologies and those who will provide land management services to farm, ranch, and land management.

Financial, workforce and environmental needs are driving the adoption of data intensive management systems for farm, ranch, or natural resources. Job growth for precision agriculture technicians is projected to grow by 8% from 2021-2031 with median entry level salaries from \$50,271-\$52,170.

University of Montana Missoula

Request for authorization to Plan a Bachelor of Science in Accounting

This proposed plan is in response to current challenges in completing a degree in accounting and creates streamlined pathway options to help assist in workforce demands. Currently the University of Montana offers a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration, BSBA, with a major in Accountancy. However, students who are interested in completing requirements for Certified Professional Account, CPA, licensure are required to complete 150 credits resulting in students completing the BSBA coursework and beginning coursework for Masters in Accountancy. The goal of this requested program will place more specific accountancy coursework in a Bachelor of Science in Accounting allowing students to become more prepared for the CPA exam without having to begin a master program.

Severe workforce shortages have been expected for some time within the accounting field. While less students are entering the field, even fewer are completing the CPA requirements. Due to this workforce shortage, the American Institute of CPAs created multiple strategies to address the problem. One of these strategies was the creation of the ELE (experience, learn, earn) program. The ELE program allows graduates to start working after 4 years rather than 5 and provides opportunities for employers to support further education costs through an accredited online program. This program provides students with 30 additional credits and costs approximately \$5,000 to the employer. This is a significant savings to the student. However, the ELE program is expected to focus on non-technical courses. There is concern that without the advanced technical courses that are typically provided from a Master of Accountancy program, passing the CPA exam could be more difficult.

With this concern in mind the proposed program will require more accounting credits than the BSBA major in accounting, while reducing requirements for non-accounting courses. The proposed BSA

program will require more accounting credits, many of which are currently offered through the Master of Accountancy program.

The proposed program hopes to utilize current curriculum structures within the University of Montana College of Business to minimize costs. Current staff will continue to support BSA students through advising and program administration responsibilities.

Montana University System
REQUEST TO PLAN – OCHE ANALYSIS

ITEM 209-2008-R1123**ITEM NAME:** Request for authorization to plan a minor in Precision Agriculture and Land Management Systems**OCHE ANALYSIS**

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|---|---|--|--------|--|
| Labor market outlook | O*Net projects strong growth for precision agriculture technicians in Montana at 5-8% from 2022-2032. Precision agricultural technicians in Montana have a median wage outcome of \$41,760 annual salary. | | | |
| Related programs / centers / institutes | While other institutions provide agricultural pathways for students, this would be the first minor in precision agriculture. | | | |
| Budget Impact | x | LOW <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only incidental costs | MEDIUM | HIGH <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • substantial commitment of resources relative to institutional budget |
| Current faculty and staff will support the program. | | | | |
| CAO discussion and follow-up | Follow up discussion to be held with MSU Northern. | | | |
| ARSA/BOR comment and direction for Level II proposal | | | | |

Montana University System
REQUEST TO PLAN – OCHE ANALYSIS

ITEM 209-1002-R1123

ITEM NAME: Request for authorization to plan a Bachelor of Science in Accounting

| OCHE ANALYSIS | | | | |
|---|--|---------------------------------------|---------------|---|
| Labor market outlook | O*Net projects strong growth for accountants in Montana at 4% from 2020-2030. Accountants in Montana have strong wage outcomes with \$69,000 as the average annual salary. | | | |
| Related programs / centers / institutes | While other institutions provide pathways for students to complete a degree in accounting and/or sit for the CPA exam, this would be the first program to offer a streamlined pathway to completion. | | | |
| Budget Impact | x | LOW • Only incidental costs | MEDIUM | HIGH • substantial commitment of resources relative to institutional budget |
| | Current faculty and staff will support the program; however, future funding may be needed to successful market and communicate the new program. | | | |
| CAO discussion and follow-up | | | | |
| ARSA/BOR comment and direction for Level II proposal | | | | |