LEVEL I APPROVAL MEMORANDUM

Compiled here is the Level I memorandum containing items approved since the March 2026 Board of Regents Meeting. This memorandum from March and April contains items for which approval authority has been designated by the Board of Regents to the individual institutions or the Commissioner of Higher Education. The items before you have been approved and are now being shared with you for your notification.

- March 2026 Level I Memorandum
- April 2026 Level I Memorandum

ACADEMIC ITEMS MEMORANDUM

April 20, 2026

To: Chief Academic Officers

From: Joe Thiel
Deputy Commissioner for Academic, Research, and Student Affairs

RE: Approval of March 2026 Academic Items

The following March 2026 academic items have been approved:

LEVEL I ITEMS:

University of Montana Western
- Request to place the Sociology Major and Minor in moratorium
  Item #1602-LI0326

Helena College University of Montana
- Notification of the establishment of a CTS in Cosmetology
  Item #1902-LI0326

Montana State University Billings
- Notification to place the Interdisciplinary Studies Exercise and Sport Leadership, MS in moratorium
  Item #2701-LI0326
- Request for authorization to terminate Teaching Creative and Expository Certificate
  Item #2702-LI0326

University of Montana
- Request to establish a CTS in Welding Basics
  Item #1101-LI0326

LEVEL II ITEMS:

University of Montana
- Request for authorization to establish the Montana Clinical and Translational Research Center (Montana CTRC)
  Item #1002-LII0326
- Request for authorization to establish the Elouise Cobell Land and Culture Institute
  Item # 1003-LII0326
- Request for authorization to establish the Institute for Human-Centered Artificial Intelligence (HCAI)
  Item #1004-LII0326

MONTANA UNIVERSITY SYSTEM
OFFICE OF COMMISSIONER OF HIGHER EDUCATION

560 N. Park – PO Box 203201 – Helena, Montana 59620-3201
(406) 449-9124 - FAX (406) 449-9171

- Request for authorization to establish the Montana Public Health Training Center
  Item #1005-LII0326

University of Montana Western

- Request to establish the Land, Water and Sky Center
  Item #1601-LII0326

Montana Technological University

- Request for authorization to establish a Certificate of Applied Science in Broadband Technology
  Item # 1501-LII0326
- Request for authorization to establish a CTS in Heavy Equipment operations
  Item #1502-LII0326
- Request for authorization to establish a CTS in Fiber Splicing
  Item #1503-LII0326
- Request for authorization to establish a CTS in Warehousing
  Item # 1504-LII0326
- Request for authorization to establish an MS in Mechanical Engineering
  Item # 1505-LII0326
- Request for authorization to establish an MS in Civil Engineering
  Item #1506-LII0326

Sincerely,

Joseph W Thiel

Joe Thiel
Deputy Commissioner for Academic, Research, and Student Affairs

ACADEMIC ITEMS MEMORANDUM

DATE: March 18, 2026

TO: Chief Academic Officers, Montana University System

FROM: Joe Thiel, Interim Deputy Commissioner for Academic, Research, and Student Affairs

RE: March 2026 Academic Items

Contained within this memorandum are Level I and Level II proposals submitted by the institutions of the Montana University System in March 2026. These proposals include items for which approval authority has been designated by the Board of Regents to the individual institutions or the Commissioner of Higher Education. These Level I items are being sent to you for your review. 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. Issues not resolved should be submitted in writing to OCHE by noon on Friday, March 27, 2026. You will be notified of approved proposals by April 6, 2026. The Board of Regents will be notified of the approved proposals at the May 2026 meeting of the Board.

LEVEL I ITEMS:

University of Montana Western

- Request to place the Sociology Major and Minor in moratorium
  Item #1602-LI0326

Helena College University of Montana

- Notification of the establishment of a CTS in Cosmetology Instructor
  Item #1902-LI0326

Montana State University Billings

- Notification to place the Interdisciplinary Studies Exercise and Sport Leadership, MS in moratorium
  Item #2701-LI0326
- Request for authorization to terminate Teaching Creative and Expository Certificate
  Item #2702-LI0326

University of Montana

- Request to establish a CTS in Welding Basics
  Item #1101-LI0326

LEVEL II ITEMS:

University of Montana

- Request for authorization to establish the Montana Clinical and Translational Research Center (Montana CTRC)
  Item #1002-LII0326
- Request for authorization to establish the Elouise Cobell Land and Culture Institute
  Item # 1003-LII0326
- Request for authorization to establish the Institute for Human-Centered Artificial Intelligence (HCAI)
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ACADEMIC ITEMS MEMORANDUM

- Request for authorization to establish the Montana Public Health Training Center
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    Item # 1504-LII0326
  - Request for authorization to establish an MS in Mechanical Engineering
    Item # 1505-LII0326
  - Request for authorization to establish an MS in Civil Engineering
    Item #1506-LII0326

Montana Board of Regents
ACADEMIC PROPOSAL REQUEST FORM

March/2026

ITEM 1602-LI0326

ITEM TITLE: Notification of placing the Sociology Major and Minor into Moratorium

Institution: **The University of Montana Western** CIP Code: _____

Program/Center/Institute Title: **Department – History, Philosophy and Social Sciences (HPSS)**

Includes (please specify below): Face-to-face Offering: X Online Offering: _____ Blended Offering: _____

Options: Major and Minor

Proposal Summary [360 words maximum]

What: Sociology Major and Minor placed into moratorium

Why: UMW's sole sociology faculty member, who was in a non-tenure-track line, left the institution at the end of AY2024-25. The faculty members of History, Philosophy, and Social Sciences have voted to no longer pursue or maintain a sociology program with a single NTT faculty member.

Resources:

ATTACHMENTS

Attachments:
1602-LI0326_Program Moratorium - Sociology Major & Minor

Please mark the appropriate type of request and submit with any additional materials, including those listed in parentheses following the type of request. For more information pertaining to the types of requests listed below, how to complete an item request, or additional forms please visit http://mus.edu/che/arsa/academicproposals.asp.

X **A. Level I:**

OCHE Notification

X **1a. Placing a postsecondary educational program into moratorium** (Program Termination and Moratorium Form)

_____ **1b. Withdrawing a postsecondary educational program from moratorium**

_____ **2. Re-titling, terminating or revising a campus certificate of 29 credits or less**

_____ **3. Offering an existing postsecondary educational program via distance or online delivery**

Montana Board of Regents

ACADEMIC PROPOSAL REQUEST FORM

OCHE Approvals

4. **Re-titling an existing postsecondary educational program**

5. **Terminating an existing postsecondary educational program** (Program Termination and Moratorium Form)

6. **Consolidating existing postsecondary educational programs** (Curriculum Proposal Form)

7. **Establishing a new minor where there is a major or an option in a major** (Curriculum Proposal Form)

8. **Revising a postsecondary educational program** (Curriculum Proposal Form)

9. **Establishing a temporary C.A.S. or A.A.S. degree program Approval limited to 2 years**

10. **Withdrawing a postsecondary program from moratorium**

11. **Establishing a campus certificate of 29 credits or less (Curriculum Proposal Form)**

B. Level II:

1. **Establishing a new postsecondary educational program** (Curriculum Proposal and Completed Request to Plan Form)

2. **Requesting Permanent authorization for a temporary C.A.S. or A.A.S degree program** (Curriculum Proposal and Completed Request to Plan Form)

3. **Requesting a variation of the 120-credit baccalaureate degrees** *Exception to policy 301.11*

4. **Forming, eliminating or consolidating an academic, administrative, or research unit** (Curriculum or Center/Institute Proposal and completed Request to Plan, except when eliminating or consolidating)

5. **Re-titling an academic, administrative, or research unit**

Montana University System

PROGRAM TERMINATION/MORATORIUM FORM

Please complete the following questionnaire prior to submission of a program for termination or placement into moratorium. Please add additional comments beneath each question where applicable.

Program Title: **Sociology Major & Minor**

Program is being **X** **Placed into moratorium** ____ **Terminated**

1. **Are there currently students enrolled in the program? (If yes, please answer questions a - c below.)** **Y: X N: ____**

   a.) **Have all students currently enrolled in the program been met with and informed of the impending termination/moratorium?** **Y: X N: ____**

   b.) **What is the expected graduation date of all students from the program? May 2029**

   c.) **Have course offerings been planned to allow for students in the program to complete the degree in a reasonable fashion?** **Y: X N: ____**

2. **Will any faculty layoffs or changes in working conditions occur because of the termination/moratorium? (If yes, please answer questions a - b below.)** **Y: ____ N: X**

   a.) **Have the faculty affected by the program termination/moratorium been notified?** **Y: ____ N: ____**

   b.) **Please describe any layoffs that will occur including the date expected?**

Montana University System

PROGRAM TERMINATION/MORATORIUM FORM

3. The following parties, where applicable, have been notified of the impending program termination/moratorium. (Please mark X for completed, NA for not applicable):

a.) Internal Curriculum Committees X

b.) Faculty Senate X

c.) Program Public Advisory Committee X

d.) Articulation Partners X

4. Has there been any negative feedback received from students, faculty, or other constituents regarding the impending termination/moratorium? (If yes, please explain below.) **Y:** X **N:** ____

After several years of back-and-forth discussions, with both positive and negative comments, this is the decision we've come to.

Montana Board of Regents

ACADEMIC PROPOSAL REQUEST FORM

March 2026

ITEM 1902-LI0326

ITEM TITLE: Notification of the establishment of C.T.S. in Cosmetology Instructor

Institution: **Helena College** CIP Code: **12.0413**

Program/Center/Institute Title: **Cosmetology Instructor CTS**

Includes (please specify below): Face-to-face Offering: X Online Offering: _____ Blended Offering: _____

Options: _____

Proposal Summary [360 words maximum]

What: Certificate of Technical Studies – Cosmetology Instructor program. This is a four course, 20 credit program that meets requirements to obtain license as a Cosmetology Instructor in Montana.

Why: This program is developed to meet the specific requirements established by the Montana Board of Barbers and Cosmetologists to obtain a Cosmetology Instructor license. In order to teach in a licensed cosmetology school, all instructors must hold this state issued license. Detailed information on the requirements **are found on the Department of Labor and Industry website.**

Resources: No additional resources are required for Helena College to add this CTS. Existing faculty, equipment, and training space meet the needs to offer this program which will be offered on demand.

ATTACHMENTS

Curriculum Proposal Form 1902-LI0326_Curr

Please mark the appropriate type of request and submit with any additional materials, including those listed in parentheses following the type of request. For more information pertaining to the types of requests listed below, how to complete an item request, or additional forms please visit http://mus.edu/che/arsa/academicproposals.asp.

X **A. Level I:**

OCHE Notification

_____ **1a. Placing a postsecondary educational program into moratorium** (Program Termination and Moratorium Form)

_____ **1b. Withdrawing a postsecondary educational program from moratorium**

_____ **2. Re-titling, terminating or revising a campus certificate of 29 credits or less**

Montana Board of Regents
ACADEMIC PROPOSAL REQUEST FORM

3. Offering an existing postsecondary educational program via distance or online delivery

OCHE Approvals

4. Re-titling an existing postsecondary educational program

5. Terminating an existing postsecondary educational program (Program Termination and Moratorium Form)

6. Consolidating existing postsecondary educational programs (Curriculum Proposal Form)

7. Establishing a new minor where there is a major or an option in a major (Curriculum Proposal Form)

8. Revising a postsecondary educational program (Curriculum Proposal Form)

9. Establishing a temporary C.A.S. or A.A.S. degree program Approval limited to 2 years

10. Withdrawing a postsecondary program from moratorium

XX **11. Establishing a campus certificate of 29 credits or less (Curriculum Proposal Form)**

B. Level II:

1. Establishing a new postsecondary educational program (Curriculum Proposal and Completed Request to Plan Form)

2. Requesting Permanent authorization for a temporary C.A.S. or A.A.S degree program (Curriculum Proposal and Completed Request to Plan Form)

3. Requesting a variation of the 120-credit baccalaureate degrees *Exception to policy 301.11*

4. Forming, eliminating or consolidating an academic, administrative, or research unit (Curriculum or Center/Institute Proposal and completed Request to Plan, except when eliminating or consolidating)

5. Re-titling an academic, administrative, or research unit

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CURRICULUM PROPOSAL FORM

1. **Institutional Accreditation.** Is the proposal considered a minor or major substantive change per NWCCU Guidelines? Consult the institutional Accreditation Liaison Officer for more information. *[Choose one]*

   Not Substantive_____ Minor Change__X___ Major Change_____

2. **Program Accreditation.** If applicable, describe specialized program accreditation requirements that inform this proposal, including the specific accrediting body and a summary of the standards being met. *[300 words]*

   This program is developed to meet the specific requirements established by the Montana Board of Barbers and Cosmetologists to obtain a Cosmetology Instructor license. In order to teach in a licensed cosmetology school, all instructors must hold this state issued license. Detailed information on the requirements are found on the Department of Labor and Industry website.

3. **Program Summary:** List the program learning outcomes for the proposed program. Use assessable learner-centered statements that indicate what students will know and be able to do, upon completing the program.

   a. List the aggregate credits required to complete the program using the following table.

	Credits
Credits in required courses offered by the department offering the program	20
Credits in required courses offered by other departments	
Credits in institutional general education curriculum	
Credits of free electives	
Total credits required to complete the program	20

   b. Please include a complete listing of the proposed new curriculum in Appendix A of this document.

4. **Need for the program.** What specific student, regional, and statewide needs is the institution responding to with the proposed program? How will the proposed program meet those needs? Consider workforce, student, economic, societal, and transfer needs in your response as appropriate. *[250 words]*

The proposed Cosmetology Instructor program directly addresses a critical workforce gap in Montana: the shortage of licensed cosmetology instructors. With very few individuals currently certified to teach in the field, the state faces challenges in sustaining and expanding cosmetology education programs that meet industry

Montana Board of Regents
CURRICULUM PROPOSAL FORM

demand. This shortage limits access to quality training for aspiring professionals and restricts career advancement opportunities for those already licensed in cosmetology-related fields.

By offering a locally accessible and affordable instructor certification program, the institution will empower licensed Barbers, Cosmetologists, Nail Technicians, and Estheticians to transition into educational roles. This not only strengthens the pipeline of future professionals but also supports economic development by retaining talent within the state

The program creates a clear pathway for career progression, encouraging lifelong learning and professional growth. Regionally, it supports workforce development by increasing the number of qualified educators who can teach in this discipline.

Societally, the program promotes equity and opportunity, while also aligning with broader educational goals such as transferability into vocational leadership or business programs. Overall, it meets urgent instructional, economic, and workforce needs across Montana.

5. **Similar programs.** Use the table below to identify and describe the relationship between any similar programs within the Montana University System. **N/A - There are no other Cosmetology programs within the Montana University System**

Institution Name	Degree	Program Title	What is the program enrollment for the last three academic years?

a. Describe how this program's learning outcomes are related or tied to other programs on campus or within the Montana University System. *[100 words]*

Helena College currently offers an AAS in Cosmetology but has faced challenges hiring qualified instructors due to limited licensure pathways in Montana. The proposed Cosmetology Instructor program directly supports the existing AAS program by creating a local, affordable route for licensed professionals to become educators. As student demand grows, so does the need for qualified instructors. This program ensures future students receive high-quality instruction and supports workforce development. It also complements broader Montana University System goals by enhancing career mobility, supporting transfer into leadership or business programs, and strengthening the state's education infrastructure.

b. If the proposed program substantially duplicates another program offered in the Montana University System, provide a rationale as to why any resulting duplication is a net benefit to the state and its citizens. *[200 words] NA*

Montana Board of Regents
CURRICULUM PROPOSAL FORM

c. Describe any efforts that were made to collaborate with similar programs at other institutions, including specific contacts and their institutional affiliations. If no efforts were made, please explain why. *[200 words] NA*

6. Program assessment.

a. Describe the assessment process that will be used to evaluate how well students are achieving the intended learning outcomes of the program. When will assessment activities occur and at what frequency? Refer to specialized program accreditation assessments where appropriate. *[150 words]*

The program employs a comprehensive and continuous assessment strategy to evaluate student achievement of learning outcomes. Each textbook chapter includes graded activities, quizzes, and tests to monitor academic progress. Student instructors engage in several hours of weekly hands-on instruction with cosmetology students, which is assessed daily and weekly through observation and performance rubrics. In addition to ongoing formative assessments, student's complete mid-term and final evaluations that include both written exams and practical demonstrations aligned with industry standards. These assessments are designed to reflect competencies outlined by the state board and any applicable accrediting bodies. Assessment data is reviewed regularly to inform instructional improvements and ensure alignment with program goals.

b. What direct and indirect measures will be used to assess student learning? *[100 words]*

Student learning will be assessed using both direct and indirect measures. **Direct measures** include graded assignments such as quizzes, tests, chapter assessments, and practical demonstrations. Daily and weekly evaluations of student instructors' interactions with cosmetology students will also serve as direct evidence of skill development. **Indirect measures** include student self-assessments, reflective journals, and feedback from supervising instructors and peers. These tools provide insight into student perceptions of their learning and instructional effectiveness, supporting continuous improvement and alignment with program outcomes.

c. How will you ensure that the assessment findings will be used to ensure the quality of the program? *[100 words]*

Montana Board of Regents
CURRICULUM PROPOSAL FORM

Assessment findings will be systematically reviewed to ensure the program maintains high standards and prepares students for licensure and instructional roles. Students must achieve a minimum score of 75% on all assessments, including written and practical exams, to demonstrate competency. These results, along with feedback from instructors and state board performance, will be analyzed to identify areas for curriculum improvement, instructional support, and resource allocation. Regular faculty meetings will be held to discuss outcomes and implement changes, ensuring alignment with Montana state licensure requirements and continuous program improvement.

Signature/Date

College or School Dean:

Chief Academic Officer:

Appendix A – Proposed New Curriculum

Instructor Training Course (650 Hours)

Program Overview

The proposed Instructor Training Course is designed to prepare licensed cosmetologists, estheticians, manicurists, barbers, or electrologists to become qualified instructors in their respective fields. This 650-hour program meets the minimum curriculum requirements set forth by the Montana State Board of Barbers and Cosmetologists and emphasizes both theoretical knowledge and practical teaching experience. This is a twenty-credit program that also meets the State of Montana requirements for hours of instruction on specific topics. The program will be taught over two semesters and includes four total classes. There are eight credits of theory and twelve credits of practical/lab included in the program to ensure the alignment with the required training hours. This includes:

- COSM 121 – Cosmetology Instructor Training
- COSM 122 – Cosmetology Practical Instructor Training
- COSM 221 – Advanced Cosmetology Instructor Training
- COSM 222 – Advanced Cosmetology Practical Instructor Training

Montana Board of Regents
CURRICULUM PROPOSAL FORM

Curriculum Breakdown

A. Teaching Methods – 245 Hours

This section focuses on instructional strategies and classroom management, including:

- Task analysis
- Developing instructional objectives
- Visual aids and their construction
- Motivational tools
- Preparation of instructional materials
- Lesson planning (theory and practical demonstration)
- Fundamentals of speech and public speaking
- Methods of test construction
- Methods of evaluation and grading
- Curriculum planning and development

B. General Psychology – 75 Hours

This component supports the development of interpersonal and counseling skills:

- General teaching and counseling principles
- Conflict resolution
- Student counseling
- Student-teacher relationships
- Public relations

C. Business Methods – 115 Hours

This section prepares future instructors for administrative and ethical responsibilities:

- Recruitment strategies
- Job analysis
- Student registration, withdrawal, and hour tracking
- Ethical employee/employer relationships
- Salon/booth rental relationships
- Professional ethics
- Current board laws and rules

D. Advanced Theory – 75 Hours

Students will deepen their understanding of:

- Advanced cosmetology, esthetics, manicuring, barbering, or electrology
- Chemistry, safety, sanitation, bacteriology
- Physiology, anatomy, and related diseases/disorders

Montana Board of Regents
CURRICULUM PROPOSAL FORM

E. Discretionary Teacher-Training Instruction – 140 Hours

These hours will be allocated at the school's discretion to reinforce learning through:

- Supervised classroom teaching
- Peer teaching
- Observations
- Additional workshops or seminars

Program Goals

- Prepare students to pass the Montana State Board Instructor Licensing Exam
- Develop confident, ethical, and effective educators
- Promote lifelong learning and professional development in the beauty industry

Montana University System

PROGRAM TERMINATION/MORATORIUM FORM

Please complete the following questionnaire prior to submission of a program for termination or placement into moratorium. Please add additional comments beneath each question where applicable.

Program Title: **Interdisciplinary Studies Exercise and Sport Leadership, MS**

Program is being **X** **Placed into moratorium** ____ **Terminated**

1. **Are there currently students enrolled in the program? (If yes, please answer questions a - c below.)** **Y:** ____ **N:** **X**

   a.) **Have all students currently enrolled in the program been met with and informed of the impending termination/moratorium?** **Y:** ____ **N:** ____

   b.) **What is the expected graduation date of all students from the program?**

   c.) **Have course offerings been planned to allow for students in the program to complete the degree in a reasonable fashion?** **Y:** ____ **N:** ____

2. **Will any faculty layoffs or changes in working conditions occur because of the termination/moratorium? (If yes, please answer questions a - b below.)** **Y:** ____ **N:** **X**

   a.) **Have the faculty affected by the program termination/moratorium been notified?** **Y:** ____ **N:** ____

Montana University System
PROGRAM TERMINATION/MORATORIUM FORM

b.) Please describe any layoffs that will occur including the date expected?

3. The following parties, where applicable, have been notified of the impending program termination/moratorium. (Please mark X for completed, NA for not applicable):

a.) Internal Curriculum Committees X

b.) Faculty Senate X

c.) Program Public Advisory Committee N/A

d.) Articulation Partners N/A

4. Has there been any negative feedback received from students, faculty, or other constituents regarding the impending termination/moratorium? (If yes, please explain below.) **Y:** ____ **N:** X

Montana Board of Regents
ACADEMIC PROPOSAL REQUEST FORM

March 2026

ITEM 2701 L1 0326

Notification of intent to place the Interdisciplinary Studies Exercise and Sport Leadership, MS on moratorium

Institution: **Montana State University Billings** CIP Code: **31.0504**

Program/Center/Institute Title: **Interdisciplinary Studies Exercise and Sport Leadership, MS**

Includes (please specify below): Face-to-face Offering: X Online Offering: _____ Blended Offering: _____

Options: _____

Proposal Summary [360 words maximum]

What: Montana State University Billings is notifying the Board of Regents of its intent to place the Interdisciplinary Studies Exercise and Sport Leadership, MS on moratorium.

Why: The Department of Health Sciences and Human Performance proposes putting this program on moratorium because the program has been low enrolled for several years (no enrollment for the past nine years).

Resources:

ATTACHMENTS

Program Termination and Moratorium Form

Please mark the appropriate type of request and submit with any additional materials, including those listed in parentheses following the type of request. For more information pertaining to the types of requests listed below, how to complete an item request, or additional forms please visit http://mus.edu/che/arsa/academicproposals.asp.

X **A. Level I:**

OCHE Notification

X **1a. Placing a postsecondary educational program into moratorium** (Program Termination and Moratorium Form)

_____ **2. Re-titling, terminating or revising a campus certificate of 29 credits or less**

_____ **3. Offering an existing postsecondary educational program via distance or online delivery**

Montana Board of Regents

ACADEMIC PROPOSAL REQUEST FORM

OCHE Approvals

4. **Re-titling an existing postsecondary educational program**

5. **Terminating an existing postsecondary educational program** (Program Termination and Moratorium Form)

6. **Consolidating existing postsecondary educational programs** (Curriculum Proposal Form)

7. **Establishing a new minor where there is a major or an option in a major** (Curriculum Proposal Form)

8. **Revising a postsecondary educational program** (Curriculum Proposal Form)

9. **Establishing a temporary C.A.S. or A.A.S. degree program Approval limited to 2 years**

10. **Withdrawing a postsecondary program from moratorium**

11. **Establishing a campus certificate of 29 credits or less (Curriculum Proposal Form)**

B. Level II:

1. **Establishing a new postsecondary educational program** (Curriculum Proposal and Completed Request to Plan Form)

2. **Requesting Permanent authorization for a temporary C.A.S. or A.A.S degree program** (Curriculum Proposal and Completed Request to Plan Form)

3. **Requesting a variation of the 120-credit baccalaureate degrees** *Exception to policy 301.11*

4. **Forming, eliminating or consolidating an academic, administrative, or research unit** (Curriculum or Center/Institute Proposal and completed Request to Plan, except when eliminating or consolidating)

5. **Re-titling an academic, administrative, or research unit**

Montana Board of Regents

ACADEMIC PROPOSAL REQUEST FORM

March 2026

ITEM 2702 L1 0326

Request for Authorization to Terminate Teaching Creative and Expository Writing, Certificate

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Institution: **Montana State University Billings** CIP Code: **23.0101**

Program/Center/Institute Title: **Teaching Creative and Expository Writing, Certificate**

Includes (please specify below): Face-to-face Offering: X Online Offering: X Blended Offering: ____

Options: ____

Proposal Summary [360 words maximum]

What: Montana State University Billings requests authorization from the Montana Board of Regents to terminate the Teaching Creative and Expository Writing, Certificate.

Why: The Department of English, Philosophy, and Modern Languages requests the termination of the Teaching Creative and Expository Writing, Certificate program due to it being consistently underenrolled. There are no students currently enrolled in the program, and have not been for several years.

Resources:

ATTACHMENTS

Program Termination Form

Please mark the appropriate type of request and submit with any additional materials, including those listed in parentheses following the type of request. For more information pertaining to the types of requests listed below, how to complete an item request, or additional forms please visit http://mus.edu/che/arsa/academicproposals.asp.

X **A. Level I:**

OCHE Notification

____ **1a. Placing a postsecondary educational program into moratorium** (Program Termination and Moratorium Form)

____ **2. Re-titling, terminating or revising a campus certificate of 29 credits or less**

____ **3. Offering an existing postsecondary educational program via distance or online delivery**

Montana Board of Regents

ACADEMIC PROPOSAL REQUEST FORM

OCHE Approvals

_____ **4. Re-titling an existing postsecondary educational program**

X **5. Terminating an existing postsecondary educational program** (Program Termination and Moratorium Form)

_____ **6. Consolidating existing postsecondary educational programs** (Curriculum Proposal Form)

_____ **7. Establishing a new minor where there is a major or an option in a major** (Curriculum Proposal Form)

_____ **8. Revising a postsecondary educational program** (Curriculum Proposal Form)

_____ **9. Establishing a temporary C.A.S. or A.A.S. degree program Approval limited to 2 years**

_____ **10. Withdrawing a postsecondary program from moratorium**

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_____ **1. Establishing a new postsecondary educational program** (Curriculum Proposal and Completed Request to Plan Form)

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_____ **5. Re-titling an academic, administrative, or research unit**

Montana University System

PROGRAM TERMINATION/MORATORIUM FORM

Please complete the following questionnaire prior to submission of a program for termination or placement into moratorium. Please add additional comments beneath each question where applicable.

Program Title: Teaching Creative and Expository Writing, Certificate

Program is being ____ **Placed into moratorium** **X** **Terminated**

1. **Are there currently students enrolled in the program? (If yes, please answer questions a - c below.)** **Y:** ____ **N:** **X**

   a.) **Have all students currently enrolled in the program been met with and informed of the impending termination/moratorium?** **Y:** ____ **N:** ____

   b.) **What is the expected graduation date of all students from the program?**

   c.) **Have course offerings been planned to allow for students in the program to complete the degree in a reasonable fashion?** **Y:** ____ **N:** ____

2. **Will any faculty layoffs or changes in working conditions occur because of the termination/moratorium? (If yes, please answer questions a - b below.)** **Y:** ____ **N:** **X**

   a.) **Have the faculty affected by the program termination/moratorium been notified?** **Y:** ____ **N:** ____

   b.) **Please describe any layoffs that will occur including the date expected?**

Montana University System

PROGRAM TERMINATION/MORATORIUM FORM

3. **The following parties, where applicable, have been notified of the impending program termination/moratorium. (Please mark X for completed, NA for not applicable):**

   a.) **Internal Curriculum Committees** X

   b.) **Faculty Senate** X

   c.) **Program Public Advisory Committee** NA

   d.) **Articulation Partners** NA

4. **Has there been any negative feedback received from students, faculty, or other constituents regarding the impending termination/moratorium? (If yes, please explain below.)** Y: ____ N: X

Montana Board of Regents

ACADEMIC PROPOSAL REQUEST FORM

March 2026

ITEM 1001-LI0326

ITEM TITLE

Institution: **Missoula College** CIP Code: **48.0508**

Program/Center/Institute Title: **Welding Basics Certificate of Technical Studies**

Includes (please specify below): Face-to-face Offering: X Online Offering: _____ Blended Offering: _____

Options: _____

Proposal Summary

What: The Welding Basics CTS is a 16-credit entry-level credential that introduces students to welding theory, practical skills, and essential general education in math, writing, and workplace communication. The program provides a foundation for immediate employment and serves as a stackable pathway into Missoula College's Welding CAS and Welding & Fabrication AAS degree programs. Flexible elective options allow students to build skills in areas such as blueprint reading, drafting, AutoCAD, OSHA 10, or welding qualification preparation. The program is designed for both traditional college students and high school students through dual enrollment.

Why: While a similar welding CTS exists at Flathead Valley Community College, Missoula College's program was developed in response to local workforce needs and feedback from the Welding Industry Advisory Board and K–12 partners. Employers emphasized the importance of communication, writing, and applied math skills in addition to technical welding ability. K–12 partners requested a more attainable option for dual enrollment, as the existing 18-credit welding CTS is not feasible for many high schools to deliver due to limited facilities and instructional capacity. This program provides an accessible entry point into the trade, supports career exploration, and strengthens pathways into advanced training and employment.

Resources: The Welding Basics CTS utilizes existing courses, faculty, and facilities within the Welding & Fabrication program at Missoula College. No new resources are required for implementation.

ATTACHMENTS

1001-LI0326_Curr

Please mark the appropriate type of request and submit with any additional materials, including those listed in parentheses following the type of request. For more information pertaining to the types of requests listed below, how to complete an item request, or additional forms please visit http://mus.edu/che/arsa/academicproposals.asp.

Montana Board of Regents

ACADEMIC PROPOSAL REQUEST FORM

A. Level I:

OCHE Notification

1a. Placing a postsecondary educational program into moratorium (Program Termination and Moratorium Form)

1b. Withdrawing a postsecondary educational program from moratorium

2. Re-titling, terminating or revising a campus certificate of 29 credits or less

3. Offering an existing postsecondary educational program via distance or online delivery

OCHE Approvals

4. Re-titling an existing postsecondary educational program

5. Terminating an existing postsecondary educational program (Program Termination and Moratorium Form)

6. Consolidating existing postsecondary educational programs (Curriculum Proposal Form)

7. Establishing a new minor where there is a major or an option in a major (Curriculum Proposal Form)

8. Revising a postsecondary educational program (Curriculum Proposal Form)

9. Establishing a temporary C.A.S. or A.A.S. degree program Approval limited to 2 years

10. Withdrawing a postsecondary program from moratorium

X **11. Establishing a campus certificate of 29 credits or less (Curriculum Proposal Form)**

B. Level II:

1. Establishing a new postsecondary educational program (Curriculum Proposal and Completed Request to Plan Form)

2. Requesting Permanent authorization for a temporary C.A.S. or A.A.S degree program (Curriculum Proposal and Completed Request to Plan Form)

3. Requesting a variation of the 120-credit baccalaureate degrees *Exception to policy 301.11*

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ACADEMIC PROPOSAL REQUEST FORM

4. **Forming, eliminating or consolidating an academic, administrative, or research unit** (Curriculum or Center/Institute Proposal and completed Request to Plan, except when eliminating or consolidating)

5. **Re-titling an academic, administrative, or research unit**

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CURRICULUM PROPOSAL FORM

1. **Institutional Accreditation.** Is the proposal considered a minor or major substantive change per NWCCU Guidelines? Consult the institutional Accreditation Liaison Officer for more information. *[Choose one]*

   Not Substantive__X__ Minor Change____ Major Change_____

2. **Program Accreditation.** If applicable, describe specialized program accreditation requirements that inform this proposal, including the specific accrediting body and a summary of the standards being met. *[300 words]*

   NA

3. **Program Summary:** List the program learning outcomes for the proposed program. Use assessable learner-centered statements that indicate what students will know and be able to do, upon completing the program.

   1. Graduates will be able to demonstrate fundamental construction skills (e.g., tool use, safety practices, blueprint reading, and basic carpentry) in accordance with industry standards for entry-level employment.
   2. Graduates will be able to apply essential academic skills in reading, writing, communication, and applied mathematics to support workplace problem-solving in residential construction settings.
   3. Graduates will be able to describe and evaluate career pathways in the construction industry, including apprenticeship, direct-to-work opportunities, and advanced study at Missoula College.

   a. List the aggregate credits required to complete the program using the following table.

	Credits
Credits in required courses offered by the department offering the program	9
Credits in required courses offered by other departments	
Credits in institutional general education curriculum	7
Credits of free electives	
Total credits required to complete the program	16

   b. Please include a complete listing of the proposed new curriculum in Appendix A of this document.

4. **Need for the program.** What specific student, regional, and statewide needs is the institution responding to with the proposed program? How will the proposed program meet those needs? Consider workforce, student, economic, societal, and transfer needs in your response as appropriate. *[250 words]*

The Welding Basics CTS was developed in response to continued workforce demand for entry-level welders across western Montana. Local employers consistently report difficulty finding workers who have both foundational welding skills and the basic math, communication, and workplace skills needed to be successful on

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CURRICULUM PROPOSAL FORM

the job. Our Welding Industry Advisory Board has emphasized that new hires must be able to read prints, follow directions, communicate clearly, and understand measurements and applied math—not just run a bead.

The program also responds to requests from regional K–12 partners for a more realistic dual enrollment option. Many high schools, particularly in rural areas, do not have the facilities, equipment, or certified instructors to offer a full one-year welding certificate. This 16-credit CTS provides an attainable entry point that maintains college-level rigor while recognizing those limitations.

The CTS is designed as a stackable credential that prepares students for immediate employment at an entry level and positions them for success if they continue into the Welding CAS or Welding & Fabrication AAS programs. By embedding MUS core courses (math, writing, and communication), students strengthen academic skills that improve persistence and completion in advanced programs.

This program meets workforce needs, improves access for rural students, and strengthens welding career pathways within our region.

5. **Similar programs.** Use the table below to identify and describe the relationship between any similar programs within the Montana University System.

Institution Name	Degree	Program Title	What is the program enrollment for the last three academic years?
Flathead Valley Community College	CTS Welding	Welding	26, 36, 17

a. Describe how this program's learning outcomes are related or tied to other programs on campus or within the Montana University System. *[100 words]*

The most similar program within MUS is the Welding CTS at Flathead Valley Community College. While both programs introduce foundational welding skills, the structure and intent differ. The proposed CTS at Missoula College is designed to be completed in one semester and intentionally integrates MUS core coursework. It functions as an accessible on-ramp and stackable credential rather than a stand-alone one-year technical certificate. Learning outcomes focus on foundational welding theory, practical skill development, workplace communication, applied math, and preparation for continued education in welding.

b. If the proposed program substantially duplicates another program offered in the Montana University System, provide a rationale as to why any resulting duplication is a net benefit to the state and its citizens. *[200 words]*

Although a welding CTS exists at Flathead Valley Community College, this proposal does not create unnecessary duplication. Montana's size and travel distances make regional access essential. Students in Missoula College's service area would otherwise need to relocate or commute significant distances to pursue a similar credential.

Montana Board of Regents
CURRICULUM PROPOSAL FORM

In addition, the programs are structured differently. The FVCC CTS is a one-year certificate. The proposed Welding Basics CTS is a one-semester, 16-credit credential designed primarily as an entry point and stackable pathway. Its purpose is not to replicate a full technical training program at the high school level, but to provide a realistic and academically supported starting point.

The inclusion of MUS core coursework also distinguishes this CTS by strengthening transfer readiness and academic preparation for advanced credentials.

Given continued workforce demand in welding across construction, manufacturing, and fabrication sectors, expanding regional training capacity represents a benefit to the state. The program increases access, strengthens pathways, and supports employer needs within our service region.

c. Describe any efforts that were made to collaborate with similar programs at other institutions, including specific contacts and their institutional affiliations. If no efforts were made, please explain why. *[200 words]*

The Welding Basics CTS was developed in consultation with the Missoula College Welding Industry Advisory Board and regional K–12 partners. Employers provided input emphasizing the importance of communication, writing, math, and safety skills alongside technical welding instruction.

Conversations with high school administrators and instructors identified capacity limitations in delivering a full one-year welding certificate due to facilities, equipment, and instructor credentialing constraints. Based on this feedback, the CTS was intentionally structured to be attainable through dual enrollment while maintaining college standards.

Missoula College maintains ongoing communication with other MUS two-year institutions through program director discussions and system-level meetings. While no formal joint development process occurred, care was taken to ensure the program complements existing offerings and primarily serves students within Missoula College's geographic service area.

The program strengthens regional access and supports statewide workforce priorities without attempting to replicate existing programs.

6. Program assessment.

a. Describe the assessment process that will be used to evaluate how well students are achieving the intended learning outcomes of the program. When will assessment activities occur and at what frequency? Refer to specialized program accreditation assessments where appropriate. *[150 words]*

Student learning will be assessed through both course-level and program-level review. Technical competencies will be evaluated through practical welding performance assessments using standardized rubrics

Montana Board of Regents
CURRICULUM PROPOSAL FORM

in WLDG coursework. Students will demonstrate safe equipment use, proper technique, blueprint interpretation, and basic welding theory knowledge.

Academic competencies will be assessed through existing MUS course assessments in math, writing, and communication.

Program-level assessment will occur annually during the Welding & Fabrication program review process. Faculty will review course completion rates, student performance trends, continuation into CAS/AAS programs, and feedback from the Industry Advisory Board. Results will be documented and discussed during annual assessment meetings.

b. What direct and indirect measures will be used to assess student learning? *[100 words]*

Direct measures include practical welding performance tests, written exams in welding theory, blueprint reading assessments, graded writing assignments, math competency assessments, and communication evaluations.

Indirect measures include student course evaluations, advisory board feedback, job placement data when available, and tracking of student continuation into advanced welding programs.

c. How will you ensure that the assessment findings will be used to ensure the quality of the program? *[100 words]*

Assessment results will be reviewed annually by welding faculty and shared with the Industry Advisory Board. If gaps are identified in technical or academic preparation, faculty will adjust curriculum sequencing, instructional methods, or elective offerings.

Signature/Date

College or School Dean: Signed by Grace Gardner for Tom Gallagher in CourseLeaf, 9/24/2025

Chief Academic Officer: 3/4/2026 

Montana Board of Regents
CURRICULUM PROPOSAL FORM

Appendix A – Proposed New Curriculum

Course Requirements:

Welding Basics CTS	
WLDG 110 Welding Theory I	3
WLDG 111 Welding Theory I Practical (Or elective)	3
Elective (From Approved List)	3
MATH 105 Contemporary Math	3
WRIT 101 College Writing	3
COMX 102 Interpersonal Skills in the Workplace	1
CTS Total Credits	16

Elective Course Options	
DDSN 113 Technical Drafting	3
DDSN 114 Intro to Autocad	3
WLDG 117 Blueprint Reading and Welding Symbols	3
WLDG 185 Welding Qualification Test Prep	3
OSH 110- OSHA 10 Hour Training	1
Other as Approved	

Montana Board of Regents

ACADEMIC PROPOSAL REQUEST FORM

March 2026

ITEM 1002-LII0326

Request Authorization to Establish the Montana Clinical and Translational Research Center (Montana CTRC)

Institution: **University of Montana** CIP Code: _____

Program/Center/Institute Title: **Montana Clinical and Translational Research Center (Montana CTRC)**

Includes (please specify below): Face-to-face Offering: _____ Online Offering: _____ Blended Offering: _____

Options: _____

Proposal Summary

What:

The University of Montana proposes establishment of the Montana Clinical and Translational Research Center, an NIH-funded research center housed in the College of Health. The Center will build clinical and translational research capacity across Montana through structured mentorship, pilot project funding, workforce development, community-engaged research, and research design and compliance infrastructure. The Center will support up to seven pilot or developmental research projects annually and provide coordinated administrative, professional development, community engagement, and data management support through five integrated cores.

Why:

Montana faces significant health disparities, workforce shortages, and limited clinical research infrastructure, particularly in rural and tribal communities. Nearly all counties are designated Health Professional Shortage Areas, and the state lacks a public medical school. The Montana Clinical and Translational Research Center responds to these challenges by strengthening "bench to bedside" and "bedside to practice" research capacity, expanding partnerships with leading healthcare and public health organizations, and advancing evidence-based solutions tailored to Montana's rural and underserved populations. The Center aligns with the University of Montana's mission by advancing high-impact research, strengthening community partnerships, and enhancing professional training opportunities for faculty, staff, and students.

Resources:

The Center is supported by a five-year award from the National Institutes of Health, totaling approximately 10.6 million dollars from September 1, 2024 through June 30, 2029. No general fund resources are required for implementation. Existing faculty will serve in leadership roles, and grant funds support core operations, pilot awards, evaluation, and a full-time partnership manager. The Center will be housed within the College of Health and leverage established institutional research infrastructure.

ATTACHMENTS

1002-LII0326_Center
1002-LII0326_RTP

Montana Board of Regents

ACADEMIC PROPOSAL REQUEST FORM

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____ A. Level I:

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OCHE Approvals

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____ **3. Requesting a variation of the 120-credit baccalaureate degrees** *Exception to policy 301.11*

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ACADEMIC PROPOSAL REQUEST FORM

X	**4. Forming, eliminating or consolidating an academic, administrative, or research unit** (Curriculum or Center/Institute Proposal and completed Request to Plan, except when eliminating or consolidating)
	5. Re-titling an academic, administrative, or research unit

Montana Board of Regents

RESEARCH CENTER AND INSTITUTE PROPOSAL FORM

1. State the proposed Institute/Center's name and purpose.

With funding from the National Institutes of Health, the Montana Clinical and Translational Research Center (Montana CTRC) aims to build clinical and translational research capacity at the University of Montana and with its clinical and public health partner organizations. The Montana CTRC has a goal of directly addressing health disparity issues throughout the state, and improving the health of our communities.

2. A comprehensive statement of the Institute/Center's mission and its relationship to the University mission.

A. State the Institute/Center's mission.

In collaboration with our Partner Organizations, the Montana CTRC will provide funding to up to 7 projects per year to build clinical and translational (C&T) research capacity throughout the state. Partner Organizations include healthcare organizations (Providence, Billings Clinic, Logan Health, and Shodair Children's Hospital) and public health partners (Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services, Missoula Public Health, and All Nations Health Center).

B. Identify the Institute/Center's goals and objectives.

The objective of the Montana CTRC is to build capacity in our rural and underserved region for "bench to bedside" research as well as translation of research findings from "bedside to practice." Through three Aims, we will:

- Aim 1: provide mentorship and workforce professional development to enhance the capacity and infrastructure in conducting clinical and translational research.
- Aim 2: administer clinical and translational research projects.
- Aim 3: integrate translational research within community settings.

C. What specific need is being responded to in developing the proposed Institute/Center?

The Montana CTRC will directly address the significant health disparities and lack of healthcare infrastructure in Montana's rural and underserved areas. With 64.1% of the state's population living in nonmetro regions, Montana faces unique challenges such as limited access to specialty care, high mortality rates from cardiovascular disease and suicide, and a lack of healthcare professionals, particularly in rural counties. These challenges are exacerbated by a shortage of healthcare providers, with nearly all counties designated as Health Professional Shortage Areas. Additionally, Montana lacks a public medical school, which further limits clinical and translational research opportunities. The Montana CTRC aims to build capacity for clinical and translational research, addressing these gaps by supporting local researchers, providing mentorship, and facilitating collaborations between academic institutions, healthcare providers, and public health agencies. This initiative will help address critical health issues, including chronic disease prevention, mental health, and substance use, by promoting evidence-based practices and research that are directly applicable to the needs of Montana's rural and tribal communities.

D. Describe how the Institute/Center benefits the department, college, or institution.

Montana Board of Regents

RESEARCH CENTER AND INSTITUTE PROPOSAL FORM

With a focus on clinical and translational research, the Montana CTRC strengthens the university's reputation as a leader in rural and population health research. It fosters collaborations with prominent healthcare organizations and public health agencies throughout the state, allowing the university to address the pressing health disparities in Montana's rural and underserved communities.

The Montana CTRC leverages the Montana Public Health Training Center (MPHTC) to provide professional development and workforce training. This center benefits the university's faculty, staff, and students by offering training programs, webinars, and mentoring, which prepares them for careers in healthcare and public health. The training supports a pipeline of skilled researchers, benefiting both the College of Health and the institution overall.

The Montana CTRC will provide pilot / developmental funding to researchers from departments and schools at the University of Montana. Each funded pilot / developmental project will then be supported to seek additional funding to support a variety of research initiatives in the future. The Montana CTRC will bring in new research projects and funding, further enhancing the university's research profile and opening grant opportunities for faculty and students.

E. Describe the Institute/Center's relationship to the University mission.

The Montana CTRC aligns closely with the University of Montana's mission by advancing world-class research that directly addresses health disparities in Montana's rural and underserved populations. By focusing on clinical and translational research, the Center not only generates impactful research but also enhances educational and professional development opportunities, fostering high-quality, accessible learning experiences for both faculty and students.

Additionally, the Montana CTRC builds partnerships with healthcare organizations and public health agencies, contributing to the university's goal of shaping global citizens who are committed to knowledge expansion and community support. This collaborative approach promotes the university's vision of sustaining diverse communities, particularly by addressing the unique healthcare needs of Montana's rural population. Through these efforts, the Center strengthens the university's role as a leader in rural health and population-focused research.

3. Briefly describe the Institute/Center's anticipated activities.

The Montana CTRC will meet its long-term goals through the efforts of five Cores: the Administrative Core, the Health Research Core, the Professional Development Core, the Community Engagement and Outreach Core, the Research Design, Compliance, and Data Management Core. Primary activities relate to providing funding to up to seven research projects each year, and supporting them to successfully apply for additional funding in future years.

The Administrative Core will provide the program / financial management infrastructure to successfully develop C&T research capacity through strong communication strategies and innovative programming,

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RESEARCH CENTER AND INSTITUTE PROPOSAL FORM

while incorporating a comprehensive evaluation program that is meant to continually improve our offerings. This will be accomplished through the following specific Aims:

- Aim 1. Provide an administrative infrastructure that facilitates the development of clinical and translational research capacity.
- Aim 2. Implement effective strategies that facilitate clear communication among the research investigators, Cores, committees, and partner organizations.
- Aim 3. Provide innovative C&T support opportunities for CTRC researchers, and Aim 4. Coordinate a comprehensive evaluation program that assesses the needs of CTRC Cores and quantifies the success of the Montana CTRC.

The Health Research (HR) Core will establish novel C&T research collaborations between academic researchers at the University of Montana and partnering clinical and public health organizations. Specific Aims of the Health Research Core include:

- Aim 1. Establish formal C&T research partnerships and build research capacity for clinical and translational research in Montana.
- Aim 2. Recruit for and administer the Pilot and Developmental Research Awards program.
- Aim 3. Provide ongoing support for C&T investigators, including mentorship toward developing successful extramural applications.

The Professional Development (PD) Core will develop a user-informed training and mentorship platform to service the professional development needs of emerging C&T researchers as well as the needs of the other Montana CTRC Cores that support hose researchers. Specific Aims of the Professional Development Core include:

- Aim 1. Conduct needs assessments to identify training and professional development needs to support C&T research.
- Aim 2. Design, promote and deliver trainings, workshops, and other professional development activities for the Montana CTRC research workforce.
- Aim 3. Develop a mentorship program for the C&T research workforce.

The Community Engagement and Outreach (CEO) Core will strengthen community-engaged C&T research throughout the state by supporting investigators in developing effective and sustainable health research projects that respond to community-informed needs and priorities. Specific Aims of the Community Engagement and Outreach Core include:

- Aim 1. Develop a comprehensive, community-informed Montana Health Issues and Priorities assessment.
- Aim 2. Deliver and evaluate training, mentoring, and resources to Montana CTRC investigators to promote high levels of community-engaged research.
- Aim 3. Translate findings and evidence from research studies to community practice and policy.

The Research Design, Compliance, and Data Management (RDCD) Core will establish sustainable

capacity for rigorous and ethical C&T research aimed at addressing health priorities in Montana. Specific Aims of this core include:

- Aim 1. Provide Montana CTRC investigators with expertise needed to design and implement rigorous research protocols.
- Aim 2a. Leverage and enhance existing HER prioritizing needs identified by Montana CTRC CEO and HR Cores.
- Aim 2b. Establish data navigation tools for clinical researchers that facilitate use of HER resources relevant to health research in Montana.
- Aim 3. Ensure compliance with NIH and institutional policies related to research in human participants and management of protected health information.

A. Identify faculty expertise available for participation in the Institute/Center's activities.

- **Core directors and key personnel:**
  Tony Ward, PhD: Dr. Ward is a Professor in the School of Public and Community Health Sciences (SPCHS). He brings extensive experience with C&T research and has been the PI/Co-PI on numerous R-level awards, including R01s, R25s, and RC1s. Dr. Ward's research has focused on exploring the respiratory health effects of populations exposed to residential wood smoke in rural areas of Montana, Alaska, Idaho and the Navajo Reservation.
- **Sophia Newcomer, PhD, MPH:** Currently the PI of a R01 funded by NIH/NIAID and formerly a project lead within the Center for Population Research (CPHR), Dr. Newcomer mentors two early stage investigators within CPHR and mentors an ESI at the University of Nebraska Medical Center. Dr. newcomer is an Associate Professor in the SPCHS.
- **Curtis Noonan, PhD:** Dr. Noonan is a Professor in the SPCHS. Dr. Noonan directs CPHR and is the Senior Faculty Development Lead for the Montana site of the Environmental Influences on Child Health Outcomes, IDeA States Pediatric Clinical Trials Network.
- **Erin Semmens, PhD:** Dr. Semmens is an Associate Professor in the SPCHS and a former project lead with CPHR. Her work has leveraged health records including vital statistics, outpatient, hospital, and occupational medical screening data. The PI of BREATHE, a 17-site NIH-funded clinical trial for the Montana Pediatric Clinical Trials Site of the ECHo ISPCTN, Dr. Semmens has led protocol development and navigated IRB and DSMB approvals processes.
- **Damian Chase-Begay, PhD**: Dr. Chase-Begay brings extensive knowledge and a robust professional network to broadly engage stateside leadership from various facets of the healthcare and public health communities. Working for many years in community, tribal, urban Indian, and public health, Dr. Chase-Begay has served as the health officer for Missoula Public Health, the Executive Director of All Nationals Health Center, and the former Executive Director of the National Council of Urban Indian Health, as well as serving as a board member for numerous health organizations. Dr. Chase-Begay is an Associate Professor in the SPCHS.
- **Erica Woodahl, PhD:** Dr. Woodahl is the Director of the L.S. Skaggs Institute for Health Innovation and a professor in the Department of Biomedical and Pharmaceutical Sciences in the Skaggs School of Pharmacy. Dr. Woodahl brings extensive experience in pharmacokinetics, pharmacogenomics, and community engagement with rural and Indigenous communities.
- **Kimber McKay, PhD:** Dr. McKay is a professor and Chair in the SPCHS and will serve as the Montana CTRC Evaluator. Dr. McKay has extensive experience conducting research on

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RESEARCH CENTER AND INSTITUTE PROPOSAL FORM

program efficacy with multi-disciplinary teams and has served as lead or co-lead as an evaluator on multiple NIH- and HRSA-funded center and research program grants, including serving as the evaluator for CPHR.

B. Which departments on campus will be involved and how will the Institute/Center contribute to the academic programs of the institution?

College of Health: The Montana CTRC will be housed within the School of Public and Community Health Sciences. With over 200 students across doctoral, masters, undergraduate, and certificate programs, the Montana CTRC will provide a rich resource for active and productive involvement by students in grant-funded research.

The Montana CTRC will provide funding to up to seven researchers from multiple other departments and schools throughout the University of Montana campus – both within and outside the College of Health.

4. Identify the organizational structure of the Institute/Center within the institution.

The Center will be housed in the College of Health.

A. Identify all agencies, organizations and/or institutions that will be involved.

Each one of our partner organizations is a leader in public health / healthcare in our state. Clinical partners include: Providence, Logan Health, Billings Clinical, and Shodair Children's Hospital. Public health partners include: Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services, Missoula Public Health, and All Nations Health Center.

B. Identify advisory council information.

The Montana CTRC's committee structure is as follows:

- **Executive Committee:** Oversees operations and program implementation, led by Dr. Ward with Core directors and key staff. Biweekly meetings ensure progress and coordination.
- **Steering Committee:** Guides overall priorities and decisions, includes Executive Committee members and leaders from partner organizations, and meets bimonthly (first year) and then quarterly. It monitors spending, evaluations, and resource allocation.
- **External Advisory Committee (EAC):** Composed of three external experts, the EAC provides scientific review and funding guidance. It meets biannually, submits progress reports, and is evaluated annually for engagement.

5. Identify first year and continuing finances necessary to support the Center/Institute, including the sources of funding.

The funding for the Montana CTRC comes from the National Institutes of Health. This is a five year award (9/1/24 – 6/30/29):

Year 1: $2,179,141
Year 2: $2,152,956
Year 3: $2,113,478

Montana Board of Regents
RESEARCH CENTER AND INSTITUTE PROPOSAL FORM

Year 4: $2,095,730
Year 5: $2,056,818

A. Will additional faculty and other resources be required to implement this Center/Institute? If yes, please describe the need and indicate the plan for meeting this need.

No additional resources will be required to implement this Center at this time. In lieu of hiring additional faculty members into MCTRC as originally requested, we will be hiring a full-time partnership manager with the budgeted funds. This position will not rely on the general funds in anyway.

B. Are other, additional resources required to ensure the success of the proposed Center/Institute? If yes, please describe the need and indicate the plan for meeting this need.

Besides space needs within the College of Health to support staff and faculty, no additional equipment or resources are needed to launch and sustain this Center.

6. Describe other similar Centers/Institutes or research capacities in the state and surrounding region.

There is no other similar Clinical and Translational Research Center (funded by NIH) in the state of Montana or the MUS.

A. Describe the relationship between the proposed Center/Institute and any similar Centers/Institutes, programs, or research capacities within the Montana University System.

The Montana CTRC will work closely with the NIH-funded Center for Population Health Research (CPHR). Montana CTRC Cores will be available to support CPHR researchers.

B. In cases of substantial duplication, explain the rationale for the proposed Center/Institute.

NA

7. Assessment: How will the success of the center/institute be measured?

he evaluation plan implemented by Dr. McKay will be guided by the Montana CTRC overall specific aims. Formative and summative reports will be generated with a specific emphasis on the development of C&T research capacity in Montana, and the functionality of the five Montana CTRC cores. Mid-year and end-of-year evaluations will be conducted with an emphasis on overall progress towards building a sustainable Center that supports C&T research capacity at UM and with our partner organizations. Dr. McKay has worked with each Core Director to determine a set of benchmarks to be reached annually by each Core. These indicators and benchmarks, reviewed semi-annually in the reports provided by Dr. McKay, will assist all stakeholders in measuring progress toward reaching the Center's desired impact. Dr. McKay will meet quarterly with each core director, focusing primarily on the achievement of goals. Dr. McKay will also conduct end-of-year focus groups with the Montana CTRC Executive Committee, Steering Committee, and investigators.

8. State the internal campus review and approval process which has occurred prior to submission to the Commissioner's Office. Indicate, where appropriate, involvement by faculty, students, community members, professional constituencies, etc.

Montana Board of Regents

RESEARCH CENTER AND INSTITUTE PROPOSAL FORM

Internal campus review was conducted by the Chair of the School of Public and Community Health Sciences (Kimber McKay), College of Health Dean (Matt Fete), the Faculty Senate, and officials in the Provost's Office at UM.

Montana University System

REQUEST TO PLAN FORM

ITEM 217-1003-R0325 **Meeting Date: 3/13/2025**

Item Name

Program/Center/Institute Title: **Montana Clinical Translational Research Center**

Planned 6-digit CIP code: **511402**

Campus, School/Department: **School of Public and Community Health Sciences**

Expected Final Submission Date: **1/1/2025**

Contact Name/Info: **Tony Ward (Tony.ward@umontana.edu)**

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

With funding from the National Institutes of Health, the Montana Clinical and Translational Research Center (Montana CTRC) aims to build clinical and translational research capacity at the University of Montana and with its clinical and public health partner organizations. The Montana CTRC has a goal of directly addressing health disparity issues throughout the state and improving the health of our communities.

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 Montana CTRC will directly address the significant health disparities and lack of healthcare infrastructure in Montana's rural and underserved areas. With 64.1% of the state's population living in nonmetro regions, Montana faces unique challenges such as limited access to specialty care, high mortality rates from cardiovascular disease and suicide, and a lack of healthcare professionals, particularly in rural counties. These challenges are exacerbated by a shortage of healthcare providers, with nearly all counties designated as Health Professional Shortage Areas. Additionally, Montana lacks a public medical school, which further limits clinical and translational research opportunities. The Montana CTRC aims to build capacity for clinical and translational research, addressing these gaps by supporting local researchers, providing mentorship, and facilitating collaborations between academic institutions, healthcare providers, and public health agencies. This initiative will help address critical health issues, including chronic disease prevention, mental health, and substance use, by promoting evidence-based practices and research that are directly applicable to the needs of Montana's rural and tribal communities.

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

Research funding is provided by the NIH over the next five years. We may need office space as we hire new staff and two new faculty over the next five years.

Montana University System

REQUEST TO PLAN FORM

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 MCTRC will provide Pilot and Developmental project funding to researchers not only in different departments at the University of Montana, but also to researchers at our Partner Organizations throughout the state.

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.

With a focus on clinical and translational research, the Montana CTRC strengthens the university's reputation as a leader in rural and population health research. It fosters collaborations with prominent healthcare organizations and public health agencies throughout the state, allowing the university to address the pressing health disparities in Montana's rural and underserved communities.

The Montana CTRC leverages the Montana Public Health Training Center (MPHTC) to provide professional development and workforce training. This center benefits the university's faculty, staff, and students by offering training programs, webinars, and mentoring, which prepares them for careers in healthcare and public health. The training supports a pipeline of skilled researchers, benefiting both the College of Health and the institution overall.

The Montana CTRC will provide pilot / developmental funding to researchers from departments and schools at the University of Montana. Each funded pilot / developmental project will then be supported to seek additional funding to support a variety of research initiatives in the future. The Montana CTRC will bring in new research projects and funding, further enhancing the university's research profile and opening grant opportunities for faculty and students.

Signature/Date
Chief Research Officer*:  **1/17/25**

Montana University System

REQUEST TO PLAN FORM

Flagship Provost**:  **1/12/24**

Flagship President: Approved March 2025 as Item 217-1003-R0325**

*Center/Institute Proposal only
**Not applicable to the Community Colleges.

Montana Board of Regents

ACADEMIC PROPOSAL REQUEST FORM

March 2026

ITEM 1003-LII0326

Request Authorization to establish the Elouise Cobell Land and Culture Institute

Institution: **University of Montana** CIP Code: _____

Program/Center/Institute Title: **Elouise Cobell Land and Culture Institute**

Includes (please specify below): Face-to-face Offering: _____ Online Offering: _____ Blended Offering: _____

Options: _____

Proposal Summary

What: The University of Montana proposes formal recognition of the Elouise Cobell Land and Culture Institute as a research institute reporting to the Office of the Vice President for Research and Scholarship. The Institute builds on more than a decade of established facilities, programming, partnerships, and externally funded research housed in the Payne Family Native American Center. It advances interdisciplinary education and applied research focused on the relationships among land, culture, environment, and community in the North American West. The Institute integrates the natural sciences, social sciences, humanities, Indigenous knowledges, and geospatial technologies, and supports teaching, outreach, and externally funded research through dedicated facilities including a GIS laboratory, multimedia classrooms, and the UM Planetarium.

Why: Contemporary research, workforce development, and public problem solving increasingly require interdisciplinary approaches that integrate environmental, cultural, social, and technological perspectives. The Institute responds to this need by providing an academic platform for applied land and culture studies, elevating Indigenous perspectives and Native American knowledge systems, and strengthening collaboration with tribal nations, federal agencies, and regional partners. Formal designation enhances institutional visibility, supports extramural funding competitiveness, and advances UM's mission to foster inclusive prosperity, community engagement, student-centered learning, and innovative research aligned with Montana's landscapes and cultures.

Resources: No new general fund resources are required. The director position is a permanently funded tenure-track line, and administrative, pre-award, and post-award support are already provided through existing institutional structures. Facilities were constructed and equipped beginning in 2014 and are maintained by UM. Ongoing and future research activity is supported primarily through extramural grants and contracts.

ATTACHMENTS

1003-LII0326_RTP
1003-LII0326_Center

Please mark the appropriate type of request and submit with any additional materials, including those listed in parentheses following the type of request. For more information pertaining to the types of requests listed below, how to complete an item request, or additional forms please visit http://mus.edu/che/arsa/academicproposals.asp.

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ACADEMIC PROPOSAL REQUEST FORM

A. Level I:

OCHE Notification

1a. Placing a postsecondary educational program into moratorium (Program Termination and Moratorium Form)

1b. Withdrawing a postsecondary educational program from moratorium

2. Re-titling, terminating or revising a campus certificate of 29 credits or less

3. Offering an existing postsecondary educational program via distance or online delivery

OCHE Approvals

4. Re-titling an existing postsecondary educational program

5. Terminating an existing postsecondary educational program (Program Termination and Moratorium Form)

6. Consolidating existing postsecondary educational programs (Curriculum Proposal Form)

7. Establishing a new minor where there is a major or an option in a major (Curriculum Proposal Form)

8. Revising a postsecondary educational program (Curriculum Proposal Form)

9. Establishing a temporary C.A.S. or A.A.S. degree program Approval limited to 2 years

10. Withdrawing a postsecondary program from moratorium

11. Establishing a campus certificate of 29 credits or less (Curriculum Proposal Form)

B. Level II:

1. Establishing a new postsecondary educational program (Curriculum Proposal and Completed Request to Plan Form)

2. Requesting Permanent authorization for a temporary C.A.S. or A.A.S degree program (Curriculum Proposal and Completed Request to Plan Form)

3. Requesting a variation of the 120-credit baccalaureate degrees *Exception to policy 301.11*

Montana Board of Regents

ACADEMIC PROPOSAL REQUEST FORM

	4. Forming, eliminating or consolidating an academic, administrative, or research unit (Curriculum or Center/Institute Proposal and completed Request to Plan, except when eliminating or consolidating)
X	
	5. Re-titling an academic, administrative, or research unit

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RESEARCH CENTER AND INSTITUTE PROPOSAL FORM

1. State the proposed Institute/Center's name and purpose.

The Elouise Cobell Land and Culture Institute ("the Institute" hereafter) is a natural development of the University if Montana's commitment to interdisciplinary scholarship and public education, and feeds on the University's renowned leadership in the conservation of the American West and the elevation of Montana's cultural, historical, and geographical richness.

In 2013, the Board of Regents approved that the basement of UM's Payne Family Native American Center be named the Elouise Cobell Land and Culture Institute (Item 158-1007+R0313, March 7-8, 2013). This space was named in honor of Elouise Pepion Cobell, a Blackfeet entrepreneur, banker, rancher, and tribal leader who tirelessly advocated for Native American rights. During her lifetime, Elouise Cobell received the MacArthur Genius Award, honorary doctorates from Montana State University and Dartmouth College, and was honored by Blackfeet Nation with warrior status in 2000. Dr. Cobell died in October 2011 and was posthumously awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2016, and inducted in the National Women's Hall of Fame in 2024. Every November, Elouise Cobell Day is celebrated at UM to remember and recognize her dedicated work to preserve Native lands and culture. With the support of donors and UM, the space for the Elouise Cobell Land and Culture Institute was built and initially equipped in 2014.

As an organization of resources and activities, the Institute already exists. The Cobell Director supervises an ongoing portfolio of applied research at the UM in collaboration with the Department of Native American Studies, the Environmental Studies Program, and the Department of Society and Conservation. Additionally, the Director partners with the Spatial Analysis Lab and the Department of Physics and Astronomy in research or educational projects, led by those units, that leverage Institute's resources. Through the Institute's facilities to support Geographic Information Science (see Section 5.A), it collaborates with Franke College of Forestry and Conservation's GIS Certificate to provide a teaching space as well as research opportunities to GIS students. Given the Institute's mission and academic priorities, it also has natural ties with the departments of Anthropology and History that will be further nurtured to support the research needs of their faculty and students, such as facilitating the Institute's equipment for historical mapping and spatial archaeological analysis. By formally recognizing the Elouise Cobell Land and Culture Institute, institutional coverage will be provided for this varied portfolio to grow, strengthen its collaborative array, and become more visible across UM, the Montana University System, and beyond.

2. A comprehensive statement of the Institute/Center's mission and its relationship to the University mission.

A. State the Institute/Center's mission.

The Elouise Cobell Land and Culture Institute aims to advance interdisciplinary education and applied research on the many environments, peoples, and values that define Montana landscapes, providing an academic space for the natural sciences, the social sciences, the humanities, and new technologies to converge in an innovative program on land and culture studies. The Institute builds on existing collaborations within UM and external partners to advance applied research and hands-on education and is designed to further elevate UM's national profile in interdisciplinary scholarship, as well as attract new resources to advance its mission.

B. Identify the Institute/Center's goals and objectives.

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RESEARCH CENTER AND INSTITUTE PROPOSAL FORM

The Institute has four main goals: (1) develop a research program around such topics as the protection of Montana's native landscapes, the understanding of their joint human and environmental history, and applications of geographical science for environmental and cultural conservation; (2) honoring the legacy of Elouise Pepion Cobell, special focus is placed on generating opportunities for the protection, revitalization, and promotion of Native American knowledges and Indigenous Science; (3) provide~~s~~ UM faculty and external partners with facilities to support teaching and outreach, consisting of several classrooms, a Geographic Information Systems lab, and a planetarium; (4) engage~~s~~ in collaborative work to (4.1) generate scientific production, (4.2) attract extramural funding, and (4.3) strengthen collaborations with state, tribal, federal, and private partners in support of its mission.

C. What specific need is being responded to in developing the proposed Institute/Center?

Contemporary problem solving in academia and the U.S. job market has evolved towards a skillset that rewards interdisciplinary teams and leaders, especially in occupations that couple human and environmental systems [1]. This approach is reflected in present-day training needs, with employers from private and public sectors seeking workers with capacity in a broad set of skills and ways of knowing [2, 3, 4, 5]. The Cobell Institute aspires to grow an interdisciplinary program where the UM will articulate training in the social sciences, the natural sciences, the humanities, and new technologies for advancing its student-centered multidisciplinary vocation. In keeping with its mission, the Institute meets current student and workforce multi-skill demands by providing a multimedia space to teach trainees in the multidisciplinary analysis of interdependencies between human dimensions (social, cultural, legislative, economic) and urban and natural environments of the Western U.S. To that end, the Institute takes a systems-based approach to training, providing opportunities to acquire hands-on experience in the integration of information technologies, data science, community engagement, and diverse ways of knowing (including Western as well as Native) to problem solving.

See Bibliographical Addendum for list of references.

D. Describe how the Institute/Center benefits the department, college, or institution.

The Institute's scope and priorities, as described in sections 2.A and 2.B, serve UM's vision to "foster inclusive prosperity and democracy while creating new knowledge and ways of learning" by seeking to develop applied knowledge and best practices in partnership with a broad range of communities of practice, colleges, tribal nations, and governments across the North American West. In addition, its focus on research, education and outreach around a broad mix of disciplines responds to UM's and MSU' missions to train future leaders in versatile capabilities for solving complex management problems that have broad consequences for the development of Montana's communities and the nation. By investing in developing pedagogy and scholarship that elevate Native American perspectives, the Institute will also become a mechanism to support UM's broader, long-term strategy to advance Montana's Indian Education for All Act within UM and across the MUS.

E. Describe the Institute/Center's relationship to the University mission.

UM has a long history of service to Montana, Tribes, and the Western U.S. with the generation of scholarship that informs critical policy making and management decisions in a continuously evolving

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RESEARCH CENTER AND INSTITUTE PROPOSAL FORM

socioeconomic landscape. This Institute aims to further this legacy and will support UM's priorities as articulated in its Strategic Vision. Honoring PFA1 (Place student success at the center of all we do), its resources will help to further enhance faculty-student mentoring and the development of opportunities for students to cultivate applied skills and research leadership in science. It will exemplify PFA5 (Proudly tell the UM story) by generating and making visible scholarship that benefits Montana and shows the University's commitment to fostering civic engagement and diverse ways of knowing. Via its partnership efforts, the Institute will assist in PFA4 (Partner with Place) to collaborate with local, tribal, statewide, regional, and federal partners to advance the shared goal of promoting Montana's cultures, communities, and science. Finally, the Institute will serve PFA2 (Drive excellence and innovation in teaching, learning, and research) by supporting educational and research opportunities that foster applied science, interdisciplinarity, as well as ethical and informed decision making in a diverse world.

3. Briefly describe the Institute/Center's anticipated activities.

The Institute will help expand UM's portfolio of applied research and hands-on training on land and cultural studies, both via direct support by UM and via using the Institute's platform and mission to attract additional resources. The Institute will also continue to be an active participant in the College of Sciences' planetarium program and FCFC's certificate program in Geographic Information Systems, seeking to further expand its scope and success, and engage in a range of academic and outreach activities in support of UM's curriculum.

A. Identify faculty expertise available for participation in the Institute/Center's activities.

MUS is fortunate to have a diverse faculty body who can participate in the Institute's agenda. As a matter of fact, Institute's resources are already at the service of a diverse group of faculty across the UM-Missoula campus. Within the Department of Native American Studies, professors Heather Cahoon, Neyooxet Greymorning, Patrick Lozar, and the Cobell Director are experts in integrating scholarship that requires the humanities, the social sciences, and Indigenous knowledges, and regular collaborators in fostering the University's research and curriculum on Native American Studies. Dr. Mark Reisser is an expert of astronomy education with years of experience in outreach and community engagement to bring Indigenous interests into this educational area. He is also the director of the UM Planetarium, which is housed in the Cobell Institute (see Section 3.B). Faculty in the Franke College of Forestry and Conservation, the Department of Anthropology, and the History Department generate scholarship, education, and service that can additionally benefit the Institute's mission, such as professors Robin Saha, Kelly Dixon, and Wade Davis. The GIS cluster at UM, with such experts as Jessica Mitchell and Anna Klene, have already collaborated with the Institute in efforts that involve GIS training and consulting with U.S. Department of Agriculture and Tribes. Likewise, the Cobell Director works with UM's Office of Sustainability to support the University's goal of advancing its campus-wide sustainability strategy. The Institute aims to facilitate these interactions and amplify existing strengths at UM, and will bring its existing resources and partnership network closer to administrative and academic expertise within UM and beyond to engage in its mission and success.

B. Which departments on campus will be involved and how will the Institute/Center contribute to the academic programs of the institution?

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RESEARCH CENTER AND INSTITUTE PROPOSAL FORM

As explained in sections 1 and 3.A, the Institute collaborates with a broad range of academic departments and programs across several UM colleges, in capacities that involve joint research, education, or outreach. To feature a few ongoing projects, (a) the Institute partners with the Department of Native American Studies for the development of a General Education course on Native American perspectives on the environment (NAS 303e) and research grants that elevate Indigenous ways of knowing; (b) it has developed a course on applied environmental analysis (EVST 797) for the Environmental Studies Program; (c) it leads a research joint venture agreement with the Department of Society and Conservation and the U.S. Forest Service to estimate the environmental impacts of recreational visitation on wilderness areas; (d) it houses the Star Gazing Room and the UM Planetarium, the latter of which is managed by the Department of Physics and Astronomy; (e) it contributes its GIS lab classroom for the teaching of courses in the GIS Certificate Program (which is coordinated by the Department of Forest Management); and (f) it collaborates with the Broader Impacts Group via the Spatial Analysis Lab in research that aims to inform fire and fuels management in Western Montana as well as advance collaborative relations between UM, U.S. Forest Service, and Tribes. Given the Institute's mission and academic priorities, (g) it also has natural ties with the departments of Anthropology and History so its academic personnel also participate in the advising of graduate students in the academic programs of those departments, in addition to (h) advising students from other programs campus-wide, mainly in the Franke College of Forestry and Conservation.

Additionally, the Institute fits into UM's institutional program array by potentially complementing several existing programs, namely, the American Indian Governance and Policy Institute, the O'Connor Center for the Rocky Mountain West, the Rural Institute for Inclusive Communities, the Fire Center, the Spatial Analysis Lab, the Center for Integrated Research on the Environment, the Bolle Center for People and Forests, the Wilderness Institute, and the Center for Natural Resources and Environmental Policy. The Institute's program complements this program array by creating applied science opportunities to incorporate cultural dimensions into policy, historical discourse, health programming, environmental research, and civic engagement.

4. Identify the organizational structure of the Institute/Center within the institution.

Since 2022, a tenure-track faculty member has been hired as the director for the Institute, who will report to the Office of the Vice President of Research and Scholarship. The director is supported by at least a business administrative associate, a budget analyst, a pre-award specialist, and a post-award specialist who have already been contributed by the UM. Faculty across UM will also be able to affiliate with the Institute pending interest in research or teaching collaboration and/or in using the Institute's facilities.

A. Identify all agencies, organizations and/or institutions that will be involved.

The Institute already has multiple relevant partners, from federal agencies like U.S. Forest Service, as well as tribal nations like the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes and tribal organizations such as KKIN. The Institute plans to expand and strengthen its current range of public and private sector partners as part of the Institute's mission.

B. Identify advisory council information.

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RESEARCH CENTER AND INSTITUTE PROPOSAL FORM

An advisory council will be formed in collaboration with the Office of the Vice President of Research and Scholarship, the College of Humanities and Social Sciences, the College of Sciences, the Franke College of Forestry and Conservation, with the Institute director, the college deans, and the Vice President of Research and Scholarship having final sign off authority on members.

5. Identify first year and continuing finances necessary to support the Center/Institute, including the sources of funding.

The formation of this Institute is the next natural step after more than 10 years of accumulated extramural and internal investment to build the Payne Family Native American Center (2014), the Institute's facilities (2015), its research and educational resources (2015 – present, see section 5.A), and starting personnel (2022 – present). The director position is part of a tenurable faculty line that is already supported by UM's General Fund on a permanent basis since FY2023 (118,000 per annum in FY2026). The rest of administrative support (see section 4), likewise, is already contributed by UM as part of its regular business (see Section 5.B).

A. Will additional faculty and other resources be required to implement this Center/Institute? If yes, please describe the need and indicate the plan for meeting this need.

The success of the Institute will benefit from the engagement of faculty from the College of Humanities and Social Sciences, the College of Sciences, and the Franke College of Forestry and Conservation and beyond, but it does not require additional fiscal resources from current budget lines (General Fund or otherwise) to launch and operate.

The physical facilities that house the Institute were built in 2014 within the Payne Family Native American Center and comprise a Star Gazing Round Room (NAC 013-015), a Geographic Information Systems teaching lab (NAC 014), a multimedia classroom (NAC 009), a multi-screen classroom (NAC 011), and an office for the Institute's research assistants (NAC 209). These spaces are regularly used to support UM's teaching needs and have been a source of revenue for UM over the last decade. The Star Gazing Round Room (NAC 013-15) houses the UM Planetarium, a collaboration between the Department of Native American Studies and the Department of Physics and Astronomy to offer an outreach program on Western and Native astronomies for schools, campus visitors, and UM's curriculum. Equipment in all these spaces has been maintained and upgraded periodically by UM since the inauguration of the building. A facilities manager, contributed by the Office of the President, is shared with the rest of units and programs that are housed in the Payne Family Native American Center.

The proposer, Dr. Fernando Sanchez, has a joint faculty appointment with the College of Humanities and Sciences and the Franke College of Forestry and Conservation, and is serving as the Cobell Director for the aforementioned research portfolio (see sections 1 and 3). In collaboration with other UM faculty and staff, the Director has attracted funding from the federal government (importantly, the U.S. Forest Service) as well as private sponsors (e.g., Mellon Foundation) that support research for the elevation of Montana's landscapes and cultures, providing opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students to start their research careers while they assist in these projects. Extramural funding in the form of grants and contracts is expected to be the main supporting source of the Institute's research agenda, an effort that will come from the Cobell Director as well as its supporting personnel and program affiliates.

Montana Board of Regents
RESEARCH CENTER AND INSTITUTE PROPOSAL FORM

B. Are other, additional resources required to ensure the success of the proposed Center/Institute? If yes, please describe the need and indicate the plan for meeting this need.

The Vice President of Research and Scholarship Office, the Office of Sponsored Programs, the College of Humanities and Social Sciences, the College of Sciences, the Franke College of Forestry and Conservation, and UM Foundation are committed to continue contributing personnel resources to support the Institute's business operations. No additional funds are needed in this vein for the initial five-year period. Since 2022, the UM College of Humanities and Sciences has allocated human resources to support the administration of an ongoing portfolio of activities (as described in sections 1 and 3) that already shapes the research agenda of the Institute; primarily, a budget analyst, a grants specialist, and a business administrative associate who are shared with other College units. Additionally, the Office of Sponsored Programs has provided pre-award and post-award specialists who assist in the preparation and management of the grants that comprise this research portfolio.

6. Describe other similar Centers/Institutes or research capacities in the state and surrounding region.

There are no other institutes or centers in the state or region with this particular mission and scope.

A. Describe the relationship between the proposed Center/Institute and any similar Centers/Institutes, programs, or research capacities within the Montana University System.

As stated in its mission, the Institute is designed to work with and enhance interdisciplinary scholarship and education in the broad range of disciplines, skills, and stakeholders that define land and culture studies. Within the MUS, the Institute complements MSU's Ivan Doig Center for the Study of the Lands and Peoples of the North American West, by focusing on an applied research agenda that will feed on cultural, social, and scientific knowledges to inform the conservation, preservation, restoration, and revitalization of the values that communities, especially Native American, attach to the landscapes that define the Western U.S. Potentially, the Institute can also strategically collaborate with MSU's Center for American Indian and Rural Health Equity and the Western Transportation Institute to pursue mutual interests understanding the role played by Montana's human and biophysical geographies in the resilience of our rural communities. To foster collaboration with these programs, the Institute's personnel, led by its director, will explore ways of collaboration such as the joint submission of proposals for extramural funding, mutual invitation of speakers, and the joint organization of events to strengthen the educational and academic ties of UM and MSU.

B. In cases of substantial duplication, explain the rationale for the proposed Center/Institute.

There are not substantial duplications identified in the state and surrounding region.

7. Assessment: How will the success of the center/institute be measured?

Success will be monitored and assessed using standard indicators that measure performance of research, educational, and outreach efforts: research impact indicators; grant and philanthropic funds raised; data on public engagement in outreach activities; data on courses and students using the Institute's facilities for training; data on research students participating in the Institute's project portfolio; data on staff, faculty, and affiliates engaged in the Institute's activities.

Montana Board of Regents

RESEARCH CENTER AND INSTITUTE PROPOSAL FORM

8. State the internal campus review and approval process which has occurred prior to submission to the Commissioner's Office. Indicate, where appropriate, involvement by faculty, students, community members, professional constituencies, etc.

Multiple faculty members have participated in the discussions and shaping of the Cobell Institute over the last 20 years, especially in the College of Humanities and Sciences, and particularly from the Department of Native American Studies (to be housed in the College of Humanities and Science in the near future) and the Geography Department (whose programs were integrated into the Franke College of Forestry and Conservation in 2019). This has also, per above, been a collaboration with donors over the last 20 years, bringing in a range of stakeholders and connections to the broader community around the Cobell Institute. This specific proposal has received direct engagement of the Vice President of Research and Scholarship (Scott Whittenburg), the Provost (Adrea Lawrence), the Vice Provost for Academic Affairs (John DeBoer), the Chief of Staff & Vice President for Strategic Planning and Implementation (Kelly Webster), as well as positive feedback from the deans of the College of Humanities and Social Sciences (Christina Yoshimura), the College of Sciences (Bruce Bowler), and the Franke College of Forestry and Conservation (Libby Metcalf). This proposal will also be reviewed by Faculty Senate.

Montana University System

REQUEST TO PLAN FORM – ACADEMIC, ADMINISTRATIVE OR RESEARCH UNIT

ITEM 221-1004-R1125 **Meeting Date – November 2025**

Request to Plan the Elouise Cobell Land and Culture Institute

Center/Institute/Unit Title: **Elouise Cobell Land and Culture Institute**

Campus: **UM-Mountain, Missoula** Expected Final Submission Date: **May 2025**

Contact Name/Info: **Fernando Sanchez, Cobell Director | Fernando.sanchez@mso.umt.edu**

This form is meant to increase communication, collaboration, and problem-solving opportunities throughout the MUS in the center/institute development process. The completed form should exceed 2-3 pages. For more information regarding the center/institute approval process, please visit http://mus.edu/che/arsa/academicproposals.asp.

1) Provide a brief description of the new center/institute (unit).

In 2013, the Board of Regents approved that the basement of UM's Payne Family Native American Center be named the Elouise Cobell Land and Culture Institute (Item 158-1007+R0313, March 7-8, 2013). This space was named in honor of Elouise Pepion Cobell, a Blackfeet entrepreneur, banker, rancher, and tribal leader who tirelessly advocated for Native American rights. With the support of donors and UM, the space for the Elouise Cobell Land and Culture Institute was built and initially equipped in 2014. The Elouise Cobell Land and Culture Institute ("the Institute" hereafter) aims to advance interdisciplinary education and applied research on the many environments, peoples, and values that define Montana landscapes, providing an academic space for the natural sciences, the social sciences, the humanities, and new technologies to converge in an innovative program on land and culture studies. The Institute seeks to develop a research program around such topics as the protection of Montana's native landscapes, the understanding of their joint human and environmental history, and applications of geographical science for environmental and cultural conservation. Honoring the legacy of Elouise Pepion Cobell, special focus is placed on generating opportunities for the protection, revitalization, and promotion of Native American knowledges and Indigenous Science. The Institute also provides UM faculty and external partners with facilities to support teaching and outreach, consisting of several classrooms, a Geographic Information Systems lab, and a planetarium (see Section 5). In addition to this research and educational portfolio, the Institute engages in collaborative work to generate scientific production, attract extramural funding, and strengthen collaborations with state, tribal, federal, and private partners in support of its mission.

As an organization of resources and activities, the Institute already exists. At present, the Cobell Director supervises an ongoing portfolio of applied research at the UM in collaboration with the Department of Native American Studies, the Environmental Studies Program, and the Department of Society and Conservation. Additionally, the Director partners with the Spatial Analysis Lab, the Department of Physics and Astronomy, and the GIS Certificate Program in research or educational projects, led by those units, that leverage Institute's resources (see Section 5). Given the Institute's mission and academic priorities, it also has natural ties with the departments of Anthropology and History that will be further nurtured to support the research needs of their faculty and students, such as facilitating the Institute's equipment for historical mapping and spatial archaeological analysis. By formally recognizing the Elouise Cobell Land and Culture Institute, institutional coverage will be provided for this varied portfolio to grow, strengthen its collaborative array, and become more visible across UM, the Montana University System, and beyond.

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REQUEST TO PLAN FORM – ACADEMIC, ADMINISTRATIVE OR RESEARCH UNIT

2) Describe the need for the center/institute. Specifically, how the center/institute meets current student, state, and industry research or community engagement needs. (Please cite sources in an addendum to this document).

Contemporary problem solving in academia and the U.S. job market has evolved towards a skillset that rewards interdisciplinary teams and leaders, especially in occupations that couple human and environmental systems [1]. This approach is reflected in present-day training needs, with employers from private and public sectors seeking workers with capacity in a broad set of skills and ways of knowing [2, 3, 4, 5]. The Cobell Institute aspires to expand an interdisciplinary program where the UM will articulate training in the social sciences, the natural sciences, the humanities, and new technologies for advancing its student-centered multidisciplinary vocation. In keeping with its mission, the Institute meets current student and workforce multi-skill demands by providing a multimedia space to teach trainees in the multidisciplinary analysis of interdependencies between human dimensions (social, cultural, legislative, economic) and urban and natural environments of the Western U.S. To that end, the Institute takes a systems-based approach to training, providing opportunities to acquire hands-on experience in the integration of information technologies, data science, community engagement, and diverse ways of knowing (including Western as well as Native) to problem solving. (See *Bibliographical Addendum* for list of references.)

3) Describe how the center/institute fits with the institutional mission, strategic plan, and the existing MUS and institutional portfolios (refer to the most recent institutional Academic Priorities and Planning Statement).

The Institute's scope and priorities, as described in sections 1 and 2, serve UM's vision to "foster inclusive prosperity and democracy while creating new knowledge and ways of learning" by seeking to develop applied knowledge and best practices in partnership with a broad range of communities of practice, colleges, tribal nations, and governments across the North American West. The Institute will support UM's priorities as articulated in its Strategic Vision. Honoring PFA1 (Place student success at the center of all we do), its resources will help to further enhance faculty-student mentoring and the development of opportunities for students to cultivate applied skills and research leadership in science (see section 5). It will exemplify PFA5 (Proudly tell the UM story) by generating and making visible scholarship that benefits Montana and shows the University's commitment to fostering civic engagement and diverse ways of knowing. Via its partnership efforts, the Institute will assist in PFA4 (Partner with Place) to collaborate with local, tribal, statewide, regional, and federal partners to advance the shared goal of promoting Montana's cultures, communities, and science. Finally, the Institute will serve PFA2 (Drive excellence and innovation in teaching, learning, and research) by supporting educational and research opportunities that foster applied science, interdisciplinarity, as well as ethical and informed decision making in a diverse world. By investing in developing pedagogy and scholarship that elevate Native American perspectives, the Institute will also become a mechanism to support UM's broader, long-term strategy to advance Montana's Indian Education for All Act within our institution and across the MUS.

4) Describe any opportunities for collaboration you have identified or initiated either within the institution or between MUS institutions (i.e. articulation, course-sharing, research collaboration). Include potential contacts and their institutional affiliation.

The Institute fits into UM's institutional program array by potentially complementing several existing programs, namely, the American Indian Governance and Policy Institute, the O'Connor Center for the Rocky Mountain West, the Rural Institute for Inclusive Communities, the Fire Center, the Spatial Analysis Lab, the Center for Integrated Research on the Environment, the Bolle Center for People and Forests, the Wilderness Institute, and the Center for Natural

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Resources and Environmental Policy. The Institute's program complements this program array by creating applied science opportunities to incorporate cultural dimensions into policy, historical discourse, health programming, environmental research, and civic engagement.

Within the MUS, the Institute complements MSU's Ivan Doig Center for the Study of the Lands and Peoples of the North American West, by focusing on an applied research agenda that will feed on cultural, social, and scientific knowledges to inform the conservation, preservation, restoration, and revitalization of the values that communities, especially Native American, attach to the landscapes that define the Western U.S. Potentially, the Institute can also strategically collaborate with MSU's Center for American Indian and Rural Health Equity and the Western Transportation Institute to pursue mutual interests understanding the role played by Montana's human and biophysical geographies in the resilience of our rural communities. To foster collaboration with these programs, the Institute's personnel, led by its director, will explore ways of collaboration such as the joint submission of proposals for extramural funding, mutual invitation of speakers, and the joint organization of events to strengthen the educational and academic ties of UM and MSU.

5) Describe any significant new financial resources (staff and/or facilities) needed to launch and sustain the center/institute. How do you anticipate supporting this new center/institute/unit

Since 2022, the UM College of Humanities and Sciences has allocated human resources to support the administration of an ongoing portfolio of activities that already shapes the research agenda of the Institute; primarily, a budget analyst, a grants specialist, and a business administrative associate who are shared with other College units. Additionally, the Office of Sponsored Programs has provided pre-award and post-award specialists who assist in the preparation and management of the grants that comprise this research portfolio.

The physical facilities that house the Institute were built in 2014 within the Payne Family Native American Center and comprise a Star Gazing Round Room (NAC 013-015), a Geographic Information Systems teaching lab (NAC 014), a multimedia classroom (NAC 009), a multi-screen classroom (NAC 011), and an office for the Institute's research assistants (NAC 209). These spaces are regularly used to support UM's teaching needs and have been a source of revenue for UM over the last decade. The Star Gazing Round Room (NAC 013-15) houses the UM Planetarium, a collaboration between the Department of Native American Studies and the Department of Physics and Astronomy to offer an outreach program on Western and Native astronomies for schools, campus visitors, and UM's curriculum. Given the Institute's equipment for Geographic Information Science, it also collaborates with FCFC's GIS Certificate to provide a teaching space as well as research opportunities to GIS students**.** Equipment in all these spaces has been maintained and upgraded periodically by UM since the inauguration of the building. A facilities manager, contributed by the Office of the President, is shared with the rest of units and programs that are housed in the Payne Family Native American Center.

The proposer, Dr. Fernando Sanchez, has a joint faculty appointment with the College of Humanities and Sciences and the Franke College of Forestry and Conservation, and is serving as the Cobell Director for the aforementioned research portfolio (see Section 1). In collaboration with other UM faculty and staff, the Director has attracted funding from the federal government (importantly, the U.S. Forest Service) as well as private sponsors (e.g., Mellon Foundation) that support research for the elevation of Montana's landscapes and cultures, providing opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students to start their research careers while they assist in these projects. Extramural funding in the form of grants and contracts is expected to be the main supporting source of the Institute's research agenda, an effort that will come from the Cobell Director as well as its supporting personnel and program affiliates.

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2. Matthew Hora, Ross J. Benbow, Amanda K. Oleson (2016). *Beyond the Skills Gap: Preparing College Students for Life and Work*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge.
3. Matthew Hora (2025). *Teaching transferable skills using a sociocultural perspective: A guide for faculty and institutions for creating college courses that highlight disciplinary knowledge, professional norms, and habits of mind*. Center for Research on College-Workforce Transitions, University of Wisconsin-Madison.
4. Irwin Kirsch, Anita M. Sands, Steven B. Robbins, Madeline J. Goodman, and Richard J. Tannenbaum (2021). *Buttressing the Middle: A Case for Reskilling and Upskilling America's Middle-Skill Workers in the 21st Century*. Educational Testing Service: Princeton, NJ.
5. Wen Zhang, Kee-Hung Lai, Qiguo Gong (2024). The future of the labor force: higher cognition and more skills. *Nature - Humanities & Social Sciences Communications* **11**, 479.

Signature/Date
Chief Research Officer: Approved by BOR, November 2025, Item 221-1004-R1125
Flagship Provost*: Approved by BOR, November 2025, Item 221-1004-R1125
Flagship President*: Approved by BOR, November 2025, Item 221-1004-R1125
*Not applicable to the Community Colleges.

Montana Board of Regents

ACADEMIC PROPOSAL REQUEST FORM

March 2026

ITEM 1004-LII0326

Request authorization to establish the Institute for Human-Centered Artificial Intelligence (HCAI)

Institution: **University of Montana** CIP Code: _____

Program/Center/Institute Title: **Institute for Human-Centered Artificial Intelligence (HCAI)**

Includes (please specify below): Face-to-face Offering: ____ Online Offering: ____ Blended Offering: ____

Options: _____

Proposal Summary

What: The University of Montana proposes establishment of the Institute for Human-Centered Artificial Intelligence, housed at UM and reporting to the Office of the Provost. The Institute will serve as a statewide hub for teaching, learning, research, and collaboration in artificial intelligence across the Montana University System. Building on the foundation of The FUTURE Project, the Institute formalizes and coordinates AI-related faculty development, interdisciplinary research, workforce alignment, and public engagement. It will support integration of AI literacy across disciplines, foster collaborative research networks, convene statewide partners, and coordinate with Montana State University and other MUS institutions to ensure complementary programming and shared infrastructure.

Why: Artificial intelligence is rapidly reshaping higher education, research, and workforce expectations. Without coordinated leadership, Montana risks fragmented implementation, uneven access, and duplication of effort. The Institute responds to this need by providing system-level coordination that integrates innovation with ethical responsibility, academic integrity, and equitable access. It advances UM's mission by strengthening student preparation, expanding research competitiveness, aligning programs with workforce needs, and positioning Montana as a leader in responsible, human-centered AI education and scholarship.

Resources: The Institute will launch using existing faculty expertise, administrative infrastructure, and campus facilities. No new permanent general fund resources are required for initial implementation. Faculty will participate through affiliate appointments, and administrative support will be provided through existing structures. Sustainability will be pursued through competitive federal grants, industry partnerships, philanthropic support, and collaborative MUS initiatives.

ATTACHMENTS

1004-LII0326_Center
1004-LII0326_RTP

Please mark the appropriate type of request and submit with any additional materials, including those listed in parentheses following the type of request. For more information pertaining to the types of requests listed below, how to complete an item request, or additional forms please visit http://mus.edu/che/arsa/academicproposals.asp.

____ **A. Level I:**

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OCHE Notification

_____ **1a. Placing a postsecondary educational program into moratorium** (Program Termination and Moratorium Form)

_____ **1b. Withdrawing a postsecondary educational program from moratorium**

_____ **2. Re-titling, terminating or revising a campus certificate of 29 credits or less**

_____ **3. Offering an existing postsecondary educational program via distance or online delivery**

OCHE Approvals

_____ **4. Re-titling an existing postsecondary educational program**

_____ **5. Terminating an existing postsecondary educational program** (Program Termination and Moratorium Form)

_____ **6. Consolidating existing postsecondary educational programs** (Curriculum Proposal Form)

_____ **7. Establishing a new minor where there is a major or an option in a major** (Curriculum Proposal Form)

_____ **8. Revising a postsecondary educational program** (Curriculum Proposal Form)

_____ **9. Establishing a temporary C.A.S. or A.A.S. degree program Approval limited to 2 years**

_____ **10. Withdrawing a postsecondary program from moratorium**

_____ **11. Establishing a campus certificate of 29 credits or less (Curriculum Proposal Form)**

_____ **B. Level II:**

_____ **1. Establishing a new postsecondary educational program** (Curriculum Proposal and Completed Request to Plan Form)

_____ **2. Requesting Permanent authorization for a temporary C.A.S. or A.A.S degree program** (Curriculum Proposal and Completed Request to Plan Form)

_____ **3. Requesting a variation of the 120-credit baccalaureate degrees** *Exception to policy 301.11*

X **4. Forming, eliminating or consolidating an academic, administrative, or research unit** (Curriculum or Center/Institute Proposal and completed Request to Plan, except when eliminating or consolidating)

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ACADEMIC PROPOSAL REQUEST FORM

5. Re-titling an academic, administrative, or research unit

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RESEARCH CENTER AND INSTITUTE PROPOSAL FORM

Research Centers and Institutes differ from one another in focus, scope, and staffing, but each contributes in unique ways to the common goals of expanding knowledge, generating new discoveries and/or having a positive impact on society through informing policy and systemic change. Communities of researchers and staff in Research Centers and Institutes provide a stimulating environment that encourages early researchers and challenges experienced researchers. Research Centers and Institutes also contribute to the education and training of the researchers of the future by serving as learning environments for students. Interdisciplinary collaboration is promoted by Research Centers and Institutes both within the Institution and among MUS Institutions. Research Centers and Institutes do not provide didactic coursework, confer academic degrees or academic certificates or require accreditation by external accrediting bodies. Research Centers and Institutes frequently provide a portal for obtaining external funding in response to federal and/or state research priorities. As such, apparent duplication of mission between MUS research centers and institutes is not generally problematic as with academic programs due to the different sources of funding.

1. State the proposed Institute/Center's name and purpose.

The University of Montana seeks to establish the **Institute for Human-Centered Artificial Intelligence (HCAI)** to serve as a partner in the Montana University System's coordinating hub for teaching, learning, research, and statewide collaboration in artificial intelligence. The Institute will promote the responsible and innovative use of AI in higher education, workforce development, and public service, ensuring that technology strengthens human creativity, integrity, and community well-being.

The proposed HCAI builds on the foundation of *The FUTURE Project* (2023–2025), a university-wide initiative that engaged **more than 1,500 faculty, staff, and students** in shaping UM's strategic approach to AI in education and research. This work positioned UM as a state and regional leader in developing thoughtful, inclusive frameworks for responsible AI adoption.

The Institute will provide a permanent structure to:

- Advance **AI in education and research** across all disciplines;
- Equip students, faculty, and staff with AI competencies aligned to Montana's workforce needs;
- Foster **collaboration among UM, MSU, and affiliate campuses** to coordinate curricula, research, and outreach;
- Serve as a **statewide convener** connecting MUS institutions, K–12 partners, tribal colleges, and industry; and
- Position Montana to attract **federal, philanthropic, and industry investment** in AI education and innovation.

The Institute will launch using existing resources and partnerships, formalizing work already underway and ensuring the Montana University System leads with integrity and purpose in the era of artificial intelligence.

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RESEARCH CENTER AND INSTITUTE PROPOSAL FORM

2. A comprehensive statement of the Institute/Center's mission and its relationship to the University mission.

A. State the Institute/Center's mission.

The mission of the University of Montana, Institute for Human-Centered Artificial Intelligence (HCAI) is to serve as the statewide hub for teaching, learning, research, and collaboration in artificial intelligence. As Montana's flagship, R1 research university, UM is uniquely positioned to lead this effort, integrating innovation with responsibility and ensuring that AI strengthens human creativity, academic integrity, and community well-being.

The vision for the Institute is to position Montana as a national model for human-centered innovation—equipping students, educators, and communities to thrive in an AI-enabled world by advancing education, fostering research, and promoting ethical, equitable use of technology.

B. Identify the Institute/Center's goals and objectives.

GOAL 1 – EDUCATION AND LEARNING
Advance AI literacy and human-centered learning across disciplines.
Objective 1 – Faculty Development: Support instructors in developing and implementing AI-informed pedagogies and curricula.
Objective 2 – Student Preparedness: Integrate AI and data literacy into general education and program-specific learning outcomes.
Objective 3 – Digital Access: Ensure equitable access to AI tools, training, and opportunities for all MUS students, faculty, and staff.
Objective 4 – Assessment and Evaluation: Provide assessment support and develop discipline-specific evaluation methods for AI-related learning outcomes, helping faculty evaluate student learning in AI-enabled environments while maintaining academic integrity.

GOAL 2 – RESEARCH AND SCHOLARSHIP
Promote interdisciplinary research that examines the ethical, creative, and practical dimensions of AI. UM will leverage its research capacity and partnerships to lead collaborative projects across the MUS and with national and industry partners.
Objective 1 – Interdisciplinary Research Networks: Build collaborative research groups across UM, MSU, and affiliate campuses.
Objective 2 – External Funding and Partnerships: Pursue federal, philanthropic, and industry funding for AI-related education and research.
Objective 3 – Ethical AI Leadership: Position Montana as a leader in responsible and transparent AI practices.

GOAL 3 – WORKFORCE AND COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS
Align AI education and research with statewide workforce and economic needs.
Objective 1 – Workforce Readiness: Partner with industry and employers to align curricula with emerging AI-driven workforce demands.
Objective 2 – K–12 and Tribal Partnerships: Collaborate with K–12, tribal colleges, and statewide digital learning initiatives to expand AI exposure and career pathways.

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Objective 3 – Statewide Coordination: Create shared MUS programming and professional development resources that reduce duplication and strengthen collaboration.

GOAL 4 – INNOVATION AND OUTREACH
Foster statewide and national engagement in AI policy, education, and innovation.
Objective 1 – Thought Leadership: Convene public discussions, symposia, and working groups on AI ethics, innovation, and the future of learning.
Objective 2 – Community and Government Partnerships: Support public sector innovation through applied research, policy analysis, and outreach.
Objective 3 – Inclusive Excellence: Promote the participation of underrepresented and rural communities in AI education and workforce programs.

C. What specific need is being responded to in developing the proposed Institute/Center?

Artificial intelligence is rapidly reshaping higher education, research, and employment. Without coordinated leadership, Montana risks fragmented efforts and uneven access to resources. Employers increasingly identify AI literacy, problem-solving, and ethical reasoning as essential skills. HCAI responds to this need by providing a system-level structure to integrate AI into education and research while ensuring that implementation remains responsible, equitable, and sustainable.
The Institute builds on *The FUTURE Project* (2023–2025), which engaged over **1,500 faculty, staff, and students** in exploring AI's role in education and research, laying a strong foundation for this statewide initiative.

D. Describe how the Institute/Center benefits the department, college, or institution.

HCAI will benefit the University of Montana and the Montana University System by serving as a multidisciplinary hub that unites existing strengths across campuses. UM is positioned to anchor this system-wide collaboration, leveraging its research capacity, statewide partnerships, and academic leadership.

The Institute will:
• Provide a venue for collaboration that extends beyond departmental or disciplinary boundaries;
• Amplify research productivity and funding competitiveness through interdisciplinary projects and shared resources;
• Support faculty and student success through coordinated training, curriculum development, and mentorship; and
• Elevate Montana's reputation as a leader in human-centered AI, research excellence, and workforce development.

E. Describe the Institute/Center's relationship to the University mission.

The Institute aligns directly with the University of Montana's mission to "transform lives by providing high-quality and accessible education and by generating world-class research and creative scholarship." UM has the capacity to lead the state in advancing human-centered innovation. HCAI advances this mission by ensuring that artificial intelligence enhances—rather than replaces—the distinctly human dimensions of learning, discovery, and service. Through this work, the Institute embodies UM's commitment to equity, ethical leadership, and statewide impact.

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3. Briefly describe the Institute/Center's anticipated activities.

FACULTY DEVELOPMENT AND CURRICULUM INNOVATION: The Institute will coordinate faculty development programs across the MUS, equipping instructors to integrate AI responsibly into their teaching. Through workshops, learning communities, and curriculum design support, faculty will develop AI literacy and learn to leverage AI tools while maintaining focus on critical thinking, creativity, and academic integrity. The Institute will facilitate course-sharing and collaborative curriculum development among MUS institutions to reduce duplication and strengthen educational offerings statewide.

INTERDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH AND SCHOLARSHIP: The Institute will foster collaborative research projects that examine AI from multiple perspectives—technical, ethical, creative, educational, and policy-oriented. Research teams will bring together computer scientists, educators, humanists, business scholars, artists, and social scientists to address complex questions about AI's impact on society. UM will lead efforts to secure federal and philanthropic funding for interdisciplinary AI research that serves Montana and the nation.

WORKFORCE AND INDUSTRY PARTNERSHIPS: The Institute will collaborate with Montana employers and industry partners to align academic programs with workforce needs. Through advisory boards, experiential learning opportunities, and co-developed training programs, the Institute will ensure students graduate with AI competencies valued in the job market. Partnerships with K–12 schools and tribal colleges will create pathways from secondary to postsecondary education, expanding access to AI education for all Montana students.

STUDENT TRAINING AND SUPPORT: The Institute will develop programming to equip students across disciplines with AI literacy and practical skills. This includes workshops on responsible AI use, data literacy, prompt engineering, and critical evaluation of AI-generated content. Students will have opportunities to engage in applied research projects, internships, and experiential learning that prepare them for AI-enabled careers while fostering ethical awareness and human-centered values.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT AND POLICY LEADERSHIP: The Institute will serve as a convener for public dialogue on AI's role in society. Through symposia, community forums, and policy working groups, the Institute will engage diverse stakeholders—educators, policymakers, industry leaders, and community members—in conversations about AI ethics, regulation, and innovation. The Institute will position Montana as a thought leader in responsible AI adoption and provide evidence-based guidance for policymakers at local, state, and federal levels.

STATEWIDE COORDINATION AND COLLABORATION: The Institute will coordinate AI initiatives across the Montana University System, ensuring that all institutions benefit from shared resources, expertise, and opportunities. By connecting faculty networks, pooling research capacity, and coordinating professional development, the Institute will amplify the collective impact of MUS institutions. This collaborative approach will reduce inefficiencies, strengthen competitiveness for external funding, and ensure equitable access to AI education and research opportunities across Montana.

A. Identify faculty expertise available for participation in the Institute/Center's activities.

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The Institute will draw on faculty expertise from across the University of Montana and the Montana University System. Key participating faculty include:

• Computer Science faculty with expertise in machine learning, natural language processing, and AI ethics
• Education faculty researching AI's impact on pedagogy, assessment, and learning outcomes
• Business and management faculty exploring AI's role in organizational decision-making and workforce development
• Humanities scholars examining AI's ethical, philosophical, and cultural dimensions
• Creative arts faculty exploring AI as a tool for artistic expression and innovation
• Health sciences faculty investigating AI applications in healthcare delivery and medical education
• Faculty from MSU and affiliate campuses contributing disciplinary expertise and regional perspectives

The Institute will engage faculty through affiliate appointments, collaborative research teams, and professional development programming. Faculty participation will be coordinated through existing structures to avoid duplicative efforts and maximize efficiency.

B. Which departments on campus will be involved and how will the Institute/Center contribute to the academic programs of the institution?

AI touches every department on campus. The Institute will serve as the central hub for support and guidance across the entire university, facilitating AI integration in ways that strengthen teaching, research, and service across all disciplines.

Rather than limiting involvement to specific departments, the Institute is designed to support faculty and programs university-wide. This includes humanities, sciences, social sciences, education, business, health professions, fine arts, and professional programs. Every discipline faces questions about how AI affects their field, how to prepare students for AI-enabled careers, and how to integrate AI responsibly into research and teaching.

The Institute will contribute to academic programs by:
• Supporting faculty in integrating AI literacy into existing courses across disciplines
• Providing assessment support and developing discipline-specific evaluation methods for AI-related learning outcomes. Faculty and programs need clear guidance on assessing student learning in an AI-driven environment while upholding academic integrity and fostering innovation.
• Developing shared AI-related coursework that can be cross-listed among departments
• Creating experiential learning opportunities for students through applied research projects
• Coordinating interdisciplinary research teams that enhance scholarly productivity
• Providing professional development for instructors to enhance teaching effectiveness
• Assisting with program-level assessment of AI competencies and learning outcomes

4. Identify the organizational structure of the Institute/Center within the institution.

The Institute will be housed at the University of Montana and report to the Office of the Provost. The organizational structure will consist of:

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Director: A director will provide strategic leadership and coordinate Institute activities. The director will be appointed by the Provost in consultation with the Dean of Graduate School and other relevant administrators. The director will maintain regular coordination with MSU's AI Institute director to ensure complementary programming and avoid duplication.

Faculty Affiliates: Faculty from across UM and MUS institutions will participate through affiliate appointments, contributing expertise in their respective disciplines while maintaining their primary departmental homes. MSU faculty with human-centered AI interests will be eligible for affiliate appointments, facilitating cross-institutional collaboration.

Advisory Council: An advisory council will provide strategic guidance and ensure the Institute remains responsive to stakeholder needs. The council will include standing representation from MSU's AI Institute to ensure ongoing coordination and collaboration. Representatives from MUS institutions, industry partners, K–12 education, tribal colleges, and state agencies will provide diverse perspectives.

Coordination with MSU: A formal memorandum of understanding will establish coordination protocols with MSU's AI Institute, including regular director meetings, joint programming opportunities, shared faculty development initiatives, collaborative grant proposals, and unified external representation.

Administrative Support: The Institute will utilize existing administrative infrastructure to support operations, event coordination, and communications.

The Institute will function as a system-level resource while being administratively housed at UM. Governance structures will ensure meaningful participation from MSU and affiliate campuses, with collaborative decision-making on programming, resource allocation, and strategic priorities.

A. Identify all agencies, organizations and/or institutions that will be involved.

The Institute will engage the following stakeholders:

Montana University System Institutions:
- Montana State University (MSU)
- Montana Technological University
- Montana Western
- UM-Helena, UM-Missoula College, MSU-Billings, MSU-Northern, and other two-year colleges

Tribal Colleges:
- Seven tribal colleges across Montana

K–12 Partners:
- Montana Office of Public Instruction
- Montana Digital Academy
- School districts statewide

Industry and Economic Development:

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• Montana High Tech Business Alliance
• Montana Chamber of Commerce
• Technology and AI companies operating in Montana

State and Federal Agencies:
• Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education
• Montana Department of Labor and Industry
• National Science Foundation AI Research Institutes Network

B. Identify advisory council information.

The Institute's Advisory Council will provide strategic guidance, ensure responsiveness to stakeholder needs, and facilitate collaboration across sectors. The council will meet semi-annually and include representatives from:

• MUS institutional leadership, including designated representatives from both UM and MSU's AI institutes to ensure coordination
• MSU AI Institute leadership (standing member to ensure alignment and collaboration)
• Faculty from diverse disciplines across MUS institutions
• Tribal college administrators and faculty
• K–12 education leaders
• Industry representatives from Montana's technology sector
• State agency officials
• Student representatives

The Advisory Council will serve as the primary coordination mechanism between UM's Human-Centered AI Institute and MSU's AI Institute, ensuring complementary programming, joint project development, shared infrastructure for the MUS system, and unified external representation of Montana's AI capacity.

Council membership will be appointed by the Institute Director in consultation with the Provost and key stakeholders, including MSU Institute leadership. Terms will be staggered to ensure continuity. A formal memorandum of understanding between the two institutes will establish coordination protocols, shared programming opportunities, and mechanisms for conflict resolution.

5. Identify first year and continuing finances necessary to support the Center/Institute, including the sources of funding.

The Institute will launch using existing resources and scale responsibly through strategic partnerships and external funding. The initial phase will leverage:

Existing Faculty Expertise: Faculty across disciplines will contribute through affiliate appointments and collaborative research, utilizing existing salary lines and workload structures.

Administrative Infrastructure: Existing administrative support within the Provost's Office and Graduate School will provide operational coordination.

Physical and Digital Resources: The Institute will utilize existing classrooms, laboratories, meeting

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spaces, and digital infrastructure.

Sustainability will be ensured through:

Federal Funding: The Institute will pursue competitive grants from the National Science Foundation (NSF AI Research Institutes program), Department of Education, National Institutes of Health, and other federal agencies supporting AI education and research.

Industry Partnerships: Collaborations with technology companies and employers will provide financial support, internship opportunities, and applied research projects.

Philanthropic Support: The Institute will cultivate relationships with foundations and donors interested in education innovation, workforce development, and ethical technology.

State Support: As AI literacy becomes recognized as critical to workforce competitiveness, the Institute will work with state agencies and the Montana Legislature to identify potential funding opportunities.

The Institute's fiscally conservative launch strategy ensures immediate impact without requiring new permanent funding, while positioning Montana to compete successfully for major external investments in AI education and research.

A. Will additional faculty and other resources be required to implement this Center/Institute? If yes, please describe the need and indicate the plan for meeting this need.

No additional faculty lines are required for initial implementation. The Institute will function through faculty affiliate appointments, allowing participation without creating new positions. Faculty contributions will be recognized through workload adjustments, research support, and professional development opportunities funded through external grants.

As external funding is secured, the Institute may support graduate research assistants, postdoctoral scholars, and visiting faculty to enhance research capacity and educational programming.

B. Are other, additional resources required to ensure the success of the proposed Center/Institute? If yes, please describe the need and indicate the plan for meeting this need.

No additional resources are required at launch. The Institute will utilize existing infrastructure, administrative support, and faculty expertise. As programming expands through external funding, resources may be allocated to:

- Event coordination and community engagement
- Research project management and grant administration
- Technology infrastructure to support collaborative projects
- Student support (graduate assistantships, internships, research opportunities)

These needs will be met through competitive grant funding and industry partnerships, ensuring the Institute remains financially sustainable without requiring permanent institutional budget increases.

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6. Describe other similar Centers/Institutes or research capacities in the state and surrounding region.

Montana State University has proposed an Institute for Artificial Intelligence. The University of Montana is proposing the Institute for Human-Centered Artificial Intelligence. Rather than creating competition, these initiatives **can coexist** productively through clear coordination and differentiated programming.

Both institutes can strengthen Montana by focusing on complementary programming rather than duplicating efforts. The key to success is intentional coordination, transparent communication, and a commitment to serving the entire MUS system collaboratively.

Coordination mechanisms will include:
• Joint advisory council representation ensuring alignment of programming and resource allocation
• Shared infrastructure development serving all MUS institutions
• Collaborative grant proposals positioning Montana comprehensively for federal funding
• Regular coordination between institute leadership to prevent duplication
• Unified external engagement representing Montana's full AI capacity

This approach allows both institutions to contribute their respective strengths while ensuring the MUS system benefits from coordinated rather than fragmented AI initiatives. Montana's two-institute model succeeds only through genuine collaboration, shared resources, and clear communication about roles and responsibilities.

Regional examples demonstrate that multiple AI institutes can coexist when differentiation is clear and coordination is strong. Montana will follow this model while addressing unique needs related to rural communities, tribal partnerships, and distributed higher education.

A. Describe the relationship between the proposed Center/Institute and any similar Centers/Institutes, programs, or research capacities within the Montana University System.

Montana State University has proposed an Institute for Artificial Intelligence. The University of Montana's Institute for Human-Centered Artificial Intelligence is designed to complement MSU's initiative through clear coordination and differentiated programming.

The relationship between the two institutes requires clear coordination:

Preventing Duplication:
• Both institutes must coordinate programming to avoid redundant efforts
• Shared infrastructure serving all MUS institutions rather than competing systems
• Joint planning for faculty development, curriculum resources, and research initiatives

Leveraging Complementary Strengths:
• Both institutions bring research capacity and technical expertise
• Coordination allows Montana to present unified AI capacity to federal funders
• Collaborative projects benefit from diverse disciplinary perspectives across both campuses

System-Wide Service:

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- All MUS institutions require access to AI infrastructure, training, and support
- Coordinated approach ensures equitable access rather than leaving some campuses behind
- Both institutes share responsibility for serving Montana's distributed higher education system

Within the broader MUS:
- Computer science and technical programs exist at both UM and MSU, requiring coordination
- All disciplines—sciences, humanities, education, business, health—need AI integration support
- Tribal colleges and rural institutions require sustained partnership and capacity building

The success of two institutes depends on transparent communication, genuine collaboration, and clear delineation of responsibilities to serve Montana effectively.

B. In cases of substantial duplication, explain the rationale for the proposed Center/Institute.

The coexistence of two AI institutes in Montana requires **intentional coordination** and **clear communication**. The University of Montana has demonstrated leadership in AI education, research, and technical implementation across the state through NSF-funded infrastructure deployment, comprehensive strategic planning via The FUTURE Project, and active service to MUS institutions.

Both institutes can succeed through:
- Transparent coordination preventing duplication of programming and resources
- Shared infrastructure serving all MUS institutions equitably
- Joint external engagement positioning Montana comprehensively for federal funding
- Regular communication between institute leadership
- Collaborative rather than competitive approach to serving Montana

Montana benefits when both institutions work together to serve the entire MUS system rather than pursuing parallel or competing initiatives.

7. Assessment: How will the success of the center/institute be measured?

The Institute will employ a comprehensive assessment framework that measures impact across education, research, workforce development, and statewide engagement:

Education and Learning Metrics:
- Number of faculty participating in professional development programs
- Number of courses integrating AI literacy across disciplines
- Student enrollment in AI-related coursework and programs
- Student satisfaction and learning outcomes assessments

Research and Scholarship Metrics:
- External funding secured (federal grants, industry partnerships, philanthropic support)
- Number of collaborative research projects across institutions and disciplines
- Publications, presentations, and creative outputs
- Graduate student and postdoctoral researcher mentorship

Workforce and Community Partnership Metrics:
- Number of industry partnerships and internship placements

Montana Board of Regents
RESEARCH CENTER AND INSTITUTE PROPOSAL FORM

- Student career outcomes in AI-related fields
- K–12 and tribal college engagement activities
- Community outreach events and participant feedback

Statewide Coordination Metrics:
- Number of MUS institutions actively participating in Institute programming
- Shared courses and collaborative curricula developed across institutions
- Cross-campus research collaborations and funding proposals
- Advisory council engagement and stakeholder satisfaction

The Institute will conduct annual assessments and produce reports documenting progress, impact, and areas for improvement. Assessment data will inform strategic planning and demonstrate accountability to stakeholders.

8. State the internal campus review and approval process which has occurred prior to submission to the Commissioner's Office. Indicate, where appropriate, involvement by faculty, students, community members, professional constituencies, etc.

The Institute proposal has undergone extensive consultation and approval through the following process:

Foundation: The FUTURE Project (2023–2025)
The Institute builds directly on The FUTURE Project, which engaged more than 1,500 faculty, staff, and students across the University of Montana in exploring AI's role in education and research. This deliberative, inclusive process established broad stakeholder buy-in and identified key priorities that inform the Institute's mission and programming.

Faculty Consultation:
- Presentations to Faculty Senate and discussion of the Institute's role in supporting academic programs
- Consultation with department chairs and deans across colleges
- Input from faculty across disciplines with AI-related expertise and interests

Administrative Review:
- Approval from the Office of the Provost and the Office of the President
- Review by the Graduate School and Office of Research and Creative Scholarship
- Coordination with college deans to ensure alignment with institutional priorities

External Stakeholder Engagement:
- Consultation with Montana State University leadership and faculty
- Discussion with tribal college partners
- Input from industry representatives and employers
- Feedback from K–12 education partners

Student Input:
Student perspectives were integral to The FUTURE Project and have informed the Institute's focus on preparing graduates for AI-enabled careers while maintaining emphasis on human creativity, critical thinking, and ethical reasoning.

Request to Plan Approval:

Montana Board of Regents

RESEARCH CENTER AND INSTITUTE PROPOSAL FORM

In November 2025, a Request to Plan was submitted to the ARSA committee members, the Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education, and the Board of Regents. The full proposal has been circulated to administrators at colleges across the University of Montana and through the campus Faculty Senate approval process.

This comprehensive consultation process ensures that the Institute reflects broad stakeholder priorities, complements existing programs, and serves the collective needs of the Montana University System and the state of Montana.

Montana University System

REQUEST TO PLAN FORM – ACADEMIC, ADMINISTRATIVE OR RESEARCH UNIT

ITEM 221-1007-R1125 **November 2025**

Item Name

Center/Institute/Unit Title: **Center for Human-Centered AI**

Campus: **University of Montana-Missoula** Expected Final Submission Date:

Contact Name/Info: **Zach Rossmiller, Zachary.Rossmiller@mso.umt.edu**

This form is meant to increase communication, collaboration, and problem-solving opportunities throughout the MUS in the center/institute development process. The completed form should exceed 2-3 pages. For more information regarding the center/institute approval process, please visit http://mus.edu/che/arsa/academicproposals.asp.

1) Provide a brief description of the new center/institute (unit).

The Center for Human-Centered AI will serve as a convener and collaborator across the Montana University System and beyond. Internally, it will connect faculty and staff across disciplines—education, business, computer science, humanities, health, and the creative arts—to develop shared approaches for integrating AI into teaching, learning, and research.

System-wide, the Center will build pathways for collaboration with other MUS campuses, including course sharing, faculty development, and joint research initiatives. It will also engage K–12 partners, statewide digital learning initiatives, and tribal colleges to expand access to AI education and support seamless pathways from secondary to postsecondary learning.

The Center will cultivate strong relationships with Montana employers and industry partners to align academic programs with workforce needs, co-develop applied research projects, and create opportunities for internships and experiential learning. At the national level, the Center will position UM and MUS to participate in regional and federal AI research and education networks, enhancing competitiveness for external funding and partnerships.

2) Describe the need for the center/institute. Specifically, how the center/institute meets current student, state, and industry research or community engagement needs. (Please cite sources in an addendum to this document).

Artificial intelligence is rapidly transforming education, research, and workforce expectations nationwide. For Montana, the stakes are particularly high: our state must prepare students not just to use AI but to shape it responsibly and innovatively. Employers are increasingly identifying AI literacy, critical thinking, and ethical reasoning as essential skills for graduates entering the workforce.

At the same time, AI is reshaping how faculty conduct research and how students learn. Without a coordinated statewide approach, efforts risk becoming fragmented, leaving institutions and communities behind. The Center will meet this need by serving as a hub for AI education and research across the MUS, ensuring that every Montana student and faculty member has equitable access to training, tools, and opportunities.

Montana University System

REQUEST TO PLAN FORM – ACADEMIC, ADMINISTRATIVE OR RESEARCH UNIT

This work builds on the momentum of The Future Project, which since 2023 has engaged hundreds of faculty, staff, and students in shaping UM's approach to AI. By formalizing that work in a Center, UM will ensure Montana has a durable structure to advance innovation, prepare an AI-ready workforce, and lead responsibly in this critical space.

3) Describe how the center/institute fits with the institutional mission, strategic plan, and the existing MUS and institutional portfolios (refer to the most recent institutional Academic Priorities and Planning Statement).

The University of Montana's mission emphasizes whole-person education, ethical leadership, and service to community. The Center directly advances these priorities by equipping students with AI competencies while ensuring education remains human-centered and value-driven.

UM's AI Commitment underscores the importance of equitable access, transparency, academic integrity, and faculty development. These principles will guide the Center's work, ensuring that the adoption of AI strengthens academic freedom, dignity, and human creativity.

At the MUS level, the Center aligns with system goals to expand research capacity, foster innovation, and support workforce readiness. By situating UM as the statewide hub for AI, the Center will complement existing institutional strengths and fill an emerging gap in MUS's academic and research portfolio.

4) Describe any opportunities for collaboration you have identified or initiated either within the institution or between MUS institutions (i.e. articulation, course-sharing, research collaboration). Include potential contacts and their institutional affiliation.

The Center is envisioned not as a single-campus initiative, but as a collaborative, statewide resource for the Montana University System. From the outset, its design and activities will be shaped through partnerships between the University of Montana, Montana State University, and affiliate campuses across the MUS. This ensures the Center is a unifying effort that strengthens all institutions rather than creating competition among them.

Collaboration will include course-sharing and curriculum development across campuses, joint faculty research initiatives, and coordinated professional development for instructors. By pooling expertise and resources, MUS institutions can collectively accelerate AI integration into teaching and research in ways no single campus could achieve alone.

The Center will also engage K–12 partners, statewide digital learning initiatives, and Montana's tribal colleges, ensuring broad and equitable access to AI education. Employers and industry partners will be integral collaborators, helping align programs with workforce needs and offering applied research opportunities. Finally, at the national level, the Center will position MUS institutions to participate jointly in federal AI consortia and compete collaboratively for large-scale research and education grants.

The Center will be housed at UM but function as a system-level resource, with governance and programming designed to ensure participation from MSU and affiliate campuses.

5) Describe any significant new financial resources (staff and/or facilities) needed to launch and sustain the center/institute. How do you anticipate supporting this new center/institute/unit

Montana University System

REQUEST TO PLAN FORM – ACADEMIC, ADMINISTRATIVE OR RESEARCH UNIT

The Center will launch using existing resources, drawing on UM's current faculty expertise, administrative capacity, and digital infrastructure. Faculty affiliates across disciplines will contribute through joint appointments and research collaborations, while existing classrooms, labs, and IT resources will provide the foundation for teaching and research initiatives.

Over time, the Center will coordinate with MUS partners to identify shared infrastructure needs and pursue external support to enhance capacity. Competitive federal grants, philanthropic support, and industry partnerships will be pursued to grow the Center's impact and ensure long-term sustainability.

By relying on existing resources at the outset and scaling responsibly through collaboration and external funding, the Center will be both financially prudent and strategically positioned to maximize impact statewide.

Addendum: Supporting Sources

National & Global Context

- **National Science Foundation (NSF)**. *National AI Research Institutes Program Solicitation*. 2023.
  Highlights the national priority of expanding AI research and education infrastructure to strengthen U.S. competitiveness and workforce development.
- **EDUCAUSE**. *2024 Horizon Report: Teaching and Learning Edition*. EDUCAUSE, 2024.
  Identifies artificial intelligence as the leading force reshaping pedagogy, assessment, and faculty development in higher education.
- **World Economic Forum (WEF)**. *Future of Jobs Report 2023*. Geneva: WEF, 2023.
  Projects that AI and digital skills are among the fastest-growing competencies demanded by employers across industries.

Montana Context

- **University of Montana**. *The Future Project*. Accessed October 2025. https://umontana.ai/future
  UM's university-wide initiative launched in 2023, guiding deliberative exploration of AI's role in teaching, learning, and Montana's workforce.
- **University of Montana**. *AI Commitment*. Accessed October 2025. https://umontana.ai/commitment
  Outlines UM's principles for responsible AI adoption, emphasizing human flourishing, equitable access, and academic integrity.

Signature/Date
Approved November 2025 as ITEM 221-1007-R1125 **Chief Research Officer: Scott Whittenburg** **Flagship Provost*: Adrea Lawrence** **Flagship President*: Seth Bodnar**

Montana University System

REQUEST TO PLAN FORM – ACADEMIC, ADMINISTRATIVE OR RESEARCH UNIT

*Not applicable to the Community Colleges.

Montana Board of Regents

ACADEMIC PROPOSAL REQUEST FORM

March 2026

ITEM 1005-LII0326

Request authorization to establish the Montana Public Health Training Center

Institution: **University of Montana** CIP Code: _____

Program/Center/Institute Title: **Montana Public Health Training Center**

Includes (please specify below): Face-to-face Offering: _____ Online Offering: _____ Blended Offering: _____

Options: _____

Proposal Summary

What: The University of Montana proposes formal recognition of the Montana Public Health Training Center, housed in the College of Health within the School of Public and Community Health Sciences. Established in 2019 with support from the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services and the Montana Healthcare Foundation, the Center provides statewide professional development, workforce support, wellness programming, and technical assistance to Montana's public health and healthcare workforce. Its four domains include a workforce recruitment and job board program, a wellness initiative, a regional technical assistance program for prevention specialists, and a professional training program offering virtual and in-person instruction aligned with statewide public health priorities.

Why: Montana's public health and healthcare workforce faces persistent recruitment, retention, and training challenges, intensified by the COVID-19 pandemic and high turnover across local and tribal health departments. At the request of the State Health Department, the Center was created to strengthen workforce competencies, support evidence-based practice, and align professional development with the Montana Public Health System Improvement Plan and Workforce Development Plan. The Center advances UM's mission of service to the state by strengthening the capacity, resilience, and effectiveness of professionals who safeguard the health of Montana communities.

Resources: The Center operates through existing faculty expertise and administrative structures within the College of Health. Funding is provided through state and foundation support and supplemented by grant resources. No new permanent general fund resources are required for implementation. Faculty participation occurs through existing instructional roles, particularly in graduate certificate programs that support workforce advancement.

ATTACHMENTS

1005-LII0326_Center
1005-LII0326_RTP

Please mark the appropriate type of request and submit with any additional materials, including those listed in parentheses following the type of request. For more information pertaining to the types of requests listed below, how to complete an item request, or additional forms please visit http://mus.edu/che/arsa/academicproposals.asp.

Montana Board of Regents

ACADEMIC PROPOSAL REQUEST FORM

A. Level I:

OCHE Notification

1a. Placing a postsecondary educational program into moratorium (Program Termination and Moratorium Form)

1b. Withdrawing a postsecondary educational program from moratorium

2. Re-titling, terminating or revising a campus certificate of 29 credits or less

3. Offering an existing postsecondary educational program via distance or online delivery

OCHE Approvals

4. Re-titling an existing postsecondary educational program

5. Terminating an existing postsecondary educational program (Program Termination and Moratorium Form)

6. Consolidating existing postsecondary educational programs (Curriculum Proposal Form)

7. Establishing a new minor where there is a major or an option in a major (Curriculum Proposal Form)

8. Revising a postsecondary educational program (Curriculum Proposal Form)

9. Establishing a temporary C.A.S. or A.A.S. degree program Approval limited to 2 years

10. Withdrawing a postsecondary program from moratorium

11. Establishing a campus certificate of 29 credits or less (Curriculum Proposal Form)

B. Level II:

1. Establishing a new postsecondary educational program (Curriculum Proposal and Completed Request to Plan Form)

2. Requesting Permanent authorization for a temporary C.A.S. or A.A.S degree program (Curriculum Proposal and Completed Request to Plan Form)

3. Requesting a variation of the 120-credit baccalaureate degrees *Exception to policy 301.11*

Montana Board of Regents

ACADEMIC PROPOSAL REQUEST FORM

	4. Forming, eliminating or consolidating an academic, administrative, or research unit (Curriculum or Center/Institute Proposal and completed Request to Plan, except when eliminating or consolidating)
X	
	5. Re-titling an academic, administrative, or research unit

Montana Board of Regents

RESEARCH CENTER AND INSTITUTE PROPOSAL FORM

1. State the proposed Institute/Center's name and purpose.

With funding from the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services and the Montana Healthcare Foundation, the Montana Public Health Training Center (MPHTC) was created in 2019 with the vision to provide professional development opportunities for public health and healthcare professionals throughout Montana.

2. A comprehensive statement of the Institute/Center's mission and its relationship to the University mission.

A. State the Institute/Center's mission.

The mission of the MPHTC is to strengthen the technical, scientific, managerial, and leadership competencies of our state's current and future public health and healthcare workforce.

B. Identify the Institute/Center's goals and objectives.

- The MPHTC houses four domains of support for the public health and healthcare workforce: 1) a wellness program, 2) a workforce program, 3) a regional technical assistance program to support prevention specialists, and 4) a professional development training program.
  1). The purpose of the wellness program is to encourage the public health / health care workforce's wellness journey by providing free resources to support their overall health and well-being. The free programs focus on mental health, fitness, nutrition, meditation, and more.
  https://www.umt.edu/mt-public-health-training/wellness-program/default.php
- 2). The purpose of the workforce program is to advise and assist Montana's local and tribal health departments with recruiting and integrating staff for vacant and new positions. The MPHTC also maintains a jobs board that houses all of the current public health jobs in the state of Montana. Our jobs board has become the go-to place to find a public health job in the state of Montana.
  https://www.umt.edu/mt-public-health-training/workforce-program/public-health-jobs.php
- 3). The regional technical assistance program's goal is to provide oversight, training, and technical assistance to community-based prevention specialists by managing and supporting the implementation of culturally appropriate community-based prevention strategies within Montana counties / Reservations.
- 4). The training program provides both virtual and in person trainings to meet the needs of Montana's public health and healthcare workforce. Additionally, the training program facilitates cross-tribal community engagement and the exchange of public health initiatives and efforts within the field by showcasing Indigenous-led professional health models that prioritize cultural relevance and community empowerment. The training program has also facilitated a wildfire smoke conference at the University of Montana in 2024, and will continue hosting conferences that support the public health / healthcare workforce in the future.
  https://www.umt.edu/mt-public-health-training/trainings/default.php

Montana Board of Regents
RESEARCH CENTER AND INSTITUTE PROPOSAL FORM

C. What specific need is being responded to in developing the proposed Institute/Center?

At the request of the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS, the State Health Department), the MPHTC was created in 2019 to address the professional development needs of public health and healthcare professionals throughout Montana and our region. Exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic, the public health / healthcare workforce has faced significant external and internal challenges resulting in staff turnover more than two times greater than normal turnover. Talent loss and long vacant positions impacts public health service delivery and quality of services. Offering training opportunities for Montana public health workers has proven to increase knowledge, productivity, and performance of the public health workforce. Training opportunities provide evidence-based ways to meet wants, needs, and requirements of the workforce. The MPHTC supports goals and objectives identified by the DPHHS, Montana Public Health System Improvement Plan and the Montana Public Health Workforce Development Plan.

D. Describe how the Institute/Center benefits the department, college, or institution.

Leveraging the University of Montana's School of Public and Community Health Sciences (SPCHS), we provide opportunities for Montana public health employees to participate in the School's certificate programs. With support from the Public Health System Improvement Office, we are able to pay full tuition, fees and textbooks. These online certificate programs are designed for working professionals who would like to advance their education in public health, epidemiology, or environmental health. This benefits the professional development and competency of the public health workforce while also benefiting the SPCHS, the College of Health, and the University of Montana with an increase in students.

The MPHTC serves as a key representative of the University of Montana at a myriad of local and statewide committees, boards, events, conferences, and more.

E. Describe the Institute/Center's relationship to the University mission.

The University of Montana's mission is Montana. The MPHTC's mission is to serve the public health and healthcare workforce of Montana. We are committed to supporting the needs of critical professionals throughout our state.

3. Briefly describe the Institute/Center's anticipated activities.

Workforce Program anticipated activities: maintain and promote the Montana public health and public health nursing job board website and coordinate Montana public health practitioner's sponsorships to earn a UM SPCHS public health graduate certificate.

Wellness Program anticipated activities: develop a wellness champions program to support workplaces as they develop their own programs to promote resilience, interprofessional collaboration, and a healthy work culture. Deliver in-person and remote wellness trainings and establish a feedback system to evaluate and adapt the program.

Montana Board of Regents
RESEARCH CENTER AND INSTITUTE PROPOSAL FORM

Regional Technical Assistance Center anticipated activities: develop the infrastructure for a regional technical assistance center, provide technical assistance to community-based prevention specialists, and develop and deliver in person and remote trainings.

Training Program anticipated activities: provide four virtual instructor led trainings in support of the Montana Public Health Workforce Development Plan and the Montana Public Health System Improvement Plan and five virtual instructor led trainings to support local needs of public health professionals.

A. Identify faculty expertise available for participation in the Institute/Center's activities.

Dr. Tony Ward, PhD, is the PI for the MPHTC. Additionally, all SPCHS faculty who teach courses in the graduate certificate programs are available to participate in the MPHTC activities. Dr. Damian Chase-Begay, PhD, also provides MPHTC support with the Academic Health Department seminar series. The presentations and trainings in the seminar series are offered to all health departments via the MPHTC.

B. Which departments on campus will be involved and how will the Institute/Center contribute to the academic programs of the institution?

The School of Public and Community Health Sciences (SPCHS) will be involved and the MPHTC contributes to the academic programs primarily through the workforce program, both with the public health graduate certificates and the graduation to workforce pipeline support.

4. Identify the organizational structure of the Institute/Center within the institution.

The Center will be housed in the College of Health.

A. Identify all agencies, organizations and/or institutions that will be involved.

The Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services Public Health System Improvement Office, The Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities Division, The Rocky Mountain Public Health Training Center, and the Montana Healthcare Foundation.

B. Identify advisory council information.

N/A

5. Identify first year and continuing finances necessary to support the Center/Institute, including the sources of funding.

N/A

A. Will additional faculty and other resources be required to implement this Center/Institute? If yes, please describe the need and indicate the plan for meeting this need.

No additional faculty are needed in the immediate future. Resources such as office space may be needed as our Training Center continues to grow.

Montana Board of Regents

RESEARCH CENTER AND INSTITUTE PROPOSAL FORM

B. Are other, additional resources required to ensure the success of the proposed Center/Institute? If yes, please describe the need and indicate the plan for meeting this need.

All additional resources will be secured through grant funding.

6. Describe other similar Centers/Institutes or research capacities in the state and surrounding region.

The Rocky Mountain Public Health Training Center, housed within the Center for Public Health Practice at the Colorado School of Public Health, provides public health training to professionals addressing public health issues.

A. Describe the relationship between the proposed Center/Institute and any similar Centers/Institutes, programs, or research capacities within the Montana University System.

N/A

B. In cases of substantial duplication, explain the rationale for the proposed Center/Institute.

N/A

7. Assessment: How will the success of the center/institute be measured?

Trainings and wellness offerings are assessed via course evaluations at the conclusion of each training. The graduate certificate program has course evaluations at the conclusion of courses that are used to measure the success of each course. Frequent progress reports are provided to the funders.

8. State the internal campus review and approval process which has occurred prior to submission to the Commissioner's Office. Indicate, where appropriate, involvement by faculty, students, community members, professional constituencies, etc.

Internal campus review was conducted by the Chair of the School of Public and Community Health Sciences, College of Health Dean (Matt Fete), the Faculty Senate, and officials in the Provost's Office at UM.

Montana University System

REQUEST TO PLAN FORM

ITEM 1005-LII0326 **Meeting Date: 3/13/2025**

Item Name

Program/Center/Institute Title: **Montana Public Health Training Center**

Planned 6-digit CIP code: **512201**

Campus, School/Department: **School of Public and Community Health Sciences**

Expected Final Submission Date: **1/6/2025**

Contact Name/Info: **Tony Ward (Tony.ward@umontana.edu)**

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

With funding from the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services and the Montana Healthcare Foundation, the Montana Public Health Training Center (MPHTC) was created in 2019 with the vision to provide professional development opportunities for public health and healthcare professionals throughout Montana.

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).**

At the request of the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS, the State Health Department), the MPHTC was created in 2019 to address the professional development needs of public health and healthcare professionals throughout Montana and our region. Exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic, the public health / healthcare workforce has faced significant external and internal challenges resulting in staff turnover more than two times greater than normal turnover. Talent loss and long vacant positions impacts public health service delivery and quality of services. Offering training opportunities for Montana public health workers has proven to increase knowledge, productivity, and performance of the public health workforce. Training opportunities provide evidence-based ways to meet wants, needs, and requirements of the workforce. The MPHTC supports goals and objectives identified by the DPHHS, Montana Public Health System Improvement Plan and the Montana Public Health Workforce Development Plan.

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

Funding received from DPHHS covers most staff and personnel needs. However, as we continue to grow, we may need additional space to accommodate staff.

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 MPHTC has used numerous faculty and staff across UM to provide trainings.

Montana University System

REQUEST TO PLAN FORM

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.

Similar to the UM academic mission of training students, the MPHTC provides professional development trainings to the public health and healthcare workforce across Montana. In addition, additional funding has been provided to the MPHTC to address health issues across the state including workplace wellness / mental health. The MPHTC also maintains a jobs board that contains the latest public health jobs in the state. This jobs board is advertised to UM SPCHS students as they enter the public health workforce in Montana.

Signature/Date
Chief Research Officer*: 1/17/25
Flagship Provost:** 1/17/2025
Flagship President:** **01/22/2025**
*Center/Institute Proposal only **Not applicable to the Community Colleges.

Montana Board of Regents

ACADEMIC PROPOSAL REQUEST FORM

MARCH/2026

ITEM 1601-LII0326

ITEM TITLE: Request to establish Land, Water and Sky (LWS) Center

Institution: **The University of Montana Western** CIP Code: _____

Program/Center/Institute Title: **Land, Water and Sky (LWS) Center**
University of Montana Western (UMW), Departments of Biology and Environmental Sciences

Includes (please specify below): Face-to-face Offering: _____ Online Offering: _____ Blended Offering: _____

Options: _____

Proposal Summary [360 words maximum]

What: An interdisciplinary team of faculty proposes creating the Land, Water and Sky (LWS) Center at The University of Montana Western (UMW), housed in the Division of Mathematics and Natural Sciences. The LWS Center will serve as a learning hub rooted in the UMW Experience 1 (X1) educational model, expanding knowledge and public impact in natural resources science and management through community-driven projects with partners throughout Southwest Montana.

Many students at UMW are eager to acquire knowledge and build livelihoods in the wild and working landscapes in which they live. With this goal in mind, we look to offer our students educational and professional development while simultaneously enhancing natural resources in our rural region. Classes embedded in the Environmental Sciences and Ecology programs regularly partner with government agencies, non-profits and landowners to engage in one-to-three-day projects such as stream restoration (ex. willow plantings, beaver dam analog installation, in-channel streambed reconstruction, non-native plant removal), plant and animal population monitoring counts, modification or removal of wildlife unfriendly fencing, and public education and outreach (ex. interpretive natural history talk, watershed education tours). These “one-off” service-learning activities are beneficial but have limited impact and scope on the more complex project work by our partners and students’ intellectual growth across their academic career.

As part of current sabbaticals, both Dr. Anderson (Department of Biology) and Dr. Crootof (Department of Environmental Sciences) are redesigning curricula to incorporate new research opportunities through longer-term, larger-scale, interdisciplinary projects with collaborators from across our region. Our redesigned ecology and environmental sciences course content will facilitate training students in research design, project implementation and monitoring, data analysis, and communication of scientific findings. Projects will be linked to student learning outcomes across classes with content in ecology, fish and wildlife management, hydrology, soil science, conservation biology, environmental policy, conflict resolution, GIS and remote sensing, astronomy, atmospheric sciences, and data analysis. One emerging example is a project in development with Mathematics department faculty to create a Dark Sky Initiative for Southwest Montana, including opportunities for atmospheric and astronomical research, public science education, and outreach to community partners invested in recreation. Similar discussions are ongoing with faculty partners in the History, Philosophy and Social Sciences Department and the Education Department to create demonstration garden beds on campus to facilitate early childhood education activities and explore the history of community gardening in rural Montana communities.

Montana Board of Regents

ACADEMIC PROPOSAL REQUEST FORM

The LWS Center will value local knowledge and invest in partnerships built on trust, accountability, and the latest science. Our Center will offer a hub for faculty and student research projects that create new knowledge. Through a circular flow of knowledge – community-based to academic and academic to community-based – we can connect academic research and education with a broader public audience as well as other regions for comparative studies. We also see the need to work across disciplines and organizations to track and prepare for impacts of possible future scenarios based on predictive models for warming, drought, non-native species, fire, disease, etc. The LWS Center will help facilitate innovative science, management, and education to support stewardship of local lands, waters, and skies for the future.

Why: The Land, Water and Sky Center's mission is to immerse undergraduate students, faculty members, and community partners in science-based collaborations that enhance experiential education (X1) at The University of Montana Western and stewardship of Southwest Montana natural resources.

Resources:

ATTACHMENTS

Attachments:
1601-LII0326_Request to Plan for Western Lands & Waters (WLW) or LWS Center
1601-LII0326_Research Center and Institute Proposal – LWS Center 2.0

Please mark the appropriate type of request and submit with any additional materials, including those listed in parentheses following the type of request. For more information pertaining to the types of requests listed below, how to complete an item request, or additional forms please visit http://mus.edu/che/arsa/academicproposals.asp.

____ A. Level I:

OCHE Notification

____ **1a. Placing a postsecondary educational program into moratorium** (Program Termination and Moratorium Form)

____ **1b. Withdrawing a postsecondary educational program from moratorium**

____ **2. Re-titling, terminating or revising a campus certificate of 29 credits or less**

____ **3. Offering an existing postsecondary educational program via distance or online delivery**

OCHE Approvals

____ **4. Re-titling an existing postsecondary educational program**

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5. **Terminating an existing postsecondary educational program** (Program Termination and Moratorium Form)

6. **Consolidating existing postsecondary educational programs** (Curriculum Proposal Form)

7. **Establishing a new minor where there is a major or an option in a major** (Curriculum Proposal Form)

8. **Revising a postsecondary educational program** (Curriculum Proposal Form)

9. **Establishing a temporary C.A.S. or A.A.S. degree program Approval limited to 2 years**

10. **Withdrawing a postsecondary program from moratorium**

11. **Establishing a campus certificate of 29 credits or less (Curriculum Proposal Form)**

B. Level II:

1. **Establishing a new postsecondary educational program** (Curriculum Proposal and Completed Request to Plan Form)

2. **Requesting Permanent authorization for a temporary C.A.S. or A.A.S degree program** (Curriculum Proposal and Completed Request to Plan Form)

3. **Requesting a variation of the 120-credit baccalaureate degrees** *Exception to policy 301.11*

X 4. **Forming, eliminating or consolidating an academic, administrative, or research unit** (Curriculum or Center/Institute Proposal and completed Request to Plan, except when eliminating or consolidating)

5. **Re-titling an academic, administrative, or research unit**

Montana University System

REQUEST TO PLAN FORM

ITEM 1601-LII0326 **Meeting Date March 2026**

Item Name: Request for authorization to plan a Western Lands & Waters (WLW) Center

Program/Center/Institute Title:	**Western Lands & Waters (WLW) Center**	Planned 6-digit CIP code:	
Campus, School/Department:	**University of Montana Western (UMW), Departments of Biology and Environmental Sciences**	Expected Final Submission Date:	**February 2026**
Contact Name/Info:	**Dr. Michelle Anderson, Professor of Biology, Michelle.Anderson@umwestern.edu, 406-683-7076 and Dr. Arica Crootof, Associate Professor of Environmental Sustainability, Arica.Crootof@umwestern.edu, 406-683-7075**		

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.**

We propose creating the Western Land and Water (WLW) Center at The University of Montana Western (UMW). The WLW Center will serve as a learning hub rooted in UMW's *Experience One* (X1) educational model, scaffolding natural resource science education through community-driven projects with regional partners (see Appendix, letters of support to follow). The WLW Center's mission is to immerse undergraduate students, faculty members, and community partners in science-based collaborations that enhance experiential education at UMW (X1) and stewardship of Southwest Montana natural resources.

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).**

Problem #1: In rural areas of the West, it can be difficult to hire highly qualified employees in the natural resources, despite being the highest paying industry in Montana[1]. Rising cost-of-living and housing prices[1] are exacerbating staffing shortages. At a 2024 campus job fair with federal and state agencies and non-profit organizations, hiring challenges were paramount and representatives stated the need for a natural resources-trained workforce with place-based knowledge and commitment to rural communities. In 2025, unprecedented workforce changes in the natural resources industry occurred nationwide, increasing competition in the job market. Recent college graduates highly trained in diverse skillsets and new technologies with extensive work experience are most competitive.

Problem #2: Conservation projects and organizations are growing in Southwest Montana given the importance of working landscapes and ecologically intact systems, yet resources to do this work are increasingly limited. At the same time, the water and working lands conservation challenges in Southwest Montana are becoming more complex and urgent as land use, economic, and climate change reshape the landscape. There exists a need to better plan and prepare our lands and waters – as well as our scientists, managers, and communities – in Southwest Montana for future scenarios of change. Many of our partners have told us they would benefit in addressing these challenges by working with faculty and students more often and in new ways. A more structured and collaborative approach is

needed to create tangible connections, successful project outcomes, networking and job opportunities for students, and sustained relationships among partner organizations across the landscape.

Problem #3: UMW needs to continue innovating in experiential education delivery, so students continue to choose us for our unique character in the higher education landscape. Experiential education (X1) programming at UMW is now over 20 years old. Learning from our history, opportunities exist for continued innovation through longer-term, larger-scale service-learning projects in the natural resources integrated vertical across different classes and disciplines.

Meeting these demands: We propose to use the WLW Center as a platform to create a conservation-trained workforce with place-based knowledge by improving our existing educational model through greater integration and immersion of undergraduate students in local collaborative conservation. Our vision is to coordinate a collaborative Center to integrate conservation efforts and address scalar differences across Southwest Montana while meeting the need for (1) a conservation-trained workforce with place-based knowledge, and (2) a collaborative hub to integrate conservation efforts across Southwest Montana and magnify impacts. We will organize and host semi-annual meetings where project partners will share current and upcoming conservation projects as well as discuss goals, resources, and timelines to coordinate efforts across the region. We aim to offer both short and long-term value by helping multiple groups in the Southwest Montana region improve their relationships and networks with UMW and one another. In our curriculum we will integrate learning objectives with local conservation projects so that students are working on real-world research and management, contributing data, analysis, and outreach that enhances existing conservation projects and creates fertile ground for instigating new projects. This integration would allow for long-term research, monitoring, and application that can magnify the conservation impacts. By building this bridge between academia and working lands and water conservation, we will enhance collaborative capacity across landscapes. In the short-term, we will have UMW classes complete needed projects and in the long-term, "grow" the next generation of practitioners.

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

No additional office, classroom, workshop, meeting, or equipment space is needed to establish the Western Land and Water Center at Montana Western. The WLW Center activities will be housed in the newly remodeled Block Hall starting Fall 2026 and utilize existing department and campus spaces and technology resources.

No new funding is needed in Year 1, and we seek minimal additional support in Years 2 and 3 as described below:

Year 1 (2025-2026): Both Drs. Michelle Anderson and Arica Crootof are working on developing the Western Land and Water Center as part of their planned sabbatical activities. So, this first year, no additional funds or resources are needed. During Year 1, we will seek external funding to reduce internal costs in years 2 and 3 and beyond.

Years 2 & 3 (2026-2028): The WLW Center will request a total of $5,000 for start-up funds from the UMW Provost's office across years 2 and 3. Funds will support WLW Center activities in the form of an annual partners meeting ($2000), travel to regional partner site locations and external networking meetings ($1000), cost-share match or stipend for a work-study student ($1500), and miscellaneous supplies associated with Center activities ($500).

We will also request one course release each semester for the co-chairs. This entails a 1-block adjunct position per semester ($3,600 max) for years 2 and 3 (one course buyout for Dr. Anderson and one for Dr. Crootof each year). During years 2 and 3 we will work to secure external funds to cover future WLW Center operations. We will evaluate AmeriCorps or Federal and State Work Study options for additional personnel support. By year 4 we aim to hire a part-time liaison to coordinate between the University and community partners. Regardless, by year 4 faculty co-Directors will move back to their full-time courseloads.

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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 WLW Center will formalize partnerships across UMW departments including Mathematics (i.e. Night Skis Program), Fine Arts (i.e. TEDx on Climate Resilience), and History, Philosophy, and Social Sciences (i.e. team teaching Natural and Human History of Montana Landscapes) and we hope it will be a catalyst for new interdisciplinary collaborations. Similarly, at the state-level we look forward to strengthening existing relationships (i.e. The Clark Fork Watershed Education Program, Sustainable Agriculture Research & Education, and Flathead Biological Station) and developing new research and teaching collaborations with MUS faculty and entities including University of Montana's Conservation Genetics Lab, Human Dimensions Lab, The River Center, and Center for Natural Resources and Environmental Policy and Montana State University's Institute on Ecosystems, Spatial Sciences Center, The Montana Water Center, and People-Places-Waters Lab among others. Our re-designed curriculum will continue to support MUS course-sharing agreements.

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 WLW Center directly supports UMW's Mission. The WLW Center will help our ecology and environmental sciences programs be a leader and innovator in experiential education by offering immersive practices to students in their field of study. Through our annual evaluations and assessments, we will ensure ongoing improvement to obtain evidence-supported student learning and achievement outcomes. In alignment with The University of Montana Western's *Academic Priorities and Planning Statement (2024-2025)*, the WLW Center directly supports UMW's two main objectives: *Objective 1: Strengthening Experiential Learning* and *Objective 2: Enhancing the Whole Student Experience.* Our faculty have a proven track record of engaging undergraduates in authentic learning experiences that prepare students to excel in environmental careers. We are dedicated to empowering students through our *Experience One* (X1) that supports field-based learning where students are studying stream dynamics to improve restoration efforts, interviewing stakeholders to understand different interests that shape natural resources conflicts, and researching the dynamics of non-native species in aquatic food webs. We will build upon this foundation to strengthen experiential learning through collaborative conservation and in turn, enhance the student experience by integrating student learning into meaningful projects that benefit our local lands and waters.

[1] Watson, A. et al. 2025 Montana Labor Day Report. Montana Department of Labor and Industry, September 2025.

Signature/Date

Chief Academic Officer: B. P. Elliott **10/1/2025**

Chief Research Officer*:

Chief Executive Officer: **10/2/2025**

Flagship Provost:**

Flagship President:**

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*Center/Institute Proposal only **Not applicable to the Community Colleges.

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Appendix: Developing network of WLW partner organizations

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Research Centers and Institutes differ from one another in focus, scope, and staffing, but each contributes in unique ways to the common goals of expanding knowledge, generating new discoveries and/or having a positive impact on society through informing policy and systemic change. Communities of researchers and staff in Research Centers and Institutes provide a stimulating environment that encourages early researchers and challenges experienced researchers. Research Centers and Institutes also contribute to the education and training of the researchers of the future by serving as learning environments for students. Interdisciplinary collaboration is promoted by Research Centers and Institutes both within the Institution and among MUS Institutions. Research Centers and Institutes do not provide didactic coursework, confer academic degrees or academic certificates or require accreditation by external accrediting bodies. Research Centers and Institutes frequently provide a portal for obtaining external funding in response to federal and/or state research priorities. As such, apparent duplication of mission between MUS research centers and institutes is not generally problematic as with academic programs due to the different sources of funding.

1. State the proposed Institute/Center's name and purpose.

Land, Water and Sky Center: An experiential education and research hub for natural resources in Southwest, MT

An interdisciplinary team of faculty proposes creating the Land, Water and Sky (LWS) Center at The University of Montana Western (UMW), housed in the Division of Mathematics and Natural Sciences. The LWS Center will serve as a learning hub rooted in the UMW Experience 1 (X1) educational model, expanding knowledge and public impact in natural resources science and management through community-driven projects with partners throughout Southwest Montana.

Many students at UMW are eager to acquire knowledge and build livelihoods in the wild and working landscapes in which they live. With this goal in mind, we look to offer our students educational and professional development while simultaneously enhancing natural resources in our rural region. Classes embedded in the Environmental Sciences and Ecology programs regularly partner with government agencies, non-profits and landowners to engage in one-to-three-day projects such as stream restoration (ex. willow plantings, beaver dam analog installation, in-channel streambed reconstruction, non-native plant removal), plant and animal population monitoring counts, modification or removal of wildlife unfriendly fencing, and public education and outreach (ex. interpretive natural history talk, watershed education tours). These "one-off" service-learning activities are beneficial but have limited impact and scope on the more complex project work by our partners and students' intellectual growth across their academic career.

As part of current sabbaticals, both Dr. Anderson (Department of Biology) and Dr. Crootof (Department of Environmental Sciences) are redesigning curricula to incorporate new research opportunities through longer-term, larger-scale, interdisciplinary projects with collaborators from across our region. Our redesigned ecology and environmental sciences course content will facilitate training students in research design, project implementation and monitoring, data analysis, and communication of scientific findings. Projects will be linked to student learning outcomes across classes with content in ecology, fish and wildlife management, hydrology, soil science, conservation biology, environmental policy, conflict resolution, GIS and remote sensing, astronomy, atmospheric sciences, and data

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analysis. One emerging example is a project in development with Mathematics department faculty to create a Dark Sky Initiative for Southwest Montana, including opportunities for atmospheric and astronomical research, public science education, and outreach to community partners invested in recreation. Similar discussions are ongoing with faculty partners in the History, Philosophy and Social Sciences Department and the Education Department to create demonstration garden beds on campus to facilitate early childhood education activities and explore the history of community gardening in rural Montana communities.

The LWS Center will value local knowledge and invest in partnerships built on trust, accountability, and the latest science. Our Center will offer a hub for faculty and student research projects that create new knowledge. Through a circular flow of knowledge – community-based to academic and academic to community-based – we can connect academic research and education with a broader public audience as well as other regions for comparative studies. We also see the need to work across disciplines and organizations to track and prepare for impacts of possible future scenarios based on predictive models for warming, drought, non-native species, fire, disease, etc. The LWS Center will help facilitate innovative science, management, and education to support stewardship of local lands, waters, and skies for the future.

2. A comprehensive statement of the Institute/Center's mission and its relationship to the University mission.

A. State the Institute/Center's mission.

The Land, Water and Sky Center's mission is to immerse undergraduate students, faculty members, and community partners in science-based collaborations that enhance experiential education (X1) at The University of Montana Western and stewardship of Southwest Montana natural resources.

B. Identify the Institute/Center's goals and objectives.

GOALS & OBJECTIVES:

1. **Create a collaboration hub** for creating and sharing knowledge about the lands, waters, and skies of Southwest Montana
   - The LWS Center will be a hub for innovative natural science undergraduate education and research through collaborations between academics and community-based partners.
   - The LWS Center will offer a stable, long-term framework for partners to consolidate knowledge, coordinate efforts, and leverage opportunities for long-term research and stewardship of Southwest Montana natural resources.

2. **Enhance experiential (X1) education** at The University of Montana Western
   - We are redesigning our curricula by integrating course content with on-the-ground projects, enabling students to apply their knowledge and skills through service-learning activities while providing partners with tangible outcomes that enhance capacity.
   - Students will acquire skills to be competitive for positions at graduate schools and the workforce through applied projects that produce professional-quality work.

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- The LWS Center will strengthen research capacity and impact by supporting faculty and student projects that generate new knowledge, inform management decisions, and train the next generation of researchers and practitioners.

C. What specific need is being responded to in developing the proposed Institute/Center?

Problem #1: In rural areas of the West, it can be difficult to hire highly qualified employees in natural resource fields, despite servicing a high paying industry in Montana[1]. Rising cost-of-living and housing prices[1] are exacerbating staffing shortages in the state labor market. In conversations at a 2024 UMW campus job fair with federal and state agencies and non-profit organizations, hiring challenges were paramount and representatives stated the need for a natural resources-trained workforce with place-based knowledge and commitment to rural communities. In 2025, unprecedented and transformative workforce changes have occurred nationwide, restructuring the natural resource employment sector and intensifying competition for jobs. Recent college graduates that can think analytically and creatively, are highly trained in diverse technology-related skillsets, and with extensive and varied work experience are expected to be most competitive.

Problem #2: Complexity in natural resource projects and organizations are growing in Southwest Montana given the importance of working landscapes and ecologically intact systems, yet resources to do this work are increasingly limited. At the same time, challenges to water, land, and sky utilization and resilience in Southwest Montana are becoming more urgent as land uses, economic factors, and climate change reshape land, water, and skyscapes. There exists a need to better plan and prepare our lands, waters, and skies – as well as our scientists, managers, and communities – in Southwest Montana for future scenarios of change. Many of our partners have told us they would benefit in addressing these challenges by working with faculty and students more often and in new ways. A more structured and collaborative approach is needed to create tangible connections, successful project outcomes, networking and job opportunities for students, and sustained relationships among partner organizations across the landscape.

Problem #3: Montana Western needs to continue innovating experiential education delivery, so students continue to choose us for our unique character in the higher education landscape. Experiential education (X1) programming at UMW is now over 20 years old. Learning from our history, opportunities exist for continued innovation through longer-term, larger-scale service-learning projects in the natural resources integrated vertical across different classes and disciplines.

Meeting these demands: The LWS Center will serve as a collaborative platform for scientists, managers, and community members to study the lands, waters, and skies of rural Southwest Montana and prepare for future scenarios of change. Our vision is to coordinate a Center to integrate conservation efforts and address scalar differences across Southwest Montana while meeting the need for (1) a natural science-trained workforce with place-based knowledge, and (2) a collaborative hub to integrate stewardship efforts across Southwest Montana and magnify impacts. We will organize and host semi-annual meetings where project partners will share current and upcoming projects as well as discuss goals, resources, and timelines to coordinate efforts across the region. We aim to offer both short and long-term value by helping multiple groups in the Southwest Montana region improve their relationships and networks with UMW and one another. In our curriculum, we will integrate learning objectives with local conservation projects so that students are working on real-world research and management, contributing data, analysis, and outreach that enhances existing projects and creates fertile ground for instigating new projects. This integration

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will allow for long-term research, monitoring, and application that can magnify stewardship. By building this bridge between academia and partners working on the land and water and engaging public interest in the atmosphere and space, we will enhance collaborative capacity across landscapes. In the short-term, we will have UMW classes complete needed projects and in the long-term, "grow" the next generation of science practitioners.

D. Describe how the Institute/Center benefits the department, college, or institution.

Our LWS Center will:

- **Advance Experiential (X1) Learning:** Revitalize UMW's commitment to innovative experiential (X1) education across the institution.
- **Enhance Student Learning and Experiences:** Deepen student engagement through immersive experiences that integrate course content knowledge with applied projects across classes, programs and departments.
- **Support Recruitment and Retention:** Encourage new student enrollment and improve retention in math and science majors by connecting academic learning to meaningful, place-based projects and professional opportunities.
- **Foster Interdisciplinary Collaboration:** Create new opportunities for faculty and students to collaborate across programs, departments, and the Montana University System.
- **Strengthen Community Partnerships:** Build trust and long-term relationships with regional partners through collaborative projects that promote stewardship and enhance public engagement across programs and departments.
- **Expand Research Opportunities:** Increase undergraduate research and applied project experiences that generate scholarly contributions and prepare students for science careers.
- **Increase Scholarly Output:** With a stronger focus on undergraduate research, we will increase student and faculty publications and presentations, and in turn, gain more external recognition for the University.
- **Develop Workforce Readiness:** Prepare a competitive student workforce with research and technical skills, collaborative experience, and professional-quality project outputs.
- **Obtain External Funding:** Leverage the Center as a portal to secure a wide range of grants and extramural support for X1 learning, undergraduate research, and community-based service-learning that benefits programs, departments, and the University.

E. Describe the Institute/Center's relationship to the University mission.

The LWS Center advances UMW's current mission by providing immersive undergraduate learning experiences where students apply knowledge and skills to address real-world challenges with faculty and community partners. Our annual evaluations and assessments will help us to continually improve and obtain evidence-supported student learning and achievement outcomes. Through this work, we aim to gain regional recognition as a leader and innovator in natural science education.

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The LWS Center's mission, objectives, and activities are also aligned with the current working draft of UMW's new Strategic Plan and Mission where there is a focus on promoting intellectual growth and transformative skills for our students through small classes, strong relationships, and rural environment.

The University of Montana Western's *Academic Priorities and Planning Statement (2024-2025*), is intended to support the MUS Board of Regents in evaluating new program or center proposals such as this one. The LWS Center directly supports the two listed objectives:

- *Objective 1: Strengthening Experiential Learning*
- *Objective 2: Enhancing the Whole Student Experience*

Our faculty have a strong track record of engaging undergraduates in authentic learning experiences that prepare students to excel in environmental careers. We are dedicated to empowering students through our *Experience One* (X1) that supports field-based learning where students are studying stream dynamics to improve restoration efforts, interviewing stakeholders to understand different interests, analyzing drone imagery for spatial analyses, and researching the dynamics of non-native species in aquatic food webs. We will build upon this foundation to strengthen experiential (X1) learning through collaborative projects and in turn, enhance the student experience by integrating student learning into meaningful long-term programs that benefit our local lands, waters, and sky. The LWS Center enhances the student experience by fostering personal growth, professional readiness, and community connection. Students work alongside faculty, agencies, and local organizations—building confidence, leadership, and a sense of purpose through meaningful contributions to regional stewardship efforts.

3. Briefly describe the Institute/Center's anticipated activities.

Collaboration hub activities:

- Host and facilitate semi-annual stakeholder meetings to review LWS Center goals and objectives, discuss individual project updates and logistics, share the latest science research, and identify resources to continue the work.
- One-on-one meetings between co-directors and partners.
- Coordinate with other MUS Centers (i.e. The Water Center, Institute on Ecosystems, National Center for Landscape Fire Analysis).
- Create a digital platform to share research findings, insights, and lessons learned through university and community engagement.
- Contribute to community partner projects, specifically tasks that could not otherwise be accomplished and demonstrate impact (i.e. increase capacity, low-cost tests of new ideas, capture stories) and that tie into student learning objectives.
- Involve community at the forefront of the research enterprise (i.e. co-production), then further invest in research activities and products with public design, engagement, and impact (action-oriented).
- Facilitate training workshops for partner organizations to help train potential employees in skills needed to succeed as natural resource practitioners of the future.

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- Expand relationships and knowledge sharing between community partners (see Appendix A), Montana Western faculty, and other institutions of higher education across the region.
- Predict possible future opportunities and vulnerabilities resulting from warming, drought, non-native species, fire, disease, etc. and connect to partner activities.

Experiential education (X1) **activities**:

- Curricular redesign to strengthen existing programs through deeper learning. Projects that meet the full potential of an experiential learning life cycle (engaging in experience, reflection, conceptualization, and experimentation) and are vertically integrated across programs for deeper learning throughout the curriculum and across campus disciplines.
- Engage in service-learning with a diverse array of partner organizations and professionals.
- Align educational activities with specific workforce skills (from measuring stream cross-sections and vegetation transects to facilitating effective meetings and connecting research to decision-makers).
- Implement research studies within existing applied management frameworks.
- Fill research gaps (i.e. 5 to 10-year studies, spatial patterns at ecosystem to landscape scales, less well-studied species, nocturnal scotobiology etc.).
- Pursue research funding (i.e. Foundations, NSF REU) for improved research capacity and public impact. Will support undergraduate research and internships by utilizing internal funds (i.e. X1 Learning Grants, Undergraduate Research Program (URP), Biology Research Scholarship, Montana Space Grant Consortium (MSGC) and external funds (i.e. student research funding and professional society funds).

A. Identify faculty expertise available for participation in the Institute/Center's activities.

Division of Mathematics and Natural Sciences

Biology Department:

- Dr. Michelle Anderson, Professor of Aquatic Ecology
  - Dr. Anderson's research and courses engage undergraduates in discovering how organisms, communities, and ecosystems respond to change, often by collaborating on projects with natural resource professionals from government agencies, non-profits, and other universities. Recent projects include freshwater mussel declines and reintroductions, food web interactions among native and non-native fish, factors linked to bird-window collisions on college campuses, phenological shifts in riverine biota, and NEON data analyses.
- Dr. Kyle Richardson, Assistant Professor of Disease & Wildlife Ecology
  - Dr. Richardson is a wildlife ecologist with expertise in applying field-based and molecular tools to address questions associated with wildlife disease and population ecology. Students in Dr. Richardson's lab have the opportunity to work directly with local Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) control efforts or can expect guidance and support to branch out towards their own research interests and pursuits.

Environmental Sciences Department:

- Dr. Lorrie Carnes, Assistant Professor of Geomorphology

- In Dr. Carnes' classes, students learn how to plan fieldwork campaigns, navigate challenges associated with working in variable conditions, and collect original datasets all the while exploring the natural processes underpinning Earth's landscapes. Industry-standard software, such as ArcGIS, Excel, and MATLAB are integrated into courses to develop needed technical skillsets.

- Dr. Arica Crootof, Associate Professor of Environmental Sustainability
  - In Dr. Crootof's classes, students explore how human activities interact with the natural world and learn how to develop sustainable solutions that protect and enhance natural resources. Whether taking meeting minutes at a local watershed meeting, conducting an interview, designing an interpretive program, or crafting a policy report, students are engaged in practicing their professional pursuits. With specific training in geographic thought, conflict resolution, and communication, students develop skills that will serve them beyond the classroom.
- Dr. Neil Foley, Associate Professor of Physics
  - In Dr. Foley's classes, students explore physics through a cross-disciplinary lens (i.e. the similarities between geophysical techniques and biomedical imaging) to engage students across departments. Students learn theory in the classroom and apply this knowledge in the field using both Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR) and Electrical Resistivity Tomography (ERT) systems. These same research-grade systems are used by land management agencies, civil engineers, and professional scientists.
- Dr. Spruce Shoenemann, Professor of Climate Science
  - In Dr. Shoenemann's classes, students are developing in-depth field logs, building weather stations, and analyzing sediment, glacier deposits, water, and tree ring isotope data to study past climates and understand climate science. Students learn to effectively use MS Excel for managing large data sets and visualizing data. Students also gain experience in Google Earth and QGIS.

<u>Mathematics Department:</u>

- Dr. Eric Dyreson, Professor of Mathematics
  - Dr. Dyreson sees the biological world through the lens of mathematics. He encourages his students to gather and analyze their own data and write their own computer models. Dyreson's classrooms embody the true spirit of Experience One. His students have presented their original work at the Montana Academy of Sciences and performed field research in Beaverhead National Forest and Yellowstone National Park.
- Dr. Joseph Eason, Associate Professor of Mathematics
  - Dr. Eason enjoys helping students succeed in classes by facilitating engaging discussions, mentoring research experiences, and utilizing hands-on applications in his teaching. His research interests are in modeling biological systems with a focus on spatial ecology.

Division of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences:

<u>Department of History, Philosophy & Social Sciences:</u>

- Dr. John Henris, Associate Professor of US History
  - Students in Professor Henris' classes are encouraged to think about the significance of place and nature in their understanding of historical events. Often this is accomplished by evaluating historical documents which elucidate how human action is often historically

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shaped by the natural world. Exploration of historical architecture and cultural landscapes, however, provides additional opportunities for study outside of the classroom and collaboration with local communities.

Division of Education / Education Department:

- Dr. Katrina Kennett, Associate Professor of Education
  - Dr. Kennett is deeply interested in how pre-service teachers integrate authentic literacy practices and contemporary technology tools into their instruction. Her research focuses on how teachers plan for student learning, and she coaches in-service teachers as they design sustained opportunities for student inquiry in their curriculum. She also serves as a university supervisor for student teachers.

B. Which departments on campus will be involved and how will the Institute/Center contribute to the academic programs of the institution?

The three primary departments with faculty involved with the LWS Center are Biology, Environmental Sciences, and Mathematics. These three departments make up the Division of Mathematics and Natural Sciences (DMN) at UMW We also have a faculty representative from the Department of History, Philosophy & Social Sciences (Division of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences) and the Department of Education (Division of Education) to support cross campus collaborations.

Working together across campus, we can leverage the LWS Center to maximize existing knowledge, facilities, and equipment to immerse undergraduate students, faculty members, and community partners in science-based collaborations that enhance experiential education (X1) at Montana Western and stewardship of Southwest Montana natural resources. By facilitating multi-disciplinary collaborations across campus, we will have students collect macroinvertebrate data in *Aquatic Ecology* that will be analyzed in *Methods in Data Analysis and Modeling* and spatially mapped and analyzed with land use data in *Environmental GIS and Remote Sensing* and presented to Trout Unlimited, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. In *American Environmental History, s*tudents will conduct archival research about Montana's natural resources and then learn to read the geologic clues that define our landscapes in *Surficial Processes.* Once trained as a Certified Interpretive Guide in *Environmental Interpretation,* these same students can then lead interpretive programs designed for the public that share the cultural, environmental, and geologic histories that shape our lives today.

The LWS Center will contribute to graduate outcomes across the three primary departments which broadly include disciplinary knowledge, intellectual and research skills, oral and written communication, and professional skills. The graduate outcomes for each degree program are outlined in more detail in our Course Catalog (2025-2026):

- Department of Biology, BS Ecology Graduate Outcomes
- Department of Environmental Sciences, BS Environmental Sciences Graduate Outcomes and BS Environmental Sustainability Graduate Outcomes
- Department of Mathematic, BS Mathematics Graduate Outcomes

We look forward to enhancing interdisciplinary academic programing across campus and expect the center to support additional programming in General Education courses like the current collaboration

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between History Professor Dr. Henris and Geomorphology Professor Dr. Carnes who are co-teaching an Honors course "*Natural and Human History of Montana State Parks"* in spring semester of 2026.

Through this multi-disciplinary work, we will pursue external funding opportunities that would be difficult for a single department at our small institution to achieve on our own. Our division has expressed interest about hosting a summer Research Experience for Undergraduates (REU) program to increase undergraduate research opportunities at Montana Western and with the LWS Center we look forward to being better prepared to pursue grants that further the LWS Center's Mission and Objectives.

By serving as a hub for collaboration, both internally and externally, the LWS Center will build public-private-education partnerships that work to strengthen academic offerings, enrich student experiences, and enhance the college's visibility and reputation in line with Montana Western's Mission and Objectives.

4. Identify the organizational structure of the Institute/Center within the institution.

The LWS Center will be housed within the Division of Mathematics and Natural Sciences at UMW. We will initially utilize a co-director model with representation from across the Division of Mathematics and Natural Sciences that reports to the Provost. Initially, Dr. Michelle Anderson (Department of Biology) and Dr. Arica Crootof (Department of Environmental Sciences) will co-direct the Center. Across the Division, we will elect two co-directors every other year, to serve a two-year term, or as needed. The Center will have an advisory committee comprised of faculty and student representatives from across departments as well as representatives from several of the agencies, organizations, and institutions listed below. The advisory committee will regularly meet at least once a semester, and on an ad hoc basis in summer as needed.

A. Identify all agencies, organizations and/or institutions that will be involved.

Below is a list of potential LWS regional partners we anticipate being involved in Center activities based on previous work with UMW faculty and students over the last decade. We are in the process of collecting Letters of Support from current collaborators working for federal, state, and non-profit organizations as part of this CP for the Board of Regents review; organizations we are contacting for letters are noted with an asterisk (*) below. We envision more collaborations will develop as the Center evolves, including partners not listed below from Tribal Nations, other MUS Centers and Institutes, small businesses, and additional non-profit organizations in our region.

Federal:

- *Bureau of Land Management
- *Natural Resources Conservation Service
- *U.S. Department of Agriculture U.S. Sheep Experiment Station
- *U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
- *U.S. Forest Service
- U.S. National Park Service

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State:

- Flathead Lake Biological Station of The University of Montana
- *Montana Bureau of Mines and Geology
- Montana Conservation Districts, *Beaverhead Conservation District
- Montana Department of Environmental Quality
- *Montana Department of Natural Resources & Conservation
- Montana Department of Transportation
- *Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
- Montana Institute on Ecosystems
- Montana Natural Heritage Program
- Montana Space Grant Consortium
- Montana State University Extension
- Montana Water Center

Non-governmental Organizations:

- Beaverhead Chamber of Commerce, Tourism & Development
- *Beaverhead Trails Coalition
- Beaverhead Watershed Committee
- *Big Hole Watershed Committee
- Blackfoot Challenge
- Centennial Valley Association
- Early Childhood Coalition of Beaverhead County
- High Divide Collaborative
- Intermountain West Joint Venture
- Montana Watershed Coordination Council
- Montana Conservation Corps
- National Wildlife Federation
- Odyssey Early Learning Center
- Ruby Habitat Foundation
- *Southwest Montana Sagebrush Partnership
- The Nature Conservancy
- *Trout Unlimited
- Youth Employment Program

B. Identify advisory council information.

An Advisory Council will be comprised of faculty, students, and federal, state, and non-governmental organization practitioners to offer strategic guidance that can (a) strengthen community and university partnerships; (b) enhance academic and professional development for students; (c) addresses challenges for continued improvement, and (d) support evaluation and accountability efforts.

5. Identify first year and continuing finances necessary to support the Center/Institute, including the sources of funding.

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We are seeking minimal start-up funds and resources to help establish the Land, Water and Sky Center at Montana Western. However, no funds or additional resources are needed in Year 1, only Years 2 and 3 as described below:

Year 1 (2025-2026): Both Drs. Michelle Anderson and Arica Crootof are working on developing the LWS Center as part of their planned sabbatical activities. So, this first year, no additional funds or resources are needed. During Year 1, we will seek external funding to reduce internal costs in years 2 and 3 and beyond.

Years 2 & 3 (2026-2028): The LWS Center will request a total of $5,000 for start-up funds from the UMW Provost's office across years 2 and 3. These funds will support LWS Center activities in the form of an semi-annual partners meeting ($2000), travel to regional partner site locations and externally hosted meetings to network with partners ($1000), cost-share match or stipend for a work-study student ($1500), and miscellaneous supplies associated with Center activities ($500).

Based on preliminary conversations with the interim Provost, we anticipate requesting one course release each year for the Co-Directors. This entails either a modified schedule of Co-Director courses or a 1-block adjunct position per semester ($4,000 max) for years 2 and 3 (one course buyout for Dr. Anderson and one for Dr. Crootof each year), pending negotiation with the Provost's Office and the impacted departments. During years 2 and 3, Co-Directors will work to secure external funds to cover future LWS Center operations, including evaluation of AmeriCorps or Federal and State Work Study options for additional personnel support. By year 4, the aim will be to hire a part-time liaison to coordinate between the University and community partners. Regardless, we anticipate that by year 4 the Co-Directors will move back to their full-time courseloads.

No additional office, classroom, workshop, meeting, or equipment space is needed. The LWS Center activities will be coordinated in the newly remodeled Block Hall starting Fall 2026. The Center will utilize existing departmental and campus spaces and technology resources for Center activities such as meetings and presentations.

The Center leverages existing operational, in-kind, and funding support as described below:

Operational support:

- The Block Hall renovation has an estimated $21 million impact on gross economic output in our community. The LWS Center campus activities are housed in this facility in part to build on this investment.
- UMW Office of Sponsored Research programs and staff send us targeted grant opportunities and assist with pre- and post-award grant management.
- UMW Foundation staff help identify potential private and foundation donors.
- Existing relationships with community partners built over the last 15 – 20 years, as is evidenced by the letters of support we will submit and co-developed projects.
- Faculty from five departments on campus have expressed strong interest in working on Center projects in their classes.

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RESEARCH CENTER AND INSTITUTE PROPOSAL FORM

- Access to campus field equipment and technologies such as research equipment and computer software (ArcGIS, MATLAB).

In-kind support:

- Volunteers from campus student Clubs (Terre Verde, Biology Club) assist with meetings and events (annual meetings, Dark Skies parties, project workdays, etc.).
- LWS Center collaborative partners support 1-day to 1-week events, including faculty and student transportation to field sites, meals, and overnight housing.

Funding support:

- Funding from MT Space Grant Consortium for Birch Creek Astronomy and the Hogsback projects: $45,000
- ARS Sheep Station CoLab subcontracts to UMW: $40,900
- MT-EpSCOR CREWS grant funding: $35,000
- MT Water Center Faculty Seed Grant $37,356
- Second Nature Energy Expansion Research Cohort $10,000
- Chuck Robbins Trout Unlimited Community Water Conversations $2500/year
- MT View Fellowship(s) $1,000 to $2,000 for student research projects per year
- UMW Equipment Fee requests: $1,000 to $20,000 per year for equipment used in classes as part of Center activities. Recent examples include Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR), Electrical Resistivity Tomography (ERT) equipment, and drones.
- UMW Biology Club support of campus Undergraduate Research Symposium, at which students will present on Center projects: $5000
- UMW student funding for Center activities, both internal (X1 Fund, URP, work-study) and external (nonprofit organizations and professional society research scholarships).

A. Will additional faculty and other resources be required to implement this Center/Institute? If yes, please describe the need and indicate the plan for meeting this need.

Minimal additional faculty and resources are needed to begin implementing the LWS Center.

The LWS Center formalizes and centralizes ongoing collaborations both across campus and in the community. The Center will be housed within the newly remodeled Block Hall facilities for the Division of Mathematics and Natural Sciences. Curriculum development and partnership engagement are occurring as part of Dr. Anderson and Dr. Crootof's 2025-2026 academic year sabbatical.

For Years 2 and 3, we are requesting (a) $5,000 of startup funds to support our semi-annual partnership meetings and incidentals; and (b) a course buyout, one per semester (2 total) as described above to help establish the Center. No additional faculty are needed after year 3.

A digital platform (web content) will need to be established for the Center and, if possible, linked to and supported by the UMW website. In advance of a formal UMW website, the co-Directors are building a free Wordpress site linked to their UMW faculty profiles.

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RESEARCH CENTER AND INSTITUTE PROPOSAL FORM

B. Are other, additional resources required to ensure the success of the proposed Center/Institute? If yes, please describe the need and indicate the plan for meeting this need.

No additional resources are required to ensure the success of the LWS Center. That said, we are requesting start-up support in years 2 and 3 (see above) to help establish the Center. From there, we will use the LWS Center to apply for external funds to support our goals and objectives. Further down the road, grants could fund a liaison position to help coordinate collaborations with external partners, but this position is not needed to run the Center.

Potential external funding sources including foundation, nonprofit, and academic organizations, will be developed in collaboration with the UMW Office of Sponsored Research and the UMW Foundation. We are working to create a funder list and calendar so we can begin applying for supplemental funds to support the LWS Center. Currently, we are preparing a $5000 Campus Compact grant application to pay 2 – 4 students to be members of the Center planning committee and then the inaugural Advisory Board in 2025 – 2026.

6. Describe other similar Centers/Institutes or research capacities in the state and surrounding region.

There are many natural resources focused research institutes and centers across the state (i.e. Center for Natural Resources and Environmental Policy, Montana Institute on Ecosystems, Montana Water Center, Nic?-Mini Water Center, O'Connor Center for the Rocky Mountain West, SARE, The River Center); however, none work specifically in our geographic region, and none are primarily focused on collaborations in a framework of undergraduate experiential learning. Our community partners are invested in integrating Montana Western courses across a broad swathe of public and private collaborators for long-term, on-the-ground, local to regional-based projects.

A. Describe the relationship between the proposed Center/Institute and any similar Centers/Institutes, programs, or research capacities within the Montana University System.

Given similar research, teaching, and management interests across many MUS institutes and centers, we look forward to having the LWS Center work in collaboration with these organizations to supplement and not duplicate efforts.

B. In cases of substantial duplication, explain the rationale for the proposed Center/Institute.

This LWS Center does not have substantial duplication with existing Centers or Institutes in the Montana University System. The need for this LWS Center arose from faculty at the University of Montana Western working with local conservation partners on class-based projects, meeting with these partners, and listening to their challenges and constraints. This Center is designed to address local partner needs while also enhancing student learning outcomes and career opportunities. Given our rural location, the LWS Center will play an important role in (a) connecting our local science and management findings to other universities, centers, institutes and programs, as well as (b) bringing outside knowledge and perspectives to Southwest Montana.

7. Assessment: How will the success of the center/institute be measured?

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RESEARCH CENTER AND INSTITUTE PROPOSAL FORM

Success of the LWS Center will be measured on short-term (annual) and long-term (5-year) intervals.

Short-Term (Annual)

- **Collaboration Hub -** We will use our semi-annual meetings to track progress on stated goals, objectives, and timelines as well as review goals and objectives and gather feedback. We will track the number of publications and presentations as well as grants applied for and awarded. We will utilize a series of surveys to collect feedback from our partner organizations, from collaborators on campus, from student participants, as well as a self-assessment by the LWS Center co-directors.
- **Experiential education (X1) activities -** Annually, we will (1) track the number of students engaged in LWS programming and activities; (2) map program assessments with LWS Center activities to document how the LWS Center supports undergraduate learning outcomes (see Section 3.B.); (3) document job skill trainings; and (4) student job offers.

A detailed assessment plan for the first three years is presented below:

Year 1 activities fall (funded as sabbatical activities by Dr.'s Anderson & Crootof):

- Center activities primarily involve conversations and planning activities by PI's Anderson and Crootof and potential collaborators and stakeholders in Center activities, to learn about community needs and help shape the formation of the Center and related activities as described in BOR Request to Plan and Curriculum Proposals.
- Create a funder list and calendar to facilitate applying for supplemental Center support funds.
- Submission of a $5000 Campus Compact grant application to pay 2 – 3 students members of the Center planning committee and inaugural Advisory Board in 2026 – 2027.

Year 1 assessment:

- Approval of the Center by the BOR.
- Establish a fundraising account for the Center with the UMW Foundation.
- Apply for Provost's Office Academic Initiatives Fund or the Foundation's Fund for Experience One to cover anticipated Center operating expenses in years 2 – 3 ($2,500 - $5,000 per year).
- Submission of one or more external grants to fund Center activities.
- Completion of a collaborator and stakeholder survey, resulting in a report identifying the number and type of community partners agreeing to engage in Center activities.
- Initial curricular revision for courses taught by PI's to generally support Center collaborations, including several new pilot projects for 2026 – 2027 courses.
- Assemble and have an initial meeting of the Center Advisory Board.

Year 2 activities:

- First annual all-hands meeting of Center collaborators.
- Center website has been established, including 1) collaborator and project information, 2) opportunities for seed funding of collaborative service and research projects between individual students and community partners, and 3) information on ways to donate to the Center, with links to the UMW Foundation.

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RESEARCH CENTER AND INSTITUTE PROPOSAL FORM

Year 2 assessment:

- Meeting attendance (organizations, number of individuals) and feedback.
- Number of completed and new Center projects.
- The website is available to the public.
- Advisory Board review of year 2 budget expenditures to plan a year 3 budget in line with expected financial resources available.

Year 3 activities:

- Second annual meeting of Center collaborators.
- Review and document major internal processes associated with Center activities to streamline communications and event planning, making it easier to incorporate students and volunteers into Center activities.

Year 3 assessment:

- Meeting attendance (organizations, number of individuals) and feedback.
- Number of completed and new Center projects.
- Process manual reviewed and accepted by the Advisory Board.

Long-Term (Every 5-Years)

Our 5-year self-assessment of both collaboration and experiential activities will include: Review of Center funding levels, number of students and partners served by Center activities, number of ongoing and completed Center projects, number of publications and presentations on Center activities, curricular interventions in support of program outcomes that involved Center activities, list of job skills, job offers to students from Center partners. The 5-year self-study of Center activities will be assessed by an external reviewer. The external reviewer and Provost's office in consultation with the Center advisory board will determine if the Center does or does not meet Center goals, including funding. If the Center does not achieve sustained funding, UMW may request to close it.

We will supplement this self-assessment with the following:

- **Southwest Montana Collaboration Coordination Assessment** designed with our advisory council that measures the scope and scale of collaboration efforts and project continuation or completion.
- **Southwest Montana Education and Workforce Assessment** designed with our advisory council that evaluates learning outcomes, professional skills and job placement.

8. State the internal campus review and approval process which has occurred prior to submission to the Commissioner's Office. Indicate, where appropriate, involvement by faculty, students, community members, professional constituencies, etc.

The concept for this trans-disciplinary center was developed in 2023. The concept was shared with the Chancellor, Provost, The University of Montana Western Foundation, and contributing departments

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RESEARCH CENTER AND INSTITUTE PROPOSAL FORM

including Biology and Environmental Sciences. With widespread support, a draft of the Intent to Plan was submitted to the Provost on July 24th, 2025. The Provost shared the draft Intent to Plan at the August 27th CAO meeting. Feedback from this first round of discussions was integrated into the final Intent to Plan that was submitted for consideration and approved at the Board of Regents Meeting in November 2025.

The Level II Montana Board of Regents Research Center and Institute Proposal Form has been reviewed by select community partners and voted on by Division of MNS departments in October 2025. The CP is going through UMW Curriculum Proposal Process starting in November 2025. The proposal will need to be approved by the UMW Curriculum Proposal Committee, Faculty Senate, the Provost, and Chancellor before submission to the Commissioner's Office.

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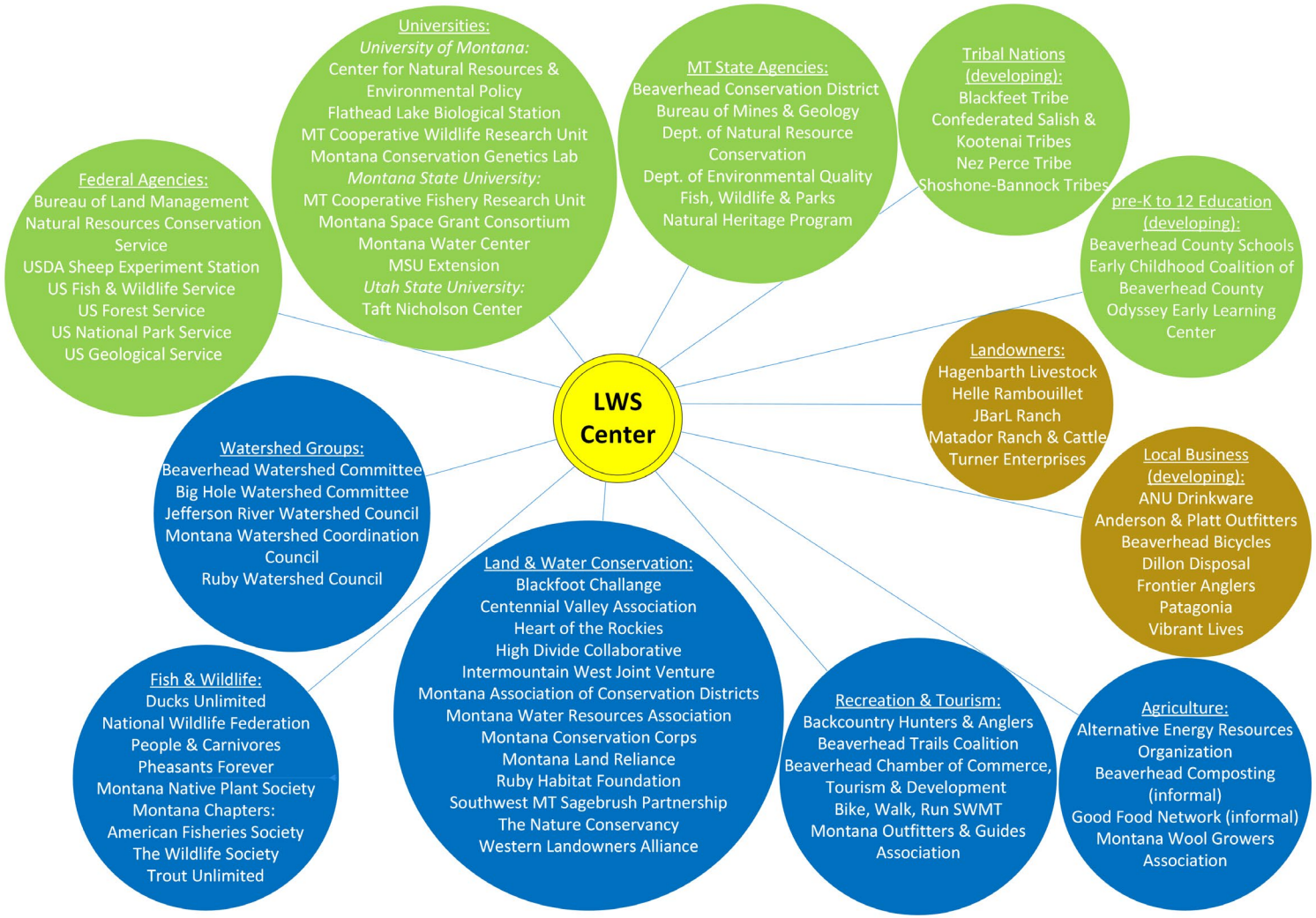
RESEARCH CENTER AND INSTITUTE PROPOSAL FORM

Appendix A: Developing network of future LWS partner organizations



Montana Board of Regents

ACADEMIC PROPOSAL REQUEST FORM

SUBMISSION 02/2026

ITEM 1501-LII0326

Request for authorization to establish a Certificate of Applied Science in Broadband Technology

Institution: Montana Technological University CIP Code: 49.9052

Program/Center/Institute Title: Highlands College

Includes (please specify below): Face-to-face Offering: X Online Offering: X Blended Offering: X

Options:

Proposal Summary [360 words maximum]

What: Highlands College proposes a Broadband Technology CAS that provides a 15-credit online/hybrid core in applied math, technical communication, business fundamentals, computer literacy, and construction management for broadband. The CAS is intentionally paired with a required Certificate of Technical Studies (CTS) in Splicing, Warehousing, or Heavy Equipment Operation, for a total program length of 31–34 credits.

Why: Western Montana faces a significant digital divide where 1 in 3 residents do not have access to reliable internet connectivity. This program will help build a strong broadband labor force to address workforce needs.

Resources: The CAS uses existing Highlands College courses for the 15-credit core. No new courses are required for the CAS; specialized technical training occurs within the separate CTS programs (Splicing, Warehousing or HEO).

ATTACHMENTS

Curriculum Proposal form

Fiscal Analysis form

Fiscal Analysis 2 form

Please mark the appropriate type of request and submit with any additional materials, including those listed in parentheses following the type of request. For more information pertaining to the types of requests listed below, how to complete an item request, or additional forms please visit http://mus.edu/che/arsa/academicproposals.asp.

____ A. Level I:

OCHE Notification

Montana Board of Regents
ACADEMIC PROPOSAL REQUEST FORM

_____ **1a. Placing a postsecondary educational program into moratorium** (Program Termination and Moratorium Form)

_____ **1b. Withdrawing a postsecondary educational program from moratorium**

_____ **2. Re-titling, terminating or revising a campus certificate of 29 credits or less**

_____ **3. Offering an existing postsecondary educational program via distance or online delivery**

OCHE Approvals

_____ **4. Re-titling an existing postsecondary educational program**

_____ **5. Terminating an existing postsecondary educational program** (Program Termination and Moratorium Form)

_____ **6. Consolidating existing postsecondary educational programs** (Curriculum Proposal Form)

_____ **7. Establishing a new minor where there is a major or an option in a major** (Curriculum Proposal Form)

_____ **8. Revising a postsecondary educational program** (Curriculum Proposal Form)

_____ **9. Establishing a temporary C.A.S. or A.A.S. degree program Approval limited to 2 years**

_____ **10. Withdrawing a postsecondary program from moratorium**

_____ **11. Establishing a campus certificate of 29 credits or less (Curriculum Proposal Form)**

_____ **B. Level II:**

X **1. Establishing a new postsecondary educational program** (Curriculum Proposal and Completed Request to Plan Form)

_____ **2. Requesting Permanent authorization for a temporary C.A.S. or A.A.S degree program** (Curriculum Proposal and Completed Request to Plan Form)

_____ **3. Requesting a variation of the 120-credit baccalaureate degrees** *Exception to policy 301.11*

_____ **4. Forming, eliminating or consolidating an academic, administrative, or research unit** (Curriculum or Center/Institute Proposal and completed Request to Plan, except when eliminating or consolidating)

_____ **5. Re-titling an academic, administrative, or research unit**

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ACADEMIC PROPOSAL REQUEST FORM

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CURRICULUM PROPOSAL FORM

1. **Institutional Accreditation.** Is the proposal considered a minor or major substantive change per NWCCU Guidelines? Consult the institutional Accreditation Liaison Officer for more information. *[Choose one]*

   Not Substantive_____ Minor Change_____ Major Change__X___

2. **Program Accreditation.** If applicable, describe specialized program accreditation requirements that inform this proposal, including the specific accrediting body and a summary of the standards being met. *[300 words]*

   No outside or specialized accreditation is required for this program.

3. **Program Summary: List** the program learning outcomes for the proposed program. Use assessable learner-centered statements that indicate what students will know and be able to do, upon completing the program.
   1. Apply technical mathematics to perform calculations and measurements required for broadband installation, construction, and field operations.
   2. Produce clear and accurate technical documentation using written communication and digital tools commonly used in broadband and construction-related workplaces.
   3. Demonstrate foundational knowledge of business and project practices, including basic budgeting, scheduling, recordkeeping, and professional workplace expectations.
   4. Explain and support broadband construction activities by applying introductory construction management principles, job-site coordination practices, and safety requirements.
   5. Use productivity and data management software to organize materials, track inventory, and support documentation for splicing, heavy equipment operations, and warehousing functions.

   a. List the aggregate credits required to complete the program using the following table.

	Credits
Credits in required courses offered by the department offering the program	16-19
Credits in required courses offered by other departments	9
Credits in institutional general education curriculum	6
Credits of free electives	0
Total credits required to complete the program	31-34

   b. Please include a complete listing of the proposed new curriculum in Appendix A of this document.

Attached.

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CURRICULUM PROPOSAL FORM

4. **Need for the program.** What specific student, regional, and statewide needs is the institution responding to with the proposed program? How will the proposed program meet those needs? Consider workforce, student, economic, societal, and transfer needs in your response as appropriate. *[250 words]*

Montana's economy and communities depend on rapid broadband expansion, yet the state faces a significant shortage of skilled workers in the industry. Employers report difficulty filling positions that require technical expertise in heavy equipment operation, splicing, and inventory management.

The proposed programs respond to these workforce needs by providing students with hands-on training and industry-recognized credentials in HEO, fiber splicing, and warehousing. These skills align with statewide priorities for digital equity and economic development.

For students, the programs offer accessible pathways to family-sustaining wages and opportunities for advancement in a growing industry. For the region, they strengthen the talent pipeline needed to accelerate broadband deployment, supporting economic resilience and community connectivity.

5. **Similar programs.** Use the table below to identify and describe the relationship between any similar programs within the Montana University System.

Institution Name	Degree	Program Title	What is the program enrollment for the last three academic years?
Missoula College	CAS	Heavy Equipment Operation CAS	FY23-11 FY24-14 FY25- 9
FVCC	CTS	Heavy Equipment Operation CTS	FY23-25 FY24-28 FY25- 25

a. Describe how this program's learning outcomes are related or tied to other programs on campus or within the Montana University System. *[100 words]*

This program is not similar to other programs on campus or within the Montana University System. This program is designed as further education for the 3 broadband focused CTS programs to be offered at Highlands College.

b. If the proposed program substantially duplicates another program offered in the Montana University System, provide a rationale as to why any resulting duplication is a net benefit to the state and its citizens. *[200 words]*

This program does have significant duplication to other MUS programs.

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CURRICULUM PROPOSAL FORM

c. Describe any efforts that were made to collaborate with similar programs at other institutions, including specific contacts and their institutional affiliations. If no efforts were made, please explain why. *[200 words]*

Highlands College worked alongside Missoula College and FVCC to develop this program. The two consortium colleges are supportive of Highlands College implementing this program, and this may end up being a shared program among these colleges if Missoula and/or FVCC choose to implement this program.

6. Program assessment.

a. Describe the assessment process that will be used to evaluate how well students are achieving the intended learning outcomes of the program. When will assessment activities occur and at what frequency? Refer to specialized program accreditation assessments where appropriate. *[150 words]*

This program will use direct performance assessments and industry certification exams to measure student achievement of learning outcomes. Students will complete hands-on evaluations operating heavy equipment, demonstrating safety practices, and performing tasks aligned with commercial construction and broadband installation standards.

b. What direct and indirect measures will be used to assess student learning? *[100 words]*

Direct measures will include hands-on performance evaluations and practical exams and successful completion of industry-recognized certifications.

Indirect measures will include student self-assessments, course evaluations, and employer feedback gathered during internships or job placements. Graduate employment rates and credential attainment data will also be analyzed. Together, these measures provide a comprehensive view of student learning and program effectiveness.

c. How will you ensure that the assessment findings will be used to ensure the quality of the program? *[100 words]*

Data collection will be managed by institutional research, and that data will be used to move the program forward continuously improving based on student and industry feedback.

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CURRICULUM PROPOSAL FORM

Faculty will review assessment data annually and consult with industry partners to ensure alignment with workforce needs. Continuous improvement will follow best practices and incorporate feedback from employers and advisory committees.

Assessment results will be reviewed by faculty and the program advisory committee to identify strengths and areas for improvement. Findings will inform curriculum updates, instructional strategies, and equipment needs to ensure alignment with industry standards and employer expectations. Annual program reviews will incorporate student performance data, certification pass rates, and employer feedback to guide continuous improvement. These reviews will ensure the program remains responsive to workforce demands and maintains high standards of student learning.

Signature/Date

College or School Dean:

Chief Academic Officer:

Montana Board of Regents
CURRICULUM PROPOSAL FORM

Appendix A – Proposed New Curriculum

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CURRICULUM PROPOSAL FORM

Highlands Broadband Curriculum

3 Certificate of Technical Studies (CTS) programs to be offered at Highlands College.

Heavy Equipment Operations CTS

- COMX 106 - Communicating in a Dynamic Workplace (3cr)
- CSTN 125 - Safety Certifications (3)
- HEO 100 - Commercial Truck Driver (3)
- PLTT120 - Into to Broadband (2cr)
- HEO 105 - Introduction to Heavy Equipment Operator (7cr)
- HEO 131 - Utility Location - (1cr)

Total: 19 credits

Splicing CTS

- COMX 106 - Communicating in a Dynamic Workplace (3cr)
- CSTN 125 - Safety Certifications (3)
- PLTT120 - Into to Broadband (2cr)
- PLTT122 - Fiber Optic Technician Training (4cr)
- ETEC 101 - AC/DC Electronics (3cr)
- HEO 131 - Utility Location - (1cr)

Total: 16 credits

Warehousing CTS

- COMX 106 - Communicating in a Dynamic Workplace (3cr)
- CSTN 125 - Safety Certifications (3)
- HEO 105 - Introduction to Heavy Equipment Operator (7cr)
- PLTT120 - Into to Broadband (2cr) OR HEO 100 - Commercial Driver's License (3cr)
- CSTN 135 - Basic Rigging (1cr)

Total: 16 to 17 credits

If desired or needed, students can stack the CTS and continue on to a Certificate of Applied Science (CAS)

Stack CTS into a to Certificate of Applied Science (CAS)

Broadband Technology CAS

- M105 OR M 121 OR M 111 - Technical Mathematics (3cr)
- WRIT 100 OR WRIT 101 OR WRIT 121 - Introduction to Technical Writing (3cr)
- BGEN 105 - Introduction to Business (3cr) OR HEO 100
- CAPP 131 - Basics MS Office OR CAPP 156 - MS Excel (3cr)
- ECIV 102 - Introduction to Construction Management (3cr)

Total of 15 credits

Academic Degree Program Proposal - Fiscal Analysis Form

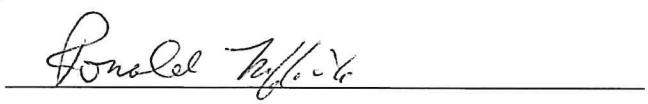
CAMPUS:	Highlands College
AWARD LEVEL:	CTS
PROGRAM NAME:	Heavy Equipment Operation, Splicing and Warehousing
PROGRAM CODE:	

ENROLLMENT PROJECTIONS	FY 2027	FY 2028	FY 2029	FY 2030	
Headcount					
annual unduplicated headcount of students with declared major or minor within the program	40	40	40	40	
Credit Hours					
annual avg. credits hours earned per student in program related curriculum	22	22	22	22	
Student FTE					
Undergrad: (Headcount x CH)/30 Graduate: (Headcount x CH)/24	29.8	29.8	29.8	29.8	
Completions					
Annual number of program completers	36	36	36	36	

REVENUE					
(Tuition (90% Instate,10% WUE , 0% Out of State)	$65,419	$65,419	$65,419	$65,419	$0
Waiver	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
Tuition Revenue (net of waivers)	$65,419	$65,419	$65,419	$65,419	$0
Institutional Support					
Other Outside Funds (grants, gifts, etc.)	$857,380	$610,702	$620,732	$628,363	
Program Tuition/Fees	$168,742	$168,742	$168,742	$168,742	$0
Total Revenue	**$1,091,541**	**$844,863**	**$854,893**	**$862,524**	**$0**
Total Revenue per Student FTE	**$36,656**	**$28,372**	**$28,709**	**$28,965**	

EXPENDITURES						
Tenure Track Faculty	FTE					
	Salary + Benefits	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
Non-tenure Track Faculty *Includes Adjunct Instructors	FTE	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	
	Salary + Benefits	$138,700	$141,474	$144,303	$147,190	
Graduate Teaching Assistants	FTE					
	Salary + Benefits					
Staff- Project Director, Project Navigator, CDL Instructor & Adjunct	FTE	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	
	Salary + Benefits	$218,081	$218,536	$222,748	$227,122	$0
Total Faculty & Staff	FTE	**3.5**	**3.5**	**3.5**	**3.5**	**0.0**
	Salary + Benefits	**$356,781**	**$360,010**	**$367,051**	**$374,312**	**$0**
Operations (supplies, travel, rent, etc)		$500,599	$250,692	$253,681	$254,051	
Start-up Expenses (OTO)						
Total Expenses		**$857,380**	**$610,702**	**$620,732**	**$628,363**	
Student FTE to Faculty (TT + NTT) Ratio						
Net Income/Deficit (Revenue - Expenses)		**$234,161**	**$234,161**	**$234,161**	**$234,161**	**$0**

The signature of the campus Chief Financial Officer signifies that he/she has reviewed and assessed the fiscal soundness of the proposal and provided his/her recommendations to the Chief Academic Officer as necessary.



Campus Chief Financial Officer Signature

Chief Financial Officer Comments

Tuition revenue is based on 90% in-state residents & 10% WUE.

This program is being supported by a 4-year grant. A plan will be developed either to create a self-funded community training type of program, or a for credit program with a tuition and fee structure to support the program after the grant funding is no longer in place.

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FISCAL ANALYSIS PART 2

Instructions: This form is the narrative component to explain the numbers in the fiscal analysis spreadsheet. Please note that no proposal is resource neutral and new programs and units will ultimately have some fiscal or administrative impact existing programs and units.

1. **Implementation.** When will the proposed program or unit begin operations? What is the initial capacity? If implementation will occur in phases, please describe the phased implementation plans. *[100 words]*

   The Strengthening Community Colleges (SCC) grant is supporting the development of three micro pathways (CTS degrees) in Broadband Technology to include Heavy Equipment Operation (HEO), Splicing, and Warehousing. These programs will be offered in a staggered fashion (see attached documentation) over the next four years with the expectation of starting in the Summer of 2026. Each micro credential can be taken as single Certificate of Technical Studies or stacked to a Certificate of Applied Science in Broadband Technology.

   a. For academic programs, complete the following table indicating the projected enrollments in and graduates from the proposed program (see attached spreadsheet for additional detail).

Fall Headcount Enrollment					Graduates				
AY__26_	AY_27__	AY_28__	AY_29__	AY__30_	AY_26__	AY_27__	AY__28_	AY_29__	AY__30_
30	40	40	40		26	36	36	36	

   b. Describe the methodology and sources for determining the enrollment and graduation projections above. *[200 words]*

   The SCC grant is focused on upskilling current employees as well as training new individuals seeking to enter into the broadband installation field. The expectation is to admit 10 students in the summer of 2026 in the HEO program and subsequently add students in splicing and warehousing in the fall. These may or may not be the same students if they choose to complete all three CTS programs. Students who wish to complete the full CAS will be given the option to complete an additional 15 credits of general education courses online so they can start employment and complete their full degree online. These pathways have been designed with oversight from our industrial advisory board which includes key employers in the broadband sector. This is currently a high demand industry and with the influx of funds from the BEAD program, we predict these to be sustainable programs in the distant future. Due to the fact that broadband implementation is happening across the State of Montana and the goal is to make training available even to rural areas which may result in enrollment being much higher than listed above but this is the baseline goal.

Montana Board of Regents

FISCAL ANALYSIS PART 2

2. Physical resources.

a. List needed facilities, equipment, space, laboratory instruments, etc., that must be obtained to support the proposed program or unit. (Enter the costs of those physical resources into the budget sheet.) How will the need for these additional resources be met? [150 words]

- Highlands College will use existing facilities, classrooms and campus grounds for this training.
- Highlands College will use grant funding to purchase the following heavy equipment:
  - Skid Steer ($75,000)
  - Backhoe ($105,000)
  - Mini Excavator ($80,000)
  - Loader ($165,000)
  - Directional Boring Machine ($50,000)
  - Mobile splicing van ($100,000)
  - Splicing Machinery ($20,000)
  - Tractor Trailer for CDL (65,000)
  - Laptop and hot spot for mobile lab ($3500)
  - Lab Tools for Splicing Lab -$20,000
  - Forklift for Warehousing - $30,000

b. Describe the existing facilities, equipment, space, laboratory instruments, computer(s), or other physical equipment available to support successful implementation. What will the impact on of increased use of physical resources on existing programs or units? How will the increased use be accommodated? [200 words]

The Broadband program will require use of Highlands College which can provide adequate classroom space to accommodate student learning. This will not affect any other campus programming. As the college sits on 40 acres of land this will also provide an outdoor lab environment for live training of heavy equipment operation. We currently have availability of secured storage space for the heavy equipment.

3. Personnel resources.

a. Identify <u>new</u> personnel that must be hired to support the proposed program. (Enter the costs of those personnel resources into the budget sheet.) What are the anticipated sources or plans to secure the needed qualified faculty and staff? *[150 words]*

The grant supports the funding for the following personnel (for 4 years): There is funding for a 1 FTE position for a full-time faculty for this program. There is also funding for a 1FTE position for a Student Navigator (Advisor). In addition, the program will fund a CDL instructor (to be paid hourly) and additional funding for adjunct instructors where needed for very specialized courses. Summer compensation may be required based on summer course offerings.

b. Describe the <u>existing</u> instructional, support, and administrative resources available to support the successful implementation. What will the impact on of increased use of increased use of existing personnel resources on existing programs or units? How will quality and productivity of existing programs be maintained? *[200 words]*

Montana Board of Regents
FISCAL ANALYSIS PART 2

Due to the limited number of students in these programs, there should be little impact on the existing resources to support this program. Quality and productivity will be maintained by the Dean, Department Head and Faculty overseeing this program. Administrative support will also be provided by current Highlands College staff on an as needed basis.

4. Other resources.

a. Are the available library and information resources adequate? If not, how will adequate resources be obtained? *[100 words]*

As this is a primarily skill-based program library resources should be minimal but with our current library availability of online resources Highlands College will provide any support needed by these students.

b. Do existing student services have the capacity to accommodate the proposed program or unit? What are the implications of the new program or unit on services for the rest of the student body? *[150 words]*

There should be little to no impact on existing students and existing student services should be able to support the expected increase of students without difficulty.

5. Revenues and expenditures. Describe the implications of the new program on the financial situation of the institution. *[100 words]*

This program will be grant funded for four years so there will be little to no impact to the institution. A strategic plan will be developed to determine how this program will be funded in the future. It may be that this becomes self-funded as more of a community education program or if it remains credit bearing, there will be a fee system in place to support the instructor and equipment replacement.

a. Describe any expenses anticipated with the implementation of the new program. How will these expenses be met? *[200 words]*

i. If funding is to come from the reallocation of existing state appropriated funds, please indicate the sources of the reallocation. What impact will the reallocation of funds in support of the program have on other programs? *[150 words]*

This is not being state funded at this time. All funds are coming from a grant source.

ii. If an increase in base funding is required to fund the program, indicate the amount of additional base funding and the fiscal year when the institution plans to include the base funding in the department's budget.

There will be no increase in base funding. All funds are coming from a grant source.

Montana Board of Regents
FISCAL ANALYSIS PART 2

iii. If the funding is to come from one-time sources such as a donation, indicate the sources of other funding. What are the institution's plans for sustaining the program when that funding ends? *[150 words]*

This is not being funded by a donation but is being supported by a 4-year grant. As stated above, a plan will be developed either to create a self-funded community training type of program, or a for credit program with a tuition and fee structure to support the program after the grant funding is no longer in place.

iv. Describe the federal grant, other grant(s), special fee arrangements, or contract(s) that will be valid to fund the program. What does the institution propose to do with the program upon termination of those funds? *[150 words]*

This program is being funded by the Strengthening Community Colleges grant that was awarded in January of 2025 with an overall award of $5.75M.

6. Student fees.
The following course fees will be added in order to support CDL operating program fees (instruction, equipment maintenance etc.), certification costs which require Highlands College to bring in outside specialists for training, and materials for fiberoptic training (wiring etc.).

Course	**Fee**
COMX106 - Communicating in a Dynamic Workplace	May already exist?
HEO100 – Commercial Truck Driver	$2500
CSTN 125 – Safety and Certifications	$300
PLTT120 – Intro to Broadband	$0
HEO105 – Into to Heavy Equipment Operator	$1000
PLTT 122 Fiber Optic Technician Training (Splicing)	$100
ETEC 101 – AC/DC Electronics	$0
CSTN 135 – Basic Rigging	$0
M 111 – Technical Mathematics	$0

Montana Board of Regents

FISCAL ANALYSIS PART 2

WRIT 100 - Composing Mindfully OR WRIT 101 College Writing OR WRIT 121 - Introduction to Technical Writing	$25
BGEN 105 – Into to Business	$0
CAPP 131 – Basics MS Office	$0
CAPP 156 – MS Excel	$0
ECIV 102 – Intro to Construction Management	$0

This form must be accompanied by the fiscal analysis form.

Courses in Proposed Program- HEO	Credits	Term
COMX 106 - Communicating in a Dynamic Workplace	3	Fall 2026
CSTN 125 - Safety Certifications	3	Fall 2026
HEO 100 - Commercial Driver's License	3	Fall 2026
PLTT 120 - Into to Broadband	2	Fall 2026
HEO 105 - Introduction to Heavy Equipment Operator	7	Fall 2026
PLTT 122 - Utility Location	1	Fall 2026

Courses in Proposed Program- Splicing	Credits	Term
COMX 106 - Communicating in a Dynamic Workplace	3	Fall 2026
CSTN 125 - Safety Certifications	3	Fall 2026
PLTT 120 - Into to Broadband	2	Fall 2026
PLTT 131 - Utility Location	1	Fall 2026
PLTT122 - Fiber Optic Technician Training	4	Fall 2026

Montana Board of Regents
FISCAL ANALYSIS PART 2

ETEC 101 - AC/DC Electronics	3	Fall 2026

Courses in Proposed - Warehousing	**Credits**	**Term**
COMX 106 - Communicating in a Dynamic Workplace	3	Fall 2026
CSTN 125 - Safety Certifications	3	Fall 2026
HEO 105 - Introduction to Heavy Equipment Operator	7	Fall 2026
PLTT 120 - Into to Broadband OR HEO 100 - Commercial Driver's License	2 to 3	Fall 2026
CSTN 135 - Basic Rigging	1	Fall 2026

Additional Courses for CAS	**Credits**	**Term**
M 111 - Technical Mathematics	3	Fall 2026
WRIT 100 - Composing Mindfully OR WRIT 101 College Writing OR WRIT 121 - Introduction to Technical Writing	3	Fall 2026
BGEN 105 - Introduction to Business	3	Fall 2026
CAPP 131 - Basics MS Office OR CAPP 156 - MS Excel	3	Fall 2026
ECIV 102 - Introduction to Construction Management	3	Fall 2026

Montana Board of Regents
FISCAL ANALYSIS PART 2

Signature/Date

College or School Dean:

Chief Academic Officer:

Chief Executive Officer:

Flagship Provost*:

Flagship President*:

*Not applicable to the Community Colleges.

Montana Board of Regents

FISCAL ANALYSIS PART 2

Appendix A – Proposed New Curriculum

See attached

Montana Board of Regents

ACADEMIC PROPOSAL REQUEST FORM

SUBMISSION: 02/2026

ITEM: 1502-LII0326

Request for authorization to establish a CTS in Heavy Equipment Operations

Institution: **Montana Technological University** CIP Code: **49.0202**

Program/Center/Institute Title: **Highlands College**

Includes (please specify below): Face-to-face Offering: X Online Offering: ____ Blended Offering: X

Options: ____

Proposal Summary [360 words maximum]

What: Highlands College has been tasked by the U.S. Department of Labor to implement short, stackable courses in the area of Broadband installation. Through the established Advisory Board, it has been determined that Heavy Equipment Operations (HEO) is a critical sector for the industry.

Why: Western Montana faces a significant digital divide where 1 in 3 residents do not have access to reliable internet connectivity. This program will help build a strong broadband labor force to address workforce needs.

Resources: The program will require the purchase of at least 2 pieces of equipment which will be covered by the Strengthening Community Colleges Grant. In addition, we may have to supplement physical machinery with a heavy machinery simulator. This cost can also be covered by the SCC Grant. Highlands College already has the adequate classroom and outdoor space needed for this program.

ATTACHMENTS

Curriculum Proposal from
Fiscal Analysis form

Please mark the appropriate type of request and submit with any additional materials, including those listed in parentheses following the type of request. For more information pertaining to the types of requests listed below, how to complete an item request, or additional forms please visit http://mus.edu/che/arsa/academicproposals.asp.

____ **A. Level I:**

OCHE Notification

____ **1a. Placing a postsecondary educational program into moratorium** (Program Termination and Moratorium Form)

____ **1b. Withdrawing a postsecondary educational program from moratorium**

Montana Board of Regents
ACADEMIC PROPOSAL REQUEST FORM

2. Re-titling, terminating or revising a campus certificate of 29 credits or less

3. Offering an existing postsecondary educational program via distance or online delivery

OCHE Approvals

4. Re-titling an existing postsecondary educational program

5. Terminating an existing postsecondary educational program (Program Termination and Moratorium Form)

6. Consolidating existing postsecondary educational programs (Curriculum Proposal Form)

7. Establishing a new minor where there is a major or an option in a major (Curriculum Proposal Form)

8. Revising a postsecondary educational program (Curriculum Proposal Form)

9. Establishing a temporary C.A.S. or A.A.S. degree program Approval limited to 2 years

10. Withdrawing a postsecondary program from moratorium

11. Establishing a campus certificate of 29 credits or less (Curriculum Proposal Form)

B. Level II:

X **1. Establishing a new postsecondary educational program** (Curriculum Proposal and Completed Request to Plan Form)

2. Requesting Permanent authorization for a temporary C.A.S. or A.A.S degree program (Curriculum Proposal and Completed Request to Plan Form)

3. Requesting a variation of the 120-credit baccalaureate degrees *Exception to policy 301.11*

4. Forming, eliminating or consolidating an academic, administrative, or research unit (Curriculum or Center/Institute Proposal and completed Request to Plan, except when eliminating or consolidating)

5. Re-titling an academic, administrative, or research unit

Montana Board of Regents

CURRICULUM PROPOSAL FORM

1. **Institutional Accreditation.** Is the proposal considered a minor or major substantive change per NWCCU Guidelines? Consult the institutional Accreditation Liaison Officer for more information. *[Choose one]*

   Not Substantive_____ Minor Change_____ Major Change__ X

2. **Program Accreditation.** If applicable, describe specialized program accreditation requirements that inform this proposal, including the specific accrediting body and a summary of the standards being met. *[300 words]*

   This program will be offered as a CTS in Heavy Equipment Operation which will not require accreditation; however, this program will be able to be accompanied by 15 additional credits to become a Certificate of Applied Science which will receive NWCCU accreditation.

3. **Program Summary:** List the program learning outcomes for the proposed program. Use assessable learner-centered statements that indicate what students will know and be able to do, upon completing the program.
   1. Students will be able to safely operate various types of heavy equipment typically used in commercial construction industry including broadband.
   2. Students will earn multiple industry recognized credentials in areas of safety, rigging, flagging and commercial truck driving.
   3. Students will gain an understanding of effective communication methods.
   4. Students will gain basic understanding of utility location and the broadband industry.

   a. List the aggregate credits required to complete the program using the following table. For the CTS therequired credits will be as follows:

	Credits
Credits in required courses offered by the department offering the program	16
Credits in required courses offered by other departments	0
Credits in institutional general education curriculum	3
Credits of free electives	0
Total credits required to complete the program	19

CAS Requirements will be as follows:

	Credits
Credits in required courses offered by the department offering the program	16
Credits in required courses offered by other departments (construction)	3

Montana Board of Regents

CURRICULUM PROPOSAL FORM

Credits in institutional general education curriculum	12
Credits of free electives	0
Total credits required to complete the program	31

b. Please include a complete listing of the proposed new curriculum in Appendix A of this document.

See attached document.

4. **Need for the program.** What specific student, regional, and statewide needs is the institution responding to with the proposed program? How will the proposed program meet those needs? Consider workforce, student, economic, societal, and transfer needs in your response as appropriate. *[250 words]*

Montana's economy and communities depend on rapid broadband expansion, yet the state faces a significant shortage of skilled workers in the industry. Employers report difficulty filling positions that require technical expertise in heavy equipment operation, splicing and inventory management.

The proposed programs respond to these workforce needs by providing students with hands-on training and industry-recognized credentials in HEO, fiber splicing and warehousing. These skills align with statewide priorities for digital equity and economic development.

For students, the programs offer accessible pathways to family-sustaining wages and opportunities for advancement in a growing industry. For the region, they strengthen the talent pipeline needed to accelerate broadband deployment, supporting economic resilience and community connectivity.

5. **Similar programs.** Use the table below to identify and describe the relationship between any similar programs within the Montana University System.

Institution Name	Degree	Program Title	What is the program enrollment for the last three academic years?
Missoula College	AAS	Heavy Equipment Operation	
FVCC	CTS	Heavy Equipment Operator	FY23-25 FY24-28 FY25- 25

Montana Board of Regents

CURRICULUM PROPOSAL FORM

a. Describe how this program's learning outcomes are related or tied to other programs on campus or within the Montana University System. *[100 words]*

This program is not similar to other programs on campus, but is similar to the Heavy Equipment Operation programs offered by both Missoula College and FVCC. Highlands College received the SCC (Strengthening Community Colleges) grant with Missoula College and FCCC being sub awardees. All three colleges have agreed to offer short-term training in Heavy Equipment Operation in order to meet the requirements of the grant and the current need in industry. Projected need for this training is at least 10 years.

b. If the proposed program substantially duplicates another program offered in the Montana University System, provide a rationale as to why any resulting duplication is a net benefit to the state and its citizens. *[200 words]*

Due to the high demand of the Broadband field, in addition to the high demand of construction trades, heavy equipment operators are highly needed. Currently there are 430 annual job openings and a projected growth of 19%. (MTDLI Analysis of 2023 OEWS and occupational projections 2023-2033).

Detailed Occupation	Employment	Average Wage	Total Annual Openings 2023-2033	Projected Growth 2023-2033
Carpenters	3,990	$50,320	670	22%
First Line Supervisors	3,870	$76,140	640	22%
Construction Laborers	3,780	$47,590	700	25%
Electricians	2,390	$63,090	380	27%
Operating Engineers & Equipment Operators	2,030	$61,440	430	19%
Office Clerks	1,870	$41,600	1,500	3%
Construction Managers	1,460	$112,080	190	23%
Plumbers, Pipefitters, and Steamfitters	1,420	$75,100	270	22%
HVAC & Refrigeration Mechanics	1,120	$51,900	160	26%
Painters	990	$46,860	160	22%

c. Describe any efforts that were made to collaborate with similar programs at other institutions, including specific contacts and their institutional affiliations. If no efforts were made, please explain why. *[200 words]*

Highlands College worked alongside Missoula College and FVCC to develop this program. The two consortium colleges are supportive of Highlands College implementing this program and Tom Gallagher and John Freer of Missoula College and Jane Karas and Lisa Blank of FVCC are all involved in this initiative and passionate about filling the current workforce shortages in this area to help not only the broadband industry but other construction industries as well. Both FVCC and Missoula College benefited from this grant opportunity by receiving funding, equipment and access to industry feedback to help further their programs.

Montana Board of Regents
CURRICULUM PROPOSAL FORM

6. Program assessment.

a. Describe the assessment process that will be used to evaluate how well students are achieving the intended learning outcomes of the program. When will assessment activities occur and at what frequency? Refer to specialized program accreditation assessments where appropriate. *[150 words]*

The HEO CTS program will use direct performance assessments and industry certification exams to measure student achievement of learning outcomes. Students will complete hands-on evaluations operating heavy equipment, demonstrating safety practices, and performing tasks aligned with commercial construction and broadband installation standards. Successful attainment of credentials such as OSHA 10, ATTSA flagging, and CDL will serve as key indicators of competency.

b. What direct and indirect measures will be used to assess student learning? *[100 words]*

Direct measures will include hands-on performance evaluations of heavy equipment operation, practical exams on safety and rigging, and successful completion of industry-recognized certifications such as OSHA 10, ATTSA flagging, and CDL. These assessments confirm technical competency and adherence to industry standards.

Indirect measures will include student self-assessments, course evaluations, and employer feedback gathered during internships or job placements. Graduate employment rates and credential attainment data will also be analyzed. Together, these measures provide a comprehensive view of student learning and program effectiveness.

c. How will you ensure that the assessment findings will be used to ensure the quality of the program? *[100 words]*

Data collection will be managed by institutional research and that data will be used to move the program forward continuously improving based on student and industry feedback.

Faculty will review assessment data annually and consult with industry partners to ensure alignment with workforce needs. Continuous improvement will follow best practices and incorporate feedback from employers and advisory committees.

Assessment results will be reviewed by faculty and the program advisory committee to identify strengths and areas for improvement. Findings will inform curriculum updates, instructional strategies, and equipment needs to ensure alignment with industry standards and employer expectations. Annual program reviews will incorporate student performance data, certification pass rates, and employer feedback to guide continuous improvement. These reviews will ensure the program remains responsive to workforce demands and maintains high standards of student learning.

Montana Board of Regents

CURRICULUM PROPOSAL FORM

Signature/Date

College or School Dean:

Chief Academic Officer:

Montana Board of Regents

CURRICULUM PROPOSAL FORM

Appendix A – Proposed New Curriculum

HEO CTS Curriculum	
COMX 106 - Communicating in a Dynamic Workplace	3
OSH 120 - Safety Certifications	3
HEO 100 - Commercial Driver's License	3
PLTT 120 - Into to Broadband	2
HEO 105 - Introduction to Heavy Equipment Operator	7
HEO 131 - Utility Location	1
Broadband Technology CAS Curriculum	
M 111 - Technical Mathematics	**3**
WRIT 121 - Introduction to Technical Writing	3
BGEN 105 - Introduction to Business	3
CAPP 131 - Basics MS Office OR CAPP 156 - MS Excel	3
ECIV 102 - Introduction to Construction Management	3

Academic Degree Program Proposal - Fiscal Analysis Form

CAMPUS:	Highlands College
AWARD LEVEL:	CTS
PROGRAM NAME:	Heavy Equipment Operation, Splicing and Warehousing
PROGRAM CODE:	

ENROLLMENT PROJECTIONS	FY 2027	FY 2028	FY 2029	FY 2030	
Headcount					
annual unduplicated headcount of students with declared major or minor within the program	40	40	40	40	
Credit Hours					
annual avg. credits hours earned per student in program related curriculum	22	22	22	22	
Student FTE					
Undergrad: (Headcount x CH)/30 Graduate: (Headcount x CH)/24	29.8	29.8	29.8	29.8	
Completions					
Annual number of program completers	36	36	36	36	

REVENUE					
(Tuition (90% Instate,10% WUE , 0% Out of State)	$65,419	$65,419	$65,419	$65,419	$0
Waiver	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
Tuition Revenue (net of waivers)	$65,419	$65,419	$65,419	$65,419	$0
Institutional Support					
Other Outside Funds (grants, gifts, etc.)	$857,380	$610,702	$620,732	$628,363	
Program Tuition/Fees	$168,742	$168,742	$168,742	$168,742	$0
Total Revenue	**$1,091,541**	**$844,863**	**$854,893**	**$862,524**	**$0**
Total Revenue per Student FTE	**$36,656**	**$28,372**	**$28,709**	**$28,965**	

EXPENDITURES						
Tenure Track Faculty	FTE					
	Salary + Benefits	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
Non-tenure Track Faculty *Includes Adjunct Instructors	FTE	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	
	Salary + Benefits	$138,700	$141,474	$144,303	$147,190	
Graduate Teaching Assistants	FTE					
	Salary + Benefits					
Staff- Project Director, Project Navigator, CDL Instructor & Adjunct	FTE	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	
	Salary + Benefits	$218,081	$218,536	$222,748	$227,122	$0
Total Faculty & Staff	FTE	**3.5**	**3.5**	**3.5**	**3.5**	**0.0**
	Salary + Benefits	**$356,781**	**$360,010**	**$367,051**	**$374,312**	**$0**
Operations (supplies, travel, rent, etc)		$500,599	$250,692	$253,681	$254,051	
Start-up Expenses (OTO)						
Total Expenses		**$857,380**	**$610,702**	**$620,732**	**$628,363**	
Student FTE to Faculty (TT + NTT) Ratio						
Net Income/Deficit (Revenue - Expenses)		**$234,161**	**$234,161**	**$234,161**	**$234,161**	**$0**

The signature of the campus Chief Financial Officer signifies that he/she has reviewed and assessed the fiscal soundness of the proposal and provided his/her recommendations to the Chief Academic Officer as necessary.

Ronald Tafoya

Campus Chief Financial Officer Signature

Chief Financial Officer Comments

Tuition revenue is based on 90% in-state residents & 10% WUE.

This program is being supported by a 4-year grant. A plan will be developed either to create a self-funded community training type of program, or a for credit program with a tuition and fee structure to support the program after the grant funding is no longer in place.

Montana Board of Regents

ACADEMIC PROPOSAL REQUEST FORM

SUBMISSION 02/2026

ITEM 1503-LII0326

Request for authorization to establish a CTS in Fiber Splicing

Institution: **Montana Technological University** CIP Code: **15.0305**

Program/Center/Institute Title: **Highlands College**

Includes (please specify below): Face-to-face Offering: X Online Offering: _____ Blended Offering: X

Options: _____

Proposal Summary [360 words maximum]

What: Highlands College has been tasked by the U.S. Department of Labor to implement short, stackable courses in the area of Broadband installation. Through the established Advisory Board, it has been determined that Fiber Splicing is a critical sector for the industry.

Why: Western Montana faces a significant digital divide where 1 in 3 residents do not have access to reliable internet connectivity. This program will help build a strong broadband workforce to address workforce needs.

Resources: The program will require the purchase of splicing equipment which will be covered by the Strengthening Community Colleges Grant. In addition, a mobile lab will be procured and launched by Highlands College. This will give access to learners who cannot attend in person training. This cost can also be covered by the SCC Grant. Highlands College already has the adequate classroom and outdoor space needed for this program.

ATTACHMENTS

Curriculum Proposal form
Fiscal Analysis form

Please mark the appropriate type of request and submit with any additional materials, including those listed in parentheses following the type of request. For more information pertaining to the types of requests listed below, how to complete an item request, or additional forms please visit http://mus.edu/che/arsa/academicproposals.asp.

____ A. Level I:

OCHE Notification

____ **1a. Placing a postsecondary educational program into moratorium** (Program Termination and Moratorium Form)

____ **1b. Withdrawing a postsecondary educational program from moratorium**

Montana Board of Regents
ACADEMIC PROPOSAL REQUEST FORM

2. Re-titling, terminating or revising a campus certificate of 29 credits or less

3. Offering an existing postsecondary educational program via distance or online delivery

OCHE Approvals

4. Re-titling an existing postsecondary educational program

5. Terminating an existing postsecondary educational program (Program Termination and Moratorium Form)

6. Consolidating existing postsecondary educational programs (Curriculum Proposal Form)

7. Establishing a new minor where there is a major or an option in a major (Curriculum Proposal Form)

8. Revising a postsecondary educational program (Curriculum Proposal Form)

9. Establishing a temporary C.A.S. or A.A.S. degree program Approval limited to 2 years

10. Withdrawing a postsecondary program from moratorium

11. Establishing a campus certificate of 29 credits or less (Curriculum Proposal Form)

B. Level II:

X **1. Establishing a new postsecondary educational program** (Curriculum Proposal and Completed Request to Plan Form)

2. Requesting Permanent authorization for a temporary C.A.S. or A.A.S degree program (Curriculum Proposal and Completed Request to Plan Form)

3. Requesting a variation of the 120-credit baccalaureate degrees *Exception to policy 301.11*

4. Forming, eliminating or consolidating an academic, administrative, or research unit (Curriculum or Center/Institute Proposal and completed Request to Plan, except when eliminating or consolidating)

5. Re-titling an academic, administrative, or research unit

Montana Board of Regents

CURRICULUM PROPOSAL FORM

1. **Institutional Accreditation.** Is the proposal considered a minor or major substantive change per NWCCU Guidelines? Consult the institutional Accreditation Liaison Officer for more information. *[Choose one]*

   Not Substantive_____ Minor Change_____ Major Change__ X

2. **Program Accreditation.** If applicable, describe specialized program accreditation requirements that inform this proposal, including the specific accrediting body and a summary of the standards being met. *[300 words]*

   No outside or specialized accreditation is required for this program.

3. **Program Summary:** List the program learning outcomes for the proposed program. Use assessable learner-centered statements that indicate what students will know and be able to do, upon completing the program. **Upon Completion of this program students will be able to:**

   1. Students will demonstrate the ability to safely handle fiber optic cables, tools, and equipment used in splicing operations.
   2. Students will perform fiber optic splicing and testing procedures to meet industry standards for signal integrity and broadband performance.
   3. Students will earn credentials in fiber optic splicing and safety, ensuring compliance with recognized broadband installation standards.
   4. Students will develop effective communication and documentation skills for reporting splice results, troubleshooting, and coordinating with field teams.
   5. Students will gain a foundational understanding of fiber network architecture, utility location practices, and installation requirements.

   a. List the aggregate credits required to complete the program using the following table.

      For the CTS the required credits will be as follows:

	Credits
Credits in required courses offered by the department offering the program	13
Credits in required courses offered by other departments	0
Credits in institutional general education curriculum	3
Credits of free electives	0
Total credits required to complete the program	16

Montana Board of Regents
CURRICULUM PROPOSAL FORM

CAS Requirements will be as follows:

	Credits
Credits in required courses offered by the department offering the program	15
Credits in required courses offered by other departments (construction)	
Credits in institutional general education curriculum	15
Credits of free electives	0
Total credits required to complete the program	30

b. Please include a complete listing of the proposed new curriculum in Appendix A of this document.

See attached document.

4. **Need for the program.** What specific student, regional, and statewide needs is the institution responding to with the proposed program? How will the proposed program meet those needs? Consider workforce, student, economic, societal, and transfer needs in your response as appropriate. *[250 words]*

Montana's economy and communities depend on rapid broadband expansion, yet the state faces a significant shortage of skilled workers in the industry. Employers report difficulty filling positions that require technical expertise in heavy equipment operation, splicing and inventory management.

The proposed programs respond to these workforce needs by providing students with hands-on training and industry-recognized credentials in HEO, fiber splicing and warehousing. These skills align with statewide priorities for digital equity and economic development.

For students, the programs offer accessible pathways to family-sustaining wages and opportunities for advancement in a growing industry. For the region, they strengthen the talent pipeline needed to accelerate broadband deployment, supporting economic resilience and community connectivity.

5. **Similar programs.** Use the table below to identify and describe the relationship between any similar programs within the Montana University System. – There are no similar programs currently in this area.

Institution Name	Degree	Program Title	What is the program enrollment for the last three academic years?

Montana Board of Regents
CURRICULUM PROPOSAL FORM

a. Describe how this program's learning outcomes are related or tied to other programs on campus or within the Montana University System. *[100 words]*

This program is not similar to other programs on campus or within the Montana University System. There is some overlap with Heavy Equipment Operation as these students will need to operate a directional drilling machine and potentially other heavy equipment, but the job skills otherwise are not overlapping.

b. If the proposed program substantially duplicates another program offered in the Montana University System, provide a rationale as to why any resulting duplication is a net benefit to the state and its citizens. *[200 words]*

This program does have significant duplication to other MUS programs.

c. Describe any efforts that were made to collaborate with similar programs at other institutions, including specific contacts and their institutional affiliations. If no efforts were made, please explain why. *[200 words]*

Highlands College worked alongside Missoula College and FVCC to develop this program. The two consortium colleges are supportive of Highlands College implementing this program and this may end up being a shared program among these colleges if Missoula and/or FVCC choose to implement this program. This program is also slated to be offered in remote areas as there will be a mobile training unit for this training.

6. Program assessment.

a. Describe the assessment process that will be used to evaluate how well students are achieving the intended learning outcomes of the program. When will assessment activities occur and at what frequency? Refer to specialized program accreditation assessments where appropriate. *[150 words]*

The Splicing CTS program will use direct performance assessments and industry certification exams to measure student achievement of learning outcomes. Students will complete hands-on evaluations operating heavy equipment, demonstrating safety practices, and performing tasks aligned with splicing.

b. What direct and indirect measures will be used to assess student learning? *[100 words]*

Direct measures will include hands-on performance evaluations of splicing, practical exams and successful completion of industry-recognized certifications if desired.

Indirect measures will include student self-assessments, course evaluations, and employer feedback gathered during internships or job placements. Graduate employment rates and credential attainment data will also be analyzed. Together, these measures provide a comprehensive view of student learning and program effectiveness.

Montana Board of Regents
CURRICULUM PROPOSAL FORM

c. How will you ensure that the assessment findings will be used to ensure the quality of the program? *[100 words]*

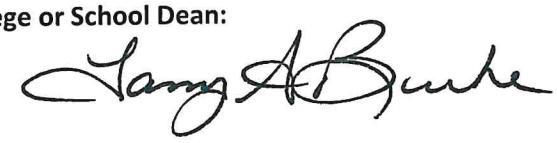
Data collection will be managed by institutional research and that data will be used to move the program forward continuously improving based on student and industry feedback.

Faculty will review assessment data annually and consult with industry partners to ensure alignment with workforce needs. Continuous improvement will follow best practices and incorporate feedback from employers and advisory committees.

Assessment results will be reviewed by faculty and the program advisory committee to identify strengths and areas for improvement. Findings will inform curriculum updates, instructional strategies, and equipment needs to ensure alignment with industry standards and employer expectations. Annual program reviews will incorporate student performance data, certification pass rates, and employer feedback to guide continuous improvement. These reviews will ensure the program remains responsive to workforce demands and maintains high standards of student learning.

Signature/Date

College or School Dean:



Chief Academic Officer:

Montana Board of Regents

CURRICULUM PROPOSAL FORM

Appendix A – Proposed New Curriculum

Splicing CTS	
COMX 106 - Communicating in a Dynamic Workplace	3
CSTN 125 - Safety Certifications	3
PLTT 120 - Into to Broadband	2
HEO 131 - Utility Location	1
PLTT 122 - Fiber Optic Technician Training	4
ETEC 101 - AC/DC Electronics	3
Broadband Technology CAS Curriculum	
M 105 OR M 121 OR M 111 - Technical Mathematics	3
WRIT 100 - Composing Mindfully OR WRIT 101 College Writing OR WRIT 121 - Introduction to Technical Writing	3
BGEN 105 - Introduction to Business	3
CAPP 131 - Basics MS Office OR CAPP 156 - MS Excel	3
ECIV 102 - Introduction to Construction Management	3

PROPOSED PROGRAM NAME: Fiber Splicing CTS			% NEW COURSES:	
Courses in Current Program	**Credits**	**Courses in Proposed Program**	**Credits**	**New Course/ Course Content? Y/N**
		COMX 106 - Communicating in a Dynamic Workplace	3	N
		CSTN 125 - Safety Certifications	3	N
		PLTT 120 - Into to Broadband	2	Y
		HEO 131 - Utility Location	1	Y
		PLTT 122 - Fiber Optic Technician Training	4	Y
		ETEC 101 - AC/DC Electronics	3	N
			16	

Academic Degree Program Proposal - Fiscal Analysis Form

CAMPUS:	Highlands College
AWARD LEVEL:	CTS
PROGRAM NAME:	Heavy Equipment Operation, Splicing and Warehousing
PROGRAM CODE:	

ENROLLMENT PROJECTIONS	FY 2027	FY 2028	FY 2029	FY 2030	
Headcount					
annual unduplicated headcount of students with declared major or minor within the program	40	40	40	40	
Credit Hours					
annual avg. credits hours earned per student in program related curriculum	22	22	22	22	
Student FTE					
Undergrad: (Headcount x CH)/30 Graduate: (Headcount x CH)/24	29.8	29.8	29.8	29.8	
Completions					
Annual number of program completers	36	36	36	36	

REVENUE					
(Tuition (90% Instate,10% WUE , 0% Out of State)	$65,419	$65,419	$65,419	$65,419	$0
Waiver	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
Tuition Revenue (net of waivers)	$65,419	$65,419	$65,419	$65,419	$0
Institutional Support					
Other Outside Funds (grants, gifts, etc.)	$857,380	$610,702	$620,732	$628,363	
Program Tuition/Fees	$168,742	$168,742	$168,742	$168,742	$0
Total Revenue	**$1,091,541**	**$844,863**	**$854,893**	**$862,524**	**$0**
Total Revenue per Student FTE	**$36,656**	**$28,372**	**$28,709**	**$28,965**	

EXPENDITURES						
Tenure Track Faculty	FTE					
	Salary + Benefits	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
Non-tenure Track Faculty *Includes Adjunct Instructors	FTE	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	
	Salary + Benefits	$138,700	$141,474	$144,303	$147,190	
Graduate Teaching Assistants	FTE					
	Salary + Benefits					
Staff- Project Director, Project Navigator, CDL Instructor & Adjunct	FTE	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	
	Salary + Benefits	$218,081	$218,536	$222,748	$227,122	$0
Total Faculty & Staff	FTE	**3.5**	**3.5**	**3.5**	**3.5**	**0.0**
	Salary + Benefits	**$356,781**	**$360,010**	**$367,051**	**$374,312**	**$0**
Operations (supplies, travel, rent, etc)		$500,599	$250,692	$253,681	$254,051	
Start-up Expenses (OTO)						
Total Expenses		**$857,380**	**$610,702**	**$620,732**	**$628,363**	
Student FTE to Faculty (TT + NTT) Ratio						
Net Income/Deficit (Revenue - Expenses)		**$234,161**	**$234,161**	**$234,161**	**$234,161**	**$0**

The signature of the campus Chief Financial Officer signifies that he/she has reviewed and assessed the fiscal soundness of the proposal and provided his/her recommendations to the Chief Academic Officer as necessary.

Ronald Tafoya

Campus Chief Financial Officer Signature

Chief Financial Officer Comments

Tuition revenue is based on 90% in-state residents & 10% WUE.

This program is being supported by a 4-year grant. A plan will be developed either to create a self-funded community training type of program, or a for credit program with a tuition and fee structure to support the program after the grant funding is no longer in place.

Montana Board of Regents

ACADEMIC PROPOSAL REQUEST FORM

SUBMISSION: 02/2026

ITEM: 1504-LII0326

Request for authorization to establish a CTS in Warehousing

Institution: **Montana Technological University** CIP Code: **52.0409**

Program/Center/Institute Title: **Highlands College**

Includes (please specify below): Face-to-face Offering: X Online Offering: _____ Blended Offering: X

Options: _____

Proposal Summary [360 words maximum]

What: Highlands College has been tasked by the U.S. Department of Labor to implement short, stackable courses in the area of Broadband installation. Through the established Advisory Board, it has been determined that warehousing is a critical sector for the industry.

Why: Western Montana faces a significant digital divide where 1 in 3 residents do not have access to reliable internet connectivity. This program will help build a strong broadband workforce to address workforce needs.

Resources: The program will require the purchase of warehousing equipment such as forklifts which will be covered by the Strengthening Community Colleges Grant. Highlands College already has the adequate classroom and outdoor space needed for this program.

ATTACHMENTS

Curriculum proposal form
Fiscal analysis form

Please mark the appropriate type of request and submit with any additional materials, including those listed in parentheses following the type of request. For more information pertaining to the types of requests listed below, how to complete an item request, or additional forms please visit http://mus.edu/che/arsa/academicproposals.asp.

____ A. Level I:

OCHE Notification

____ **1a. Placing a postsecondary educational program into moratorium** (Program Termination and Moratorium Form)

____ **1b. Withdrawing a postsecondary educational program from moratorium**

Montana Board of Regents
ACADEMIC PROPOSAL REQUEST FORM

2. Re-titling, terminating or revising a campus certificate of 29 credits or less

3. Offering an existing postsecondary educational program via distance or online delivery

OCHE Approvals

4. Re-titling an existing postsecondary educational program

5. Terminating an existing postsecondary educational program (Program Termination and Moratorium Form)

6. Consolidating existing postsecondary educational programs (Curriculum Proposal Form)

7. Establishing a new minor where there is a major or an option in a major (Curriculum Proposal Form)

8. Revising a postsecondary educational program (Curriculum Proposal Form)

9. Establishing a temporary C.A.S. or A.A.S. degree program Approval limited to 2 years

10. Withdrawing a postsecondary program from moratorium

11. Establishing a campus certificate of 29 credits or less (Curriculum Proposal Form)

B. Level II:

X **1. Establishing a new postsecondary educational program** (Curriculum Proposal and Completed Request to Plan Form)

2. Requesting Permanent authorization for a temporary C.A.S. or A.A.S degree program (Curriculum Proposal and Completed Request to Plan Form)

3. Requesting a variation of the 120-credit baccalaureate degrees *Exception to policy 301.11*

4. Forming, eliminating or consolidating an academic, administrative, or research unit (Curriculum or Center/Institute Proposal and completed Request to Plan, except when eliminating or consolidating)

5. Re-titling an academic, administrative, or research unit

Montana Board of Regents

CURRICULUM PROPOSAL FORM

1. **Institutional Accreditation.** Is the proposal considered a minor or major substantive change per NWCCU Guidelines? Consult the institutional Accreditation Liaison Officer for more information. *[Choose one]*

   Not Substantive_____ Minor Change_____ Major Change__ X

2. **Program Accreditation.** If applicable, describe specialized program accreditation requirements that inform this proposal, including the specific accrediting body and a summary of the standards being met. *[300 words]*

   No outside or specialized accreditation is required for this program.

3. **Program Summary:** List the program learning outcomes for the proposed program. Use assessable learner-centered statements that indicate what students will know and be able to do, upon completing the program.
   Upon Completion of this program students will be able to:
   1. Demonstrate compliance with warehouse safety and regulatory standards.
   2. Execute inventory control and material handling processes.
   3. Operate warehouse equipment and technology.
   4. Apply professional workplace behaviors in warehouse operations.

   a. List the aggregate credits required to complete the program using the following table.

   b. For the CTS, the required credits will be as follows:

	Credits
Credits in required courses offered by the department offering the program	16
Credits in required courses offered by other departments	0
Credits in institutional general education curriculum	0
Credits of free electives	0
Total credits required to complete the program	16

CAS Requirements will be as follows:

	Credits
Credits in required courses offered by the department offering the program	16
Credits in required courses offered by other departments (construction)	9
Credits in institutional general education curriculum	6
Credits of free electives	0
Total credits required to complete the program	31

Montana Board of Regents
CURRICULUM PROPOSAL FORM

c. Please include a complete listing of the proposed new curriculum in Appendix A of this document.

See attached document.

4. **Need for the program.** What specific student, regional, and statewide needs is the institution responding to with the proposed program? How will the proposed program meet those needs? Consider workforce, student, economic, societal, and transfer needs in your response as appropriate. *[250 words]*

Montana's economy and communities depend on rapid broadband expansion, yet the state faces a significant shortage of skilled workers in the industry. Employers report difficulty filling positions that require technical expertise in heavy equipment operation, splicing and inventory management.

The proposed programs respond to these workforce needs by providing students with hands-on training and industry-recognized credentials in HEO, fiber splicing and warehousing. These skills align with statewide priorities for digital equity and economic development.

For students, the programs offer accessible pathways to family-sustaining wages and opportunities for advancement in a growing industry. For the region, they strengthen the talent pipeline needed to accelerate broadband deployment, supporting economic resilience and community connectivity.

5. **Similar programs.** Use the table below to identify and describe the relationship between any similar programs within the Montana University System. – There are no similar programs currently in this area.

Institution Name	Degree	Program Title	What is the program enrollment for the last three academic years?

a. Describe how this program's learning outcomes are related or tied to other programs on campus or within the Montana University System. *[100 words]*

This program is not similar to other programs on campus or within the Montana University System. There is some overlap with Heavy Equipment Operation as these students will need to operate forklifts and have a knowledge in rigging, but the job skills otherwise are not overlapping.

b. If the proposed program substantially duplicates another program offered in the Montana University System, provide a rationale as to why any resulting duplication is a net benefit to the state and its citizens. *[200 words]*

This program does have significant duplication to other MUS programs.

Montana Board of Regents
CURRICULUM PROPOSAL FORM

c. Describe any efforts that were made to collaborate with similar programs at other institutions, including specific contacts and their institutional affiliations. If no efforts were made, please explain why. *[200 words]*

Highlands College worked alongside Missoula College and FVCC to develop this program. The two consortium colleges are supportive of Highlands College implementing this program and this may end up being a shared program among these colleges if Missoula and/or FVCC choose to implement this program.

6. Program assessment.

a. Describe the assessment process that will be used to evaluate how well students are achieving the intended learning outcomes of the program. When will assessment activities occur and at what frequency? Refer to specialized program accreditation assessments where appropriate. *[150 words]*

The Warehousing CTS program will use direct performance assessments and industry certification exams to measure student achievement of learning outcomes. Students will complete hands-on evaluations operating heavy equipment, demonstrating safety practices, and performing tasks aligned with warehousing. Successful attainment of credentials such as OSHA 10, ATTSA flagging, and rigging will serve as key indicators of competency.

b. What direct and indirect measures will be used to assess student learning? *[100 words]*

Direct measures will include hands-on performance evaluations of warehousing equipment operation, practical exams on safety and rigging, and successful completion of industry-recognized certifications such as OSHA 10, and ATTSA flagging These assessments confirm technical competency and adherence to industry standards.

Indirect measures will include student self-assessments, course evaluations, and employer feedback gathered during internships or job placements. Graduate employment rates and credential attainment data will also be analyzed. Together, these measures provide a comprehensive view of student learning and program effectiveness.

c. How will you ensure that the assessment findings will be used to ensure the quality of the program? *[100 words]*

Data collection will be managed by institutional research and that data will be used to move the program forward continuously improving based on student and industry feedback.

Faculty will review assessment data annually and consult with industry partners to ensure alignment with workforce needs. Continuous improvement will follow best practices and incorporate feedback from employers and advisory committees.

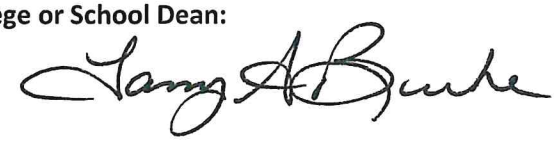
Assessment results will be reviewed by faculty and the program advisory committee to identify strengths and areas for improvement. Findings will inform curriculum updates, instructional strategies, and equipment needs to ensure alignment with industry standards and employer expectations. Annual program reviews will incorporate student performance data, certification pass rates, and employer

Montana Board of Regents
CURRICULUM PROPOSAL FORM

feedback to guide continuous improvement. These reviews will ensure the program remains responsive to workforce demands and maintains high standards of student learning.

Signature/Date

College or School Dean:



Chief Academic Officer:

Montana Board of Regents

CURRICULUM PROPOSAL FORM

Appendix A – Proposed New Curriculum

Warehousing CTS	
COMX 106 - Communicating in a Dynamic Workplace	3
CSTN 125 - Safety Certifications	3
HEO 105 - Introduction to Heavy Equipment Operator	7
PLTT120 - Into to Broadband OR HEO 100 - Commercial Driver's License	2 to 3
CSTN 135 - Basic Rigging	1
Broadband Technology CAS	
M 105 OR M 121 OR M 111 - Technical Mathematics	3
WRIT 100 - Composing Mindfully OR WRIT 101 College Writing OR WRIT 121 - Introduction to Technical Writing	3
BGEN 105 - Introduction to Business	3
CAPP 131 - Basics MS Office OR CAPP 156 - MS Excel	3
ECIV 102 - Introduction to Construction Management	3

Academic Degree Program Proposal - Fiscal Analysis Form

CAMPUS:	Highlands College
AWARD LEVEL:	CTS
PROGRAM NAME:	Heavy Equipment Operation, Splicing and Warehousing
PROGRAM CODE:	

ENROLLMENT PROJECTIONS	FY 2027	FY 2028	FY 2029	FY 2030	
Headcount					
annual unduplicated headcount of students with declared major or minor within the program	40	40	40	40	
Credit Hours					
annual avg. credits hours earned per student in program related curriculum	22	22	22	22	
Student FTE					
Undergrad: (Headcount x CH)/30 Graduate: (Headcount x CH)/24	29.8	29.8	29.8	29.8	
Completions					
Annual number of program completers	36	36	36	36	

REVENUE					
(Tuition (90% Instate,10% WUE , 0% Out of State)	$65,419	$65,419	$65,419	$65,419	$0
Waiver	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
Tuition Revenue (net of waivers)	$65,419	$65,419	$65,419	$65,419	$0
Institutional Support					
Other Outside Funds (grants, gifts, etc.)	$857,380	$610,702	$620,732	$628,363	
Program Tuition/Fees	$168,742	$168,742	$168,742	$168,742	$0
Total Revenue	**$1,091,541**	**$844,863**	**$854,893**	**$862,524**	**$0**
Total Revenue per Student FTE	**$36,656**	**$28,372**	**$28,709**	**$28,965**	

EXPENDITURES						
Tenure Track Faculty	FTE					
	Salary + Benefits	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
Non-tenure Track Faculty *Includes Adjunct Instructors	FTE	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	
	Salary + Benefits	$138,700	$141,474	$144,303	$147,190	
Graduate Teaching Assistants	FTE					
	Salary + Benefits					
Staff- Project Director, Project Navigator, CDL Instructor & Adjunct	FTE	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	
	Salary + Benefits	$218,081	$218,536	$222,748	$227,122	$0
Total Faculty & Staff	FTE	**3.5**	**3.5**	**3.5**	**3.5**	**0.0**
	Salary + Benefits	**$356,781**	**$360,010**	**$367,051**	**$374,312**	**$0**
Operations (supplies, travel, rent, etc)		$500,599	$250,692	$253,681	$254,051	
Start-up Expenses (OTO)						
Total Expenses		**$857,380**	**$610,702**	**$620,732**	**$628,363**	
Student FTE to Faculty (TT + NTT) Ratio						
Net Income/Deficit (Revenue - Expenses)		**$234,161**	**$234,161**	**$234,161**	**$234,161**	**$0**

The signature of the campus Chief Financial Officer signifies that he/she has reviewed and assessed the fiscal soundness of the proposal and provided his/her recommendations to the Chief Academic Officer as necessary.

Ronald Tafoya

Campus Chief Financial Officer Signature

Chief Financial Officer Comments

Tuition revenue is based on 90% in-state residents & 10% WUE.

This program is being supported by a 4-year grant. A plan will be developed either to create a self-funded community training type of program, or a for credit program with a tuition and fee structure to support the program after the grant funding is no longer in place.

Montana Board of Regents

ACADEMIC PROPOSAL REQUEST FORM

February 2026

ITEM 1505-LII0326

Request for authorization to establish an M.S. in Mechanical Engineering

Institution: **Montana Technological University** CIP Code: **14.1901**

Program/Center/Institute Title: **M.S. in Mechanical Engineering**

Includes (please specify below): Face-to-face Offering: x Online Offering: _____ Blended Offering: _____

Options: None

Proposal Summary [360 words maximum]

What: Establish an MS in Mechanical Engineering

Why: Offering a standalone Mechanical Engineering M.S. degree instead of the current General Engineering – Mechanical M.S. degree better meets the needs of students, industry, and Montana Tech. The name of the degree (Mechanical Engineering, as opposed to General Engineering) better aligns with the BS degree name and is important in job applications and job descriptions

Resources: No additional resources are required. The change is essentially a renaming of an existing program.

ATTACHMENTS

Curriculum Proposal Form
Request to Plan Form
Fiscal Analysis

Please mark the appropriate type of request and submit with any additional materials, including those listed in parentheses following the type of request. For more information pertaining to the types of requests listed below, how to complete an item request, or additional forms please visit http://mus.edu/che/arsa/academicproposals.asp.

_____ **A. Level I:**

OCHE Notification

_____ **1a. Placing a postsecondary educational program into moratorium** (Program Termination and Moratorium Form)

_____ **1b. Withdrawing a postsecondary educational program from moratorium**

_____ **2. Re-titling, terminating or revising a campus certificate of 29 credits or less**

Montana Board of Regents

ACADEMIC PROPOSAL REQUEST FORM

3. Offering an existing postsecondary educational program via distance or online delivery

OCHE Approvals

4. Re-titling an existing postsecondary educational program

5. Terminating an existing postsecondary educational program (Program Termination and Moratorium Form)

6. Consolidating existing postsecondary educational programs (Curriculum Proposal Form)

7. Establishing a new minor where there is a major or an option in a major (Curriculum Proposal Form)

8. Revising a postsecondary educational program (Curriculum Proposal Form)

9. Establishing a temporary C.A.S. or A.A.S. degree program Approval limited to 2 years

10. Withdrawing a postsecondary program from moratorium

11. Establishing a campus certificate of 29 credits or less (Curriculum Proposal Form)

B. Level II:

X **1. Establishing a new postsecondary educational program** (Curriculum Proposal and Completed Request to Plan Form)

2. Requesting Permanent authorization for a temporary C.A.S. or A.A.S degree program (Curriculum Proposal and Completed Request to Plan Form)

3. Requesting a variation of the 120-credit baccalaureate degrees *Exception to policy 301.11*

4. Forming, eliminating or consolidating an academic, administrative, or research unit (Curriculum or Center/Institute Proposal and completed Request to Plan, except when eliminating or consolidating)

5. Re-titling an academic, administrative, or research unit

Montana Board of Regents

CURRICULUM PROPOSAL FORM

1. **Institutional Accreditation.** Is the proposal considered a minor or major substantive change per NWCCU Guidelines? Consult the institutional Accreditation Liaison Officer for more information. *[Choose one]*

   Not Substantive_____ Minor Change_____ Major Change_x____

2. **Program Accreditation.** If applicable, describe specialized program accreditation requirements that inform this proposal, including the specific accrediting body and a summary of the standards being met. *[300 words]*

   The Master of Science in Mechanical Engineering at Montana Technological University will build upon the rigor and quality ABET-accredited undergraduate mechanical engineering program. While ABET accreditation applies to undergraduate engineering programs and not to standalone master's degrees, the graduate program uses ABET principles that emphasizing advanced technical competence, ethical responsibility, effective communication, and professional preparation. The program will be managed in compliance with NWCCU accreditation standards that apply to Montana Tech.

3. **Program Summary:** List the program learning outcomes for the proposed program. Use assessable learner-centered statements that indicate what students will know and be able to do, upon completing the program.

   a. List the aggregate credits required to complete the program using the following table.

	Credits
Credits in required courses offered by the department offering the program	25 (Thesis) or 31 (Non-Thesis)
Credits in required courses offered by other departments	5
Credits in institutional general education curriculum	0
Credits of free electives	0
Total credits required to complete the program	30

   b. Please include a complete listing of the proposed new curriculum in Appendix A of this document.

4. **Need for the program.** What specific student, regional, and statewide needs is the institution responding to with the proposed program? How will the proposed program meet those needs? Consider workforce, student, economic, societal, and transfer needs in your response as appropriate. *[250 words]*

The M.S. in Mechanical Engineering will support the growing technology industry sector growth in Montana. Technology development companies thrive on M.S. level or greater to do their research and development

Montana Board of Regents
CURRICULUM PROPOSAL FORM

(R&D). With the current growth of technology companies in Montana, there exists a need for more Mechanical Engineering M.S. students. In addition, the currently funded research at MTU, needs a Mechanical Engineering M.S. degree to recruit and retain the correct students for the research tasks.

The M.S. in Mechanical Engineering will also be a feeder program to the Ph.D. Program in Engineering at Montana State University (MSU). Students will be dual advised with both MSU and MTU faculty to work on funded research under the Montana University System (MUS).

5. **Similar programs.** Use the table below to identify and describe the relationship between any similar programs within the Montana University System.

Institution Name	Degree	Program Title	What is the program enrollment for the last three academic years?
MSU	M.S.	Mechanical Engineering M.S	8

a. Describe how this program's learning outcomes are related or tied to other programs on campus or within the Montana University System. *[100 words]*

The proposed M.S. degree in Mechanical Engineering fits Montana Tech's mission. The curriculum exists and is successful. Creating Mechanical Engineering M.S. aligns the B.S. and M.S. degree names and facilitates obtaining employment for mechanical engineering graduates. Like the current General Engineering M.S., the Mechanical Engineering will contribute to exemplary graduate education and research, blending theory with practice to enable program graduates to significantly impact their profession.

b. If the proposed program substantially duplicates another program offered in the Montana University System, provide a rationale as to why any resulting duplication is a net benefit to the state and its citizens. *[200 words]*

Mechanical Engineering students are multidisciplinary. The thesis work supports the other engineering programs research as well as provides the backbone of a quality research institution's capability. Mechanical Engineering handles research in material science, control systems, HVAC, power conversion and transfer, machine design, etc. Every industry uses mechanical engineers and throughout the state they support mining, reclamation, agriculture, city maintenance and building standards, power systems. Local companies that hire M.S. in Mechanical Engineering are Northwestern Energy, REC Silicone, Resodyn, Biosqueeze, and Montana Resources. Graduate programs do not compete within the university system but strengthen all programs.

c. Describe any efforts that were made to collaborate with similar programs at other institutions, including specific contacts and their institutional affiliations. If no efforts were made, please explain why. *[200 words]*

Montana Board of Regents
CURRICULUM PROPOSAL FORM

Past and current research collaborations in the Mechanical Engineering department are numerous between and among Montana Tech departments, the University of Montana-Missoula, Montana State University-Bozeman, and the Montana Bureau of Mines and Geology, and these collaborations will continue. Additionally, the ME faculty has been working with MSU in the Materials Science Ph.D. program.

6. Program assessment.

a. Describe the assessment process that will be used to evaluate how well students are achieving the intended learning outcomes of the program. When will assessment activities occur and at what frequency? Refer to specialized program accreditation assessments where appropriate. *[150 words]*

The new M.S. program will be assessed per Montana Tech's Graduate School Assessment Plan. It will be assessed along with the other graduate programs. Key metrics used in graduate program assessment include applications, enrollment, graduates, placements, and impact. Impact includes grant revenues, peer-reviewed publications, student and faculty awards, and fiscal soundness. The Graduate School follows a 2-year assessment cycle. In year 1 of the cycle, the Graduate School and the faculty consider the assessment metrics and use them to guide actions and decisions. In year 2, a formal program review document is prepared and reviewed by faculty, administration, and the department's Industry Advisory Board. When performance falls short, action plans will be developed and implemented. A major assessment of the program will be conducted at the end of the third 2-year cycle to determine whether enrollment, completion, and impact are on track.

b. What direct and indirect measures will be used to assess student learning? *[100 words]*

Direct measures of student learning include performance in coursework; the thesis, publishable paper, or master's project and its defense; placement rates; conference presentations; and the performance of graduates on professional registration exams. Indirect measures include the judgment of graduate committees and the department's Industry Advisory Board, instrumentation proficiency, participation in special experiences (such as software skills, professional development, professional society membership, field experiences, and conference attendance).

c. How will you ensure that the assessment findings will be used to ensure the quality of the program? *[100 words]*

The assessment findings will be reviewed by faculty, department head, Graduate Council, deans, Administration, and Industrial Advisory Board. The deans will hold faculty accountable for using the findings to ensure the quality of the program. The Graduate School's biannual assessment report will be reviewed and evaluated by MTU Assessment Committee, which will determine whether it and actions taken or proposed are acceptably ensuring the quality of the program.

Montana Board of Regents

CURRICULUM PROPOSAL FORM

Signature/Date

College or School Dean: 1/19/2026

Chief Academic Officer: 2/2/2026

Montana Board of Regents
CURRICULUM PROPOSAL FORM

Appendix A – Proposed New Curriculum

Mechanical Engineering

Master's Degree Information

Master of Science Degree (M.S.) in Mechanical Engineering

View the catalog information

The MS program here at Montana Technological University offers thesis track and non-thesis track alternatives. Both are available to on-campus students. Incoming off-campus students are admitted to the non-thesis track. At the invitation of a research-active participating faculty member (advisor), students who demonstrate an interest and aptitude for scientific research may petition the Graduate School for transfer to the thesis track.

To graduate from Montana Tech with the MS degree, a student on the non-thesis track (Option B) are required to complete a minimum of 36 semester credit hours. In the final year of their program, non-thesis track students complete a culminating experience or practicum. To fulfill the practicum requirements, students must undertake and complete a substantial project of approximately six months duration. The project selection, scope, and objectives must be approved in advance by the student's academic advisor, the MS program director, and the Montana Tech graduate school. At the conclusion of the project, the student must submit a detailed comprehensive technical report and deliver a presentation to an audience of MS faculty and students.

Thesis-track (Option A) students are required to complete a minimum of 30 semester credit hours. Thesis track students must prepare and submit a research-based thesis and pass a formal thesis defense examination, which will be conducted by the student's research advisor and committee. The thesis and defense examination must conform to established Montana Tech Graduate School and department policies and guidelines.

The graduate program requirements are summarized below. Courses are categorized as Core Courses, Advanced Graduate Courses, and Seminar and are dependent on whether the student selects the thesis or the non-thesis track.

Montana Board of Regents
CURRICULUM PROPOSAL FORM

All students must complete the following mandatory Core Courses:

- Required Core Courses (8 Credits)
  - EGEN 505 – 3 Credits – Advanced Engineering Analysis
  - Any 500 level Math course – 3 credits
  - ENGR 5940 – 1 Credit – Engineering Seminar
  - TC 5150/5160 – 1 Credit – Writing Seminar
- 8 Credits EMEC 590 Master's Thesis Credits for thesis option or 8 Credits of Independent Study EMEC 5XX for non-thesis option
- Elective Courses 14 credits of 4XX and 5XX (preferred) from the below list or approved by the thesis advisor (20 credits for non-thesis option)
  - EGEN 574 Intro Micro/Nano Elec Mech Systems
  - EMEC 448 HVAC
  - EMEC 505 Finite Element Analysis
  - EMEC 515 Impact Dynamics
  - EMEC 516 Dynamic Behavior of Materials
  - EMEC 517 Engine Design
  - EMEC 518 Intro Biomedical Engineering
  - EMEC 535 Rocket Propulsion
  - EMEC 536 Computational Fluid Dynamics
  - EMEC 571 Compressible Flow Gas Dynamics
  - EWLD 440 Design of Welded Connections
  - EWLD 544 Physics of Welding
  - EWLD 476 Nondestructive Examination
  - EWLD 588 Metallurgy of Welds

Examinations

When the candidate for a master's degree has elected Option A (thesis option), the student must present the thesis and pass an oral examination. The oral examination will include an examination on the thesis presentation, but may also include questions relating to the graduate study program.

Students who elect the non-thesis option must complete at least six (6) credits of special problems and pass an oral and comprehensive exam.

Admissions Information for the Mechanical Engineering M.S. Program

Applicants are expected to have earned a bachelor of science degree in an engineering discipline with a minimum GPA of 3.0 (4.0 maximum basis) or equivalent. Undergraduate studies include mathematics at least through differential equations, at least one year each of general physics and chemistry, a course in physical chemistry or modern physics, an elementary course in properties of materials (such as EGEN 213 or EMAT 251), and engineering coursework (including prerequisites) equivalent to EGEN 201 – Engineering Mechanics/Statics, EELE 201 – Circuits for Engineers, EGEN 335 – Fluid Mechanics, and EGEN 305 – Mechanics of Materials. Applicants may be admitted with deficiencies but, to the extent possible, such courses are expected to be made up during the student's first year in the program. In addition, mechanical core classes of EMEC 341, EGEN 434, and EMEC 326 are also highly recommended.

M.S. students who are employed as GRAs engaged in funded thesis-track research projects or as GTAs are eligible for stipends and tuition waivers.

Montana Board of Regents

FISCAL ANALYSIS PART 2

Instructions: This form is the narrative component to explain the numbers in the fiscal analysis spreadsheet. Please note that no proposal is resource neutral and new programs and units will ultimately have some fiscal or administrative impact existing programs and units.

1. **Implementation.** When will the proposed program or unit begin operations? What is the initial capacity? If implementation will occur in phases, please describe the phased implementation plans. *[100 words]*

   The M.S. Mechanical Engineering program will be first offered in the 2026-2027 academic year.

   a. For academic programs, complete the following table indicating the projected enrollments in and graduates from the proposed program.

Fall Headcount Enrollment					Graduates				
AY26-27	AY27-28	AY28-29	AY29-30	AY30-31	AY26-27	AY27-28	AY28-29	AY29-30	AY30-31
5	5	6	8	10	3	5	5	6	8

   b. Describe the methodology and sources for determining the enrollment and graduation projections above. *[200 words]*

   Because the change is essentially a renaming of the M.S. General Engineering – Mechanical Option, the existing enrollment in the M.S. General Engineering – Mechanical Option enrollment and factored in expected research growth in the department.

1. Physical resources.

a. List needed facilities, equipment, space, laboratory instruments, etc., that must be obtained to support the proposed program or unit. (Enter the costs of those physical resources into the budget sheet.) How will the need for these additional resources be met? [150 words]

Existing facilities, space, laboratory instruments, computers that support the General Engineering – Mechanical Option M.S., the Earth Science & Engineering Ph.D., the Materials Science and Engineering M.S. and Materials Science Ph.D., and the Mechanical Engineering bachelor's degrees are more than adequate and sufficiently available to support the successful implementation of this new degree. The projected enrollment increase is not expected to exceed capacity with the current research funding projections.

c. Describe the existing facilities, equipment, space, laboratory instruments, computer(s), or other physical equipment available to support successful implementation. What will the impact on of increased use of physical resources on existing programs or units? How will the increased use be accommodated? [200 words]

Montana Board of Regents
FISCAL ANALYSIS PART 2

None.

2. Personnel resources.

a. Identify new personnel that must be hired to support the proposed program. (Enter the costs of those personnel resources into the budget sheet.) What are the anticipated sources or plans to secure the needed qualified faculty and staff? *[150 words]*

Existing courses are offered in the Materials Science Ph.D. program and the Earth Science & Engineering Ph.D. programs. One new course will be newly taught at MTU but is already taught at MSU. The faculty to teach this course are within the existing faculty teaching load for the General Engineering M.S. program.

b. Describe the existing instructional, support, and administrative resources available to support the successful implementation. What will the impact on of increased use of increased use of existing personnel resources on existing programs or units? How will quality and productivity of existing programs be maintained? *[200 words]*

None.

3. Other resources.

a. Are the available library and information resources adequate? If not, how will adequate resources be obtained? *[100 words]*

Library and information resources are adequate to excellent in these areas.

b. Do existing student services have the capacity to accommodate the proposed program or unit? What are the implications of the new program or unit on services for the rest of the student body? *[150 words]*

The net increase in a small number of graduate students has negligible implications for student services.

4. Revenues and expenditures. Describe the implications of the new program on the financial situation of the institution. *[100 words]*

The addition of a new M.S. has negligible budgetary implications because it is essentially a reorganization of an existing M.S. While we can tally the tuition revenue from the projected student enrollment, the marginal differences in expenses are less clear, because no new faculty or facilities are needed, and these students will take courses that are already in the teaching rotation and therefore already budgeted. At the same time, it would be misleading to show the tuition revenues against zero expenses, which would make the program appear to be net revenue producing.

Montana Board of Regents

FISCAL ANALYSIS PART 2

a. Describe any expenses anticipated with the implementation of the new program. How will these expenses be met? *[200 words]*

No new expenses are anticipated with the implementation of the new option.

i. If funding is to come from the reallocation of existing state appropriated funds, please indicate the sources of the reallocation. What impact will the reallocation of funds in support of the program have on other programs? *[150 words]*

N/A

ii. If an increase in base funding is required to fund the program, indicate the amount of additional base funding and the fiscal year when the institution plans to include the base funding in the department's budget.

N/A

iii. If the funding is to come from one-time sources such as a donation, indicate the sources of other funding. What are the institution's plans for sustaining the program when that funding ends? *[150 words]*

N/A

iv. Describe the federal grant, other grant(s), special fee arrangements, or contract(s) that will be valid to fund the program. What does the institution propose to do with the program upon termination of those funds? *[150 words]*

N/A

5. **Student fees.** If the proposed program intends to impose new course, class, lab, or program fees, please list the type and amount of the fee. (Approval of the program does not imply approval of fees. Authorization for new fees is a separate BOR process.)

No new student fees will be imposed. Students in this option will be subject to the same fees as other students in the Lance College of Mines and Engineering.

6. This form must be accompanied by the fiscal analysis form.

Montana Board of Regents

FISCAL ANALYSIS PART 2

Signature/Date

College or School Dean: 1/19/2026

Chief Academic Officer: 2/2/2026

Chief Executive Officer:

Flagship Provost*:

Flagship President*:

*Not applicable to the Community Colleges.

Montana Board of Regents

FISCAL ANALYSIS PART 2

Appendix A – Proposed New Curriculum

Montana Board of Regents

ACADEMIC PROPOSAL REQUEST FORM

February 2026

ITEM 1506-LII0326

Request for authorization to establish an M.S. in Civil Engineering

Institution: **Montana Technological University** CIP Code: **14.1901**

Program/Center/Institute Title: **M.S. in Civil Engineering**

Includes (please specify below): Face-to-face Offering: x Online Offering: _____ Blended Offering: _____

Options: None

Proposal Summary [360 words maximum]

What: Establish an MS in Civil Engineering

Why: Offering a standalone Civil Engineering M.S. degree instead of the current General Engineering – Civil M.S. degree better meets the needs of students, industry, and Montana Tech. The name of the degree (Civil Engineering, as opposed to General Engineering) better aligns with the BS degree name and is important in job applications and job descriptions

Resources: No additional resources are required. The change is essentially a renaming of an existing program.

ATTACHMENTS

Curriculum Proposal Form
Request to Plan Form
Attachment #1
Fiscal Analysis

Please mark the appropriate type of request and submit with any additional materials, including those listed in parentheses following the type of request. For more information pertaining to the types of requests listed below, how to complete an item request, or additional forms please visit http://mus.edu/che/arsa/academicproposals.asp.

____ **A. Level I:**

OCHE Notification

____ **1a. Placing a postsecondary educational program into moratorium** (Program Termination and Moratorium Form)

____ **1b. Withdrawing a postsecondary educational program from moratorium**

____ **2. Re-titling, terminating or revising a campus certificate of 29 credits or less**

Montana Board of Regents

ACADEMIC PROPOSAL REQUEST FORM

3. Offering an existing postsecondary educational program via distance or online delivery

OCHE Approvals

4. Re-titling an existing postsecondary educational program

5. Terminating an existing postsecondary educational program (Program Termination and Moratorium Form)

6. Consolidating existing postsecondary educational programs (Curriculum Proposal Form)

7. Establishing a new minor where there is a major or an option in a major (Curriculum Proposal Form)

8. Revising a postsecondary educational program (Curriculum Proposal Form)

9. Establishing a temporary C.A.S. or A.A.S. degree program Approval limited to 2 years

10. Withdrawing a postsecondary program from moratorium

11. Establishing a campus certificate of 29 credits or less (Curriculum Proposal Form)

B. Level II:

X **1. Establishing a new postsecondary educational program** (Curriculum Proposal and Completed Request to Plan Form)

2. Requesting Permanent authorization for a temporary C.A.S. or A.A.S degree program (Curriculum Proposal and Completed Request to Plan Form)

3. Requesting a variation of the 120-credit baccalaureate degrees *Exception to policy 301.11*

4. Forming, eliminating or consolidating an academic, administrative, or research unit (Curriculum or Center/Institute Proposal and completed Request to Plan, except when eliminating or consolidating)

5. Re-titling an academic, administrative, or research unit

Montana Board of Regents

CURRICULUM PROPOSAL FORM

1. **Institutional Accreditation.** Is the proposal considered a minor or major substantive change per NWCCU Guidelines? Consult the institutional Accreditation Liaison Officer for more information. *[Choose one]*

   Not Substantive_____ Minor Change_____ Major Change_x____

2. **Program Accreditation.** If applicable, describe specialized program accreditation requirements that inform this proposal, including the specific accrediting body and a summary of the standards being met. *[300 words]*

   The Master of Science in Civil Engineering at Montana Technological University will build upon the rigor and quality ABET-accredited undergraduate civil engineering program. ABET accreditation will not be sought for the master's degree, because it is rare for engineering master's degrees to be ABET-accredited. The graduate program will use ABET principles that emphasizing advanced technical competence, ethical responsibility, effective communication, and professional preparation. The program will be managed in compliance with NWCCU accreditation standards that apply to Montana Tech.

3. **Program Summary:** List the program learning outcomes for the proposed program. Use assessable learner-centered statements that indicate what students will know and be able to do, upon completing the program.

Graduates from the Civil Engineering Masters of Science Program will:

- Demonstrate mastery of advanced civil engineering principles and apply analytical, computational, and experimental methods to solve complex engineering problems.
- Be able to formulate and execute original research or applied engineering investigations, including experimental design, modeling, data analysis, and interpretation of results, culminating in a thesis or applied project.
- Be able to communicate complex engineering concepts, research findings, and technical analyses effectively through professional-quality written documents and oral presentations.
- Evaluate and apply ethical principles and professional standards in civil engineering practice, considering impacts on safety, society, and the environment.
- Demonstrate the ability to independently acquire and apply new knowledge, tools, and technologies necessary for continued professional development.
- Be able to work effectively both independently and as a member or leader of multidisciplinary teams in advanced engineering or research settings

a. List the aggregate credits required to complete the program using the following table.

	Credits: Thesis Option	Credits: Non-thesis
Credits in required courses offered by the department offering the program	9 coursework 8 thesis	9 coursework 3 research/design project
Credits in required courses offered by other departments	2 (seminars)	2 (seminars)
Credits in institutional general education curriculum	0	0
Credits of free electives (note: *engineering* courses)	11	22
Total credits required to complete the program	30	36

b. Please include a complete listing of the proposed new curriculum in Appendix A of this document.

Montana Board of Regents
CURRICULUM PROPOSAL FORM

4. **Need for the program.** What specific student, regional, and statewide needs is the institution responding to with the proposed program? How will the proposed program meet those needs? Consider workforce, student, economic, societal, and transfer needs in your response as appropriate. *[250 words]*

Job growth in the civil engineering and construction industries in Montana is strong, and the civil engineering profession is working toward establishing that a master's degree will be required for professional registration. Offering a M.S degree in civil engineering will support the future career goals of civil engineers within Montana and in the region. In addition, efforts by civil engineering faculty at Montana Tech to recruit and retain the correct students for their research projects will be greatly facilitated by having a M.S. degree in Civil Engineering (rather than General Engineering).

The M.S. in Civil Engineering will also be a feeder program to the Ph.D. Program in Engineering at Montana State University (MSU). Students will be adequately prepared for research directed by MSU faculty, or could be dual advised by both MSU and Montana Tech faculty and work on collaborative research.

5. **Similar programs.** Use the table below to identify and describe the relationship between any similar programs within the Montana University System.

Institution Name	Degree	Program Title	What is the program enrollment for the last three academic years?
MSU	M.S.	Civil Engineering M.S.	About 30 (includes MS and Meng students)

a. Describe how this program's learning outcomes are related or tied to other programs on campus or within the Montana University System. *[100 words]*

The proposed M.S. degree in Civil Engineering fits Montana Tech's mission. Creating Civil Engineering M.S. aligns the B.S. and M.S. degree names and facilitates obtaining employment for civil engineering graduates. Like the current General Engineering M.S., the Civil Engineering M.S. will contribute to exemplary graduate education and research, blending theory with practice, allowing program graduates to significantly impact their profession. Most of the Civil Engineering faculty are currently at the assistant professor rank and are eager to build their research programs in parallel with the M.S. Civil Engineering degree, providing graduate level coursework to serve graduate students and advanced undergraduates.

b. If the proposed program substantially duplicates another program offered in the Montana University System, provide a rationale as to why any resulting duplication is a net benefit to the state and its citizens. *[200 words]*

While MSU Bozeman already offers a M.S. degree in civil engineering, coursework and faculty expertise within Montana Tech's civil engineering department are different and complementary to those at MSU, so there is little duplication. Montana Tech's M.S. Civil Engineering degree will provide another alternative for prospective students who are interested in focusing in different topics at the graduate level.

c. Describe any efforts that were made to collaborate with similar programs at other institutions, including specific contacts and their institutional affiliations. If no efforts were made, please explain why. *[200 words]*

Montana Board of Regents
CURRICULUM PROPOSAL FORM

Montana Tech faculty have been working to establish relationships with their counterparts at MSU. Montana Tech Civil Engineering Department Head MacLaughlin has corresponded multiple times in 2025 with MSU Civil Engineering Department Head Woolard about opportunities for MSU faculty and PhD students to teach at Montana Tech, and we look forward to connecting with the new Civil Engineering department head at MSU when that individual has been identified. Several Montana Tech and MSU faculty attended the MDT Research Symposium held in Helena in May 2025, offering the opportunity to network and build collaborations. We look forward to other opportunities to develop collaborations, perhaps via inter-campus visits.

6. Program assessment.

a. Describe the assessment process that will be used to evaluate how well students are achieving the intended learning outcomes of the program. When will assessment activities occur and at what frequency? Refer to specialized program accreditation assessments where appropriate. *[150 words]*

The new M.S. program will be assessed per Montana Tech's Graduate School Assessment Plan. It will be assessed along with the other graduate programs. Key metrics used in graduate program assessment include applications, enrollment, graduates, placements, and impact. Impact includes grant revenues, peer-reviewed publications, student and faculty awards, and fiscal soundness. The Graduate School follows a 2-year assessment cycle. In year 1 of the cycle, the Graduate School and the faculty consider the assessment metrics and use them to guide actions and decisions. In year 2, a formal program review document is prepared and reviewed by faculty, administration, and the department's Industry Advisory Board. When performance falls short, action plans will be developed and implemented. A major assessment of the program will be conducted at the end of the third 2-year cycle to determine whether enrollment, completions, and impact are on track.

b. What direct and indirect measures will be used to assess student learning? *[100 words]*

Direct measures of student learning include performance in coursework; the thesis, publishable paper, or master's project and its defense; placement rates; conference presentations; and the performance of graduates on professional registration exams. Indirect measures include the judgment of graduate committees and the department's Industry Advisory Board, instrumentation proficiency, participation in special experiences (such as software skills, professional development, professional society membership, field experiences, and conference attendance).

c. How will you ensure that the assessment findings will be used to ensure the quality of the program? *[100 words]*

The assessment findings will be reviewed by faculty, department head, Graduate Council, deans, Administration, and Industrial Advisory Board. The deans will hold faculty accountable for using the findings to ensure the quality of the program. The Graduate School's biannual assessment report will be reviewed and evaluated by MTU Assessment Committee, which will determine whether it and actions taken or proposed are acceptably ensuring the quality of the program.

Montana Board of Regents

CURRICULUM PROPOSAL FORM

Signature/Date

College or School Dean: 1/27/2026

Chief Academic Officer: 2/2/2026

Appendix A – Proposed New Curriculum (separate document)

Montana Board of Regents

FISCAL ANALYSIS PART 2

Instructions: This form is the narrative component to explain the numbers in the fiscal analysis spreadsheet. Please note that no proposal is resource neutral and new programs and units will ultimately have some fiscal or administrative impact existing programs and units.

1. **Implementation.** When will the proposed program or unit begin operations? What is the initial capacity? If implementation will occur in phases, please describe the phased implementation plans. *[100 words]*

   The M.S. Civil Engineering program will be first offered in the 2026-2027 academic year.

   a. For academic programs, complete the following table indicating the projected enrollments in and graduates from the proposed program.

Fall Headcount Enrollment					Graduates				
AY26-27	AY27-28	AY28-29	AY29-30	AY30-31	AY26-27	AY27-28	AY28-29	AY29-30	AY30-31
2	4	5	7	8	1	1	2	3	4

   b. Describe the methodology and sources for determining the enrollment and graduation projections above. *[200 words]*

   The Department of Civil Engineering currently has one student in the MS General Engineering – Civil Option who will switch to the new degree in fall 2026; additionally, we expect to admit several new students for AY 2026-27 and expect one student to enroll. In subsequent years, we expect 2, 3, and then 4 new students to enroll as we advertise the new MS Civil Engineering degree and corresponding research opportunities within the department.

1. **Physical resources.**

a. List needed facilities, equipment, space, laboratory instruments, etc., that must be obtained to support the proposed program or unit. (Enter the costs of those physical resources into the budget sheet.) How will the need for these additional resources be met? [150 words]

Existing facilities, space, laboratory instruments, computers that support the General Engineering – Civil Option M.S., the Earth Science & Engineering Ph.D., the Materials Science and Engineering M.S. and Materials Science Ph.D., and the Civil Engineering bachelor's degrees are more than adequate and sufficiently available to support the successful implementation of this new degree. The projected enrollment increase is not expected to exceed capacity with the current research funding projections.

Montana Board of Regents
FISCAL ANALYSIS PART 2

c. Describe the existing facilities, equipment, space, laboratory instruments, computer(s), or other physical equipment available to support successful implementation. What will the impact on of increased use of physical resources on existing programs or units? How will the increased use be accommodated? [200 words]

None.

2. Personnel resources.

a. Identify new personnel that must be hired to support the proposed program. (Enter the costs of those personnel resources into the budget sheet.) What are the anticipated sources or plans to secure the needed qualified faculty and staff? *[150 words]*

None. Teaching loads of the current Civil Engineering faculty allow for offering sufficient graduate level electives to support the MS Civil Engineering degree.

b. Describe the existing instructional, support, and administrative resources available to support the successful implementation. What will the impact on of increased use of increased use of existing personnel resources on existing programs or units? How will quality and productivity of existing programs be maintained? *[200 words]*

The Department of Civil Engineering currently has 4 tenure track assistant professors, with one faculty line vacant, and a half-time administrative associate. These faculty are developing and offering new 400- and 500-level electives as they build their research programs; these new courses will serve both graduate students and advanced undergraduates. Since Jan 2025, the new department head has adjusted teaching loads to allow for offering these new electives rather than teaching too many classes at the 300-level and below that are not needed to serve the undergraduate student body. At least 4 to 8 elective courses will be offered each academic year that can be included in the programs of student of MS Civil Engineering graduate students, and courses outside of civil engineering are also allowed.

3. Other resources.

a. Are the available library and information resources adequate? If not, how will adequate resources be obtained? *[100 words]*

Library and information resources are adequate to excellent in these areas.

Montana Board of Regents
FISCAL ANALYSIS PART 2

b. Do existing student services have the capacity to accommodate the proposed program or unit? What are the implications of the new program or unit on services for the rest of the student body? *[150 words]*

The net increase in a small number of graduate students has negligible implications for student services.

4. **Revenues and expenditures.** Describe the implications of the new program on the financial situation of the institution. *[100 words]*

The addition of a new MS has negligible budgetary implications because it is essentially a reorganization of an existing M.S.

a. Describe any expenses anticipated with the implementation of the new program. How will these expenses be met? *[200 words]*

No new expenses are anticipated with the implementation of the new MS degree, as it is replacing an existing MS degree.

i. If funding is to come from the reallocation of existing state appropriated funds, please indicate the sources of the reallocation. What impact will the reallocation of funds in support of the program have on other programs? *[150 words]*

N/A

ii. If an increase in base funding is required to fund the program, indicate the amount of additional base funding and the fiscal year when the institution plans to include the base funding in the department's budget.

N/A

iii. If the funding is to come from one-time sources such as a donation, indicate the sources of other funding. What are the institution's plans for sustaining the program when that funding ends? *[150 words]*

N/A

iv. Describe the federal grant, other grant(s), special fee arrangements, or contract(s) that will be valid to fund the program. What does the institution propose to do with the program upon termination of those funds? *[150 words]*

N/A

5. **Student fees.** If the proposed program intends to impose new course, class, lab, or program fees, please list the type and amount of the fee. (Approval of the program does not imply approval of fees. Authorization for new fees is a separate BOR process.)

Montana Board of Regents

FISCAL ANALYSIS PART 2

No new student fees will be imposed. Students in this option will be subject to the same fees as other students in the Lance College of Mines and Engineering.

6. This form must be accompanied by the fiscal analysis form.

Signature/Date

College or School Dean: 11/26/2026

Chief Academic Officer: 2/2/2026

Chief Executive Officer:

Flagship Provost*:

Flagship President*:

*Not applicable to the Community Colleges.

Montana Board of Regents

FISCAL ANALYSIS PART 2

Appendix A – Proposed New Curriculum

Montana University System

REQUEST TO PLAN FORM

ITEM 218-1501-R0525 **Meeting Date**

Request for authorization to plan standalone M.S. degrees in Mechanical Engineering and Civil Engineering that would replace the two options currently under General Engineering

Program/Center/Institute Title:	**M.S. Mechanical Engineering, M.S. Civil Engineering**	Planned 6-digit CIP code:	**14.1901**
Campus, School/Department:	**Montana Technological University, Lance College of Mines and Engineering**	Expected Final Submission Date:	**November 2025**
Contact Name/Info:	**Rick LaDouceur, rladuouceur@mtech.edu, 406-496-4186** **Mary MacLaughlin, mmaclaughlin@mtech.edu, 406-496-4655**		

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.**

Montana Tech's existing M.S. degree in General Engineering has two options – Mechanical Engineering and Civil Engineering. The proposed new program is to instead offer standalone M.S. degrees in Mechanical Engineering and Civil Engineering that would replace the General Engineering – Mechanical Option M.S. degree and the General Engineering – Civil Option M.S.degree. Replacing the General Engineering M.S. Options with separate Mechanical Engineering and Civil Engineering M.S. degrees is consistent with changes made at the B.S. level in 2018. Like the General Engineering M.S. degree, the Mechanical Engineering and Civil Engineering M.S. degrees would have thesis and non-thesis options.

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).**

Offering standalone Mechanical Engineering and Civil Engineering M.S. degrees instead of the current General Engineering – Mechanical M.S. degree better meets the needs of students, industry, and Montana Tech. The name of the degree (Mechanical Engineering or Civil Engineering, as opposed to General Engineering) is important in job applications and job descriptions. Graduates are sometimes overlooked by prospective employers, because job postings frequently specify Mechanical Engineering or Civil Engineering as the degree requirement and do not list General Engineering. Replacing the General Engineering M.S. – Mechanical Option and Civil Option with a properly named Mechanical Engineering M.S. degree and Civil Engineering M.S. degree would enable graduates and prospective employers to more effectively connect with one another. Montana Tech is also expected to benefit from the change because prospective students will be more effectively recruited into named Mechanical Engineering and Civil Engineering programs than into a General Engineering program.

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

Montana University System
REQUEST TO PLAN FORM

None. Because the new program is essentially a renaming of an existing program, the curricula, courses, library, faculty, and research infrastructure are in place.

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).**

Past and current research collaborations in the Mechanical Engineering department are numerous between and among Montana Tech departments, the University of Montana-Missoula, Montana State University-Bozeman, and the Montana Bureau of Mines and Geology, and these collaborations will continue. The Civil Engineering department has a number of new faculty eager to build research collaborations within and external to Montana Tech. No new courses are required, and existing course sharing and research collaborations are expected to continue.

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 M.S. degrees in Mechanical Engineering and Civil Engineering fits Montana Tech's mission. The curriculum exists and is successful. Creating Mechanical Engineering M.S. and Civil Engineering M.S. aligns the B.S. and M.S. degree names and facilitates obtaining employment for mechanical engineering graduates. Like the current General Engineering M.S., the Mechanical Engineering and Civil Engineering M.S. will contribute to exemplary graduate education and research, blending theory with practice to enable program graduates to significantly impact their profession.

Signature/Date
Chief Academic Officer: 3/18/25
Chief Research Officer*:
Chief Executive Officer: 3/20/25
Flagship Provost:**
Flagship President:**

*Center/Institute Proposal only
**Not applicable to the Community Colleges.

Montana Board of Regents

CURRICULUM PROPOSAL FORM

Appendix A – Proposed Curriculum: M.S. Civil Engineering

The proposed Master of Science in Civil Engineering requires that the admitted student have a degree in civil engineering or a related field. Math through differential equations and an introductory course in structural engineering are required, along with a set of classes that demonstrate breadth in fundamentals of engineering.

The Civil Engineering Department, which is hosting the proposed option, has excellent facilities and equipment for laboratory, numerical, and field investigations. Opportunities for applied research projects are plentiful.

Admission Requirements:	B.S. in Civil Engineering or related field. Math through Differential Equations. An introductory course in structural engineering Demonstrated breadth in fundamentals of engineering (at least 3 of the following: fluid mechanics, dynamics thermodynamics, engineering economics, surveying)
Options:	Thesis (30 credits), Publishable Paper (30 credits), or Non-Thesis (36 credits)
Seminar Requirements (2 credits):	TC 5150 Graduate Writing Seminar or equivalent (1 cr) ENGR 5940 Engineering Seminar (1 cr) Two credits of seminar (TC 5150 and ENGR 5940, minimum 1 credit each) are required for all students pursuing the M.S. Civil Engineering degree.
Coursework Requirements *(20 credits for thesis or publishable paper)* *(34 credits for non-thesis project)*	*Core Courses*: As the field of civil engineering is very broad and interdisciplinary, there are no predetermined core courses that are required for all students pursuing the M.S. Civil Engineering degree. Students who select the non-thesis option are required to take ECIV 590W Graduate Research or Design Project (3 credits minimum) as part of their coursework. *Electives*: 400 and 500-level engineering courses approved by the student's advisor and graduate committee. A minimum of 9 credits must be ECIV courses. Courses outside of engineering (6 credits maximum) may be included if approved by the student's advisor and graduate committee. *At least half of the minimum course credits for either option must be at the 500 level.*
Thesis (8 credits)	ECIV 599W Thesis Research (8 credits minimum) Students who select the thesis option are required to take ECIV 599W Thesis Research (8 credits minimum). Under special circumstances, thesis credits in another department may be considered.

Montana Board of Regents

CURRICULUM PROPOSAL FORM

Examinations:
The final examination for thesis and publishable paper-option students will consist of an oral presentation and defense of the thesis, or publishable paper. Questions may be asked on any topic related to the thesis/paper or coursework taken as part of the graduate program. The presentation will be open to all interested parties, but the defense following the presentation will be open only to the student's graduate committee.

The final examination for non-thesis option students will consist of one of the following:

- A written and/or oral examination formulated by the student's graduate committee. The oral examination will draw questions from the written examination plus any coursework undertaken as part of the graduate program.
- An oral presentation and defense, similar to the thesis or publishable paper option.

Students who have not taken the Fundamentals of Engineering Examination will be required to do so.

Montana University System

REQUEST TO PLAN FORM

ITEM 211-1502-R0324 **Meeting Date March 2023**

Request for authorization to plan a Certificate of Applied Sciences in Broadband Technology

Program/Center/Institute Title: **Broadband Technology, C.A.S** Planned 6-digit CIP code: **46.0303**

Campus, School/Department: **Highlands College of Montana Technological University** Expected Final Submission Date: **Spring 2025**

Contact Name/Info: **Michelle Morley/Director Associate of Science & Curriculum, 406-496-3778**

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.**

The Broadband Technology, Certificate of Applied Science will provide students with training needed to gain employment in the broadband telecommunications industry. The one-semester, 30-credit program covers broadband/telecommunication issues and procedures in the areas of safety, warehousing, fiber and splicing, and equipment operations. Students in the program will receive industry recognized training in, CDL-A (Commercial Driver's License), OSHA-10, Flagging, Rigging, First Aid & CPR and Splicing. The program will be delivered in a hybrid format utilizing online instruction for the theory and evening/weekend scheduling for the hands-on labs.

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 state of Montana and Governor Gianforte has made narrowing the digital divide and providing reliable high-speed internet to rural communities and underserved populations a priority.[1] The significant increase in broadband access necessitates a substantial increase in the workforce needed to address narrowing the digital divide. Over the next four years, projections indicate that more than half of Montana's broadband-related positions will face shortages. Manual roles are expected to have the most significant deficit, with a projected 36% labor shortage by 2026. Shortages in key roles such as laborers (36% gap), locators (18% gap), and restoration crews (9% gap) could cause delays and increase costs if labor needs to be sourced outside the state to fill gaps.[2] The Broadband Technology CAS will meet the employment gaps by providing short-term, accelerated workforce training in these labor-intensive positions allowing the expansion of broadband across the state to continue unimpeded by the lack of a skilled workforce.

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[1] Governor's Office. "Governor Gianforte Announces $628 Million to Expand Broadband Access." *News.mt.gov*, 26 June 2023, news.mt.gov/Governors-Office/Governor_Gianforte_Announces_628_Million_To_Expand_Broadband_Access. Accessed 04 Nov. 2023.

[2] Montana Broadband Office. *BEAD Five-Year Action Plan*. 16 May 2023.

Montana University System
REQUEST TO PLAN FORM

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

The applied technical courses specific to broadband technology with the exception of the safety and certifications and CDL courses will need to be created. Faculty will need to be identified and hired to teach the applied technical broadband courses. Some of the heavy equipment and tractor/trailer combinations utilized in the Pre-Apprentice Line program and CDL training will be shared. Highlands College will partner with industry in the identification and purchase of necessary broadband specific technical equipment.

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).

Both the Broadband Technology Program and the Pre-Apprentice Line Program require most of the same safety and certification training which will be taught to students in both programs at the same time as it requires specialized instruction that is currently contracted out. Additionally, by scheduling the Broadband Technology labs during the evenings and weekends, the more expensive equipment, specifically the heavy equipment and CDL tractor/trailers can be shared with the Pre-Apprentice Line Program.

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 Broadband Technology CAS supports the mission and vision of Montana Tech to provide workforce development education and vision through an innovative broadband curriculum. Through a hybrid curriculum that blends online theory with hands-on industry recognized practice, the Broadband Technology programs delivers the labor-intensive skills and certifications needed for immediate employability in the broadband industry. The Broadband Technology program advances the strategic goals of Montana Tech through:

- The promotion and affordability of an education that allows students across the state of Montana the utilize flexibility in scheduling through the hybrid delivery of a short-term, accelerated workforce training meeting the needs of both students and industry.
- The Broadband Technology CAS will be a program of distinction due to the connection with the established and successful Pre-Apprentice Line Program and the flexibility the program provides to students through hybrid delivery and one semester program length.
- The Broadband Technology CAS will continue Montana Tech's goal of delivering hands-on learning on broadband equipment and partnerships within the broadband telecommunications industry.

Montana University System

REQUEST TO PLAN FORM

Signature/Date	
Chief Academic Officer:	1/18/24
Chief Research Officer*:	
Chief Executive Officer:	1/22/24
Flagship Provost:**	
Flagship President:**	

*Center/Institute Proposal only
**Not applicable to the Community Colleges.

ACADEMIC ITEMS MEMORANDUM

April 30, 2026

To: Chief Academic Officers

From: Joe Thiel
Deputy Commissioner for Academic, Research, and Student Affairs

RE: Approval of April 2026 Academic Items

The following April 2026 academic items have been approved:

LEVEL I ITEMS:

University of Montana

- Request to terminate multiple concentrations: BA in Classics with concentrations in Classical Languages, Latin Language Education, Latin; BA in Russian with concentration in Russian Language Education
  Item #1003-LI0526
- Request to terminate the BFA in Sound Design and Media Technology
  Item #1004-LI0526
- Notification to place multiple minors in moratorium: Russian Studies, European Studies, Arabic Studies
  Item #1005-LI0526
- Request for authorization to terminate multiple certificates: World Competencies, Sonic Arts, New West: Art and the Environment, Interactive Art and Media, Athletic Injury, Sports Coaching, Wilderness Emergency Medicine, Exercise is Medicine
  Item #1006-LI0526
- Request for authorization to retitle the BA in Classics with a concentration in Classical Civilization to BA in Classical Studies
  Item #1007-LI0526
- Request authorization to establish a certificate in esports
  Item #1008-LI0526
- Request authorization to establish a Planetarium Presenter certificate
  Item #1009-LI0526
- Request authorization to establish a certificate in Global Change Biology
  Item #1010-LI0526
- Notification to place the minor in Chinese into moratorium
  Item #1013-LI0526
- Authorization to terminate the MA in Economics
  Item #1015-LI0526
- Notification to place the BS in Public Health online
  Item #1018-LI0526

LEVEL II ITEMS:

- Request authorization to consolidate the Learning and Belonging (LAB) School within the Institution for Early Childhood Education
  Item #1011-LII0526
- Request for authorization to establish the Institute for Human Centered Artificial Intelligence
  Item #1017-LII0526

MONTANA UNIVERSITY SYSTEM
OFFICE OF COMMISSIONER OF HIGHER EDUCATION

560 N. Park – PO Box 203201 – Helena, Montana 59620-3201
(406) 449-9124 - FAX (406) 449-9171

- Request for authorization to establish the Montana Public Health Training Center
  Item #1005-LII0326

University of Montana Western

- Request to establish the Land, Water and Sky Center
  Item #1601-LII0326

Montana Technological University

- Request for authorization to establish a Certificate of Applied Science in Broadband Technology
  Item # 1501-LII0326
- Request for authorization to establish a CTS in Heavy Equipment operations
  Item #1502-LII0326
- Request for authorization to establish a CTS in Fiber Splicing
  Item #1503-LII0326
- Request for authorization to establish a CTS in Warehousing
  Item # 1504-LII0326
- Request for authorization to establish an MS in Mechanical Engineering
  Item # 1505-LII0326
- Request for authorization to establish an MS in Civil Engineering
  Item #1506-LII0326

Sincerely,

Joseph W Thiel

Joe Thiel
Deputy Commissioner for Academic, Research, and Student Affairs

ACADEMIC ITEMS MEMORANDUM

DATE: April 17, 2026

TO: Chief Academic Officers, Montana University System

FROM: Joe Thiel, Interim Deputy Commissioner for Academic, Research, and Student Affairs

RE: April 2026 Academic Items

Contained within this memorandum are Level I and Level II proposals submitted by the institutions of the Montana University System in April 2026. These proposals include items for which approval authority has been designated by the Board of Regents to the individual institutions or the Commissioner of Higher Education. These Level I items are being sent to you for your review. 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. Issues not resolved should be submitted in writing to OCHE by noon on Friday, April 24, 2026. You will be notified of approved proposals by April 30, 2026. The Board of Regents will be notified of the approved proposals at the May 2026 meeting of the Board.

LEVEL I ITEMS:

University of Montana

- Request to terminate multiple concentrations: BA in Classics with concentrations in Classical Languages, Latin Language Education, Latin; BA in Russian with concentration in Russian Language Education
  Item #1003-LI0526
- Request to terminate the BFA in Sound Design and Media Technology
  Item #1004-LI0526
- Notification to place multiple minors in moratorium: Russian Studies, European Studies, Arabic Studies
  Item #1005-LI0526
- Request for authorization to terminate multiple certificates: World Competencies, Sonic Arts, New West: Art and the Environment, Interactive Art and Media, Athletic Injury, Sports Coaching, Wilderness Emergency Medicine, Exercise is Medicine
  Item #1006-LI0526
- Request for authorization to retitle the BA in Classics with a concentration in Classical Civilization to BA in Classical Studies
  Item #1007-LI0526
- Request authorization to establish a certificate in esports
  Item #1008-LI0526
- Request authorization to establish a Planetarium Presenter certificate
  Item #1009-LI0526
- Request authorization to establish a certificate in Global Change Biology
  Item #1010-LI0526
- Notification to place the minor in Chinese into moratorium
  Item #1013-LI0526
- Authorization to terminate the MA in Economics
  Item #1015-LI0526

- Notification to place the BS in Public Health online
  Item #1018-LI0526

LEVEL II ITEMS:

- Request authorization to consolidate the Learning and Belonging (LAB) School within the Institution for Early Childhood Education
  Item #1011-LII0526
- Request for authorization to establish the Institute for Human Centered Artificial Intelligence
  Item #1017-LII0526

Montana Board of Regents

ACADEMIC PROPOSAL REQUEST FORM

April 2026

ITEM 1003-LI0526

Request authorization to terminate multiple concentrations:

- **BA in Classics with concentration in Classical Languages**
- **BA in Classics with concentration in Latin Language Education**
- **BA in Classics with concentration in Latin**
- **BA in Russian with concentration in Russian Language Education**

Institution: **University of Montana-Missoula** CIP Code: **Various**

Program/Center/Institute Title: **College of Humanities and Social Sciences**

Includes (please specify below): Face-to-face Offering: _____ Online Offering: _____ Blended Offering: _____

Options: _____

Proposal Summary [360 words maximum]

What: We requesting to terminate these concentrations due to limited enrollments or completions in the last seven years. The parent majors for all concentrations will remain active and available to students.

Why: This is part of the ongoing Academic Portfolio Review process at the University of Montana.

Resources: None

ATTACHMENTS

- **TERM_A: Concentration in Classical Languages**
- **TERM_B: Concentration in Latin Language Education**
- **TERM_C: Concentration in Latin**
- **TERM_D: Concentration in Russian Language Education**

Please mark the appropriate type of request and submit with any additional materials, including those listed in parentheses following the type of request. For more information pertaining to the types of requests listed below, how to complete an item request, or additional forms please visit http://mus.edu/che/arsa/academicproposals.asp.

x A. Level I:

OCHE Notification

_____ **1a. Placing a postsecondary educational program into moratorium** (Program Termination and Moratorium Form)

Montana Board of Regents
ACADEMIC PROPOSAL REQUEST FORM

1b. **Withdrawing a postsecondary educational program from moratorium**

2. **Re-titling, terminating or revising a campus certificate of 29 credits or less**

3. **Offering an existing postsecondary educational program via distance or online delivery**

OCHE Approvals

4. **Re-titling an existing postsecondary educational program**

X 5. **Terminating an existing postsecondary educational program** (Program Termination and Moratorium Form)

6. **Consolidating existing postsecondary educational programs** (Curriculum Proposal Form)

7. **Establishing a new minor where there is a major or an option in a major** (Curriculum Proposal Form)

8. **Revising a postsecondary educational program** (Curriculum Proposal Form)

9. **Establishing a temporary C.A.S. or A.A.S. degree program Approval limited to 2 years**

10. **Withdrawing a postsecondary program from moratorium**

11. **Establishing a campus certificate of 29 credits or less (Curriculum Proposal Form)**

B. Level II:

1. **Establishing a new postsecondary educational program** (Curriculum Proposal and Completed Request to Plan Form)

2. **Requesting Permanent authorization for a temporary C.A.S. or A.A.S degree program** (Curriculum Proposal and Completed Request to Plan Form)

3. **Requesting a variation of the 120-credit baccalaureate degrees** *Exception to policy 301.11*

4. **Forming, eliminating or consolidating an academic, administrative, or research unit** (Curriculum or Center/Institute Proposal and completed Request to Plan, except when eliminating or consolidating)

5. **Re-titling an academic, administrative, or research unit**

Montana University System

PROGRAM TERMINATION/MORATORIUM FORM

Please complete the following questionnaire prior to submission of a program for termination or placement into moratorium. Please add additional comments beneath each question where applicable.

Program Title: **BA in Classics with concentration in Classical Languages**

Program is being ____ **Placed into moratorium** **X** **Terminated**

1. **Are there currently students enrolled in the program? (If yes, please answer questions a - c below.)** **Y: X N: ____**

   a.) **Have all students currently enrolled in the program been met with and informed of the impending termination/moratorium?** **Y: X N: ____**

   b.) **What is the expected graduation date of all students from the program?**

   May 2027

   c.) **Have course offerings been planned to allow for students in the program to complete the degree in a reasonable fashion?** **Y: X N: ____**

2. **Will any faculty layoffs or changes in working conditions occur because of the termination/moratorium? (If yes, please answer questions a - b below.)** **Y: ____ N: X**

   a.) **Have the faculty affected by the program termination/moratorium been notified?** **Y: ____ N: ____**

   b.) **Please describe any layoffs that will occur including the date expected?**

Montana University System

PROGRAM TERMINATION/MORATORIUM FORM

3. The following parties, where applicable, have been notified of the impending program termination/moratorium. (Please mark X for completed, NA for not applicable):

a.) Internal Curriculum Committees X

b.) Faculty Senate X

c.) Program Public Advisory Committee NA

d.) Articulation Partners NA

4. Has there been any negative feedback received from students, faculty, or other constituents regarding the impending termination/moratorium? (If yes, please explain below.) **Y:** ____ **N:** X

Montana University System

PROGRAM TERMINATION/MORATORIUM FORM

Please complete the following questionnaire prior to submission of a program for termination or placement into moratorium. Please add additional comments beneath each question where applicable.

Program Title: **BA in Classics with concentration in Latin Language Education**

Program is being ____ **Placed into moratorium** **X** **Terminated**

1. **Are there currently students enrolled in the program? (If yes, please answer questions a - c below.)** **Y: X N: ____**

   a.) **Have all students currently enrolled in the program been met with and informed of the impending termination/moratorium?** **Y: X N: ____**

   b.) **What is the expected graduation date of all students from the program?**

   May 2027

   c.) **Have course offerings been planned to allow for students in the program to complete the degree in a reasonable fashion?** **Y: X N: ____**

2. **Will any faculty layoffs or changes in working conditions occur because of the termination/moratorium? (If yes, please answer questions a - b below.)** **Y: ____ N: X**

   a.) **Have the faculty affected by the program termination/moratorium been notified?** **Y: ____ N: ____**

   b.) **Please describe any layoffs that will occur including the date expected?**

Montana University System

PROGRAM TERMINATION/MORATORIUM FORM

3. The following parties, where applicable, have been notified of the impending program termination/moratorium. (Please mark X for completed, NA for not applicable):

a.) Internal Curriculum Committees X

b.) Faculty Senate X

c.) Program Public Advisory Committee NA

d.) Articulation Partners NA

4. Has there been any negative feedback received from students, faculty, or other constituents regarding the impending termination/moratorium? (If yes, please explain below.) **Y:** ____ **N:** X

Montana University System

PROGRAM TERMINATION/MORATORIUM FORM

Please complete the following questionnaire prior to submission of a program for termination or placement into moratorium. Please add additional comments beneath each question where applicable.

Program Title: **BA in Classics with concentration in Latin**

Program is being ____ **Placed into moratorium** **X** **Terminated**

1. **Are there currently students enrolled in the program? (If yes, please answer questions a - c below.)** **Y: X N: ____**

   a.) **Have all students currently enrolled in the program been met with and informed of the impending termination/moratorium?** **Y: X N: ____**

   b.) **What is the expected graduation date of all students from the program?**

   May 2027

   c.) **Have course offerings been planned to allow for students in the program to complete the degree in a reasonable fashion?** **Y: X N: ____**

2. **Will any faculty layoffs or changes in working conditions occur because of the termination/moratorium? (If yes, please answer questions a - b below.)** **Y: ____ N: X**

   a.) **Have the faculty affected by the program termination/moratorium been notified?** **Y: ____ N: ____**

   b.) **Please describe any layoffs that will occur including the date expected?**

Montana University System

PROGRAM TERMINATION/MORATORIUM FORM

3. The following parties, where applicable, have been notified of the impending program termination/moratorium. (Please mark X for completed, NA for not applicable):

a.) Internal Curriculum Committees X

b.) Faculty Senate X

c.) Program Public Advisory Committee NA

d.) Articulation Partners NA

4. Has there been any negative feedback received from students, faculty, or other constituents regarding the impending termination/moratorium? (If yes, please explain below.) **Y:** ____ **N:** X

Montana University System

PROGRAM TERMINATION/MORATORIUM FORM

Please complete the following questionnaire prior to submission of a program for termination or placement into moratorium. Please add additional comments beneath each question where applicable.

Program Title: **BA in Russian with concentration in Russian Language Education**

Program is being ____ **Placed into moratorium** **X** **Terminated**

1. **Are there currently students enrolled in the program? (If yes, please answer questions a - c below.)** **Y:** ____ **N:** **X**

   a.) **Have all students currently enrolled in the program been met with and informed of the impending termination/moratorium?** **Y:** ____ **N:** ____

   b.) **What is the expected graduation date of all students from the program?**

   c.) **Have course offerings been planned to allow for students in the program to complete the degree in a reasonable fashion?** **Y:** ____ **N:** ____

2. **Will any faculty layoffs or changes in working conditions occur because of the termination/moratorium? (If yes, please answer questions a - b below.)** **Y:** ____ **N:** **X**

   a.) **Have the faculty affected by the program termination/moratorium been notified?** **Y:** ____ **N:** ____

   b.) **Please describe any layoffs that will occur including the date expected?**

Montana University System

PROGRAM TERMINATION/MORATORIUM FORM

3. The following parties, where applicable, have been notified of the impending program termination/moratorium. (Please mark X for completed, NA for not applicable):

a.) Internal Curriculum Committees X

b.) Faculty Senate X

c.) Program Public Advisory Committee NA

d.) Articulation Partners NA

4. Has there been any negative feedback received from students, faculty, or other constituents regarding the impending termination/moratorium? (If yes, please explain below.) **Y:** ____ **N:** X

Montana Board of Regents

ACADEMIC PROPOSAL REQUEST FORM

April 2026

ITEM 1004-LI0526

Request authorization to terminate the BFA in Sound Design and Media Technology

Institution: **University of Montana-Missoula** CIP Code: **15.0307**

Program/Center/Institute Title: **College of the Arts and Media**

Includes (please specify below): Face-to-face Offering: _____ Online Offering: _____ Blended Offering: _____

Options: _____

Proposal Summary [360 words maximum]

What: We request to terminate these terminate the BFA in Sound Design and Media Technology due to limited enrollments since its recent inception.

Why: This is part of the ongoing Academic Portfolio Review process at the University of Montana and an overhaul of the Art and Media Arts curriculum in the College of the Arts and Media.

Resources: None

ATTACHMENTS

- **TERM: Termination Form**

Please mark the appropriate type of request and submit with any additional materials, including those listed in parentheses following the type of request. For more information pertaining to the types of requests listed below, how to complete an item request, or additional forms please visit http://mus.edu/che/arsa/academicproposals.asp.

x A. Level I:

OCHE Notification

_____ **1a. Placing a postsecondary educational program into moratorium** (Program Termination and Moratorium Form)

_____ **1b. Withdrawing a postsecondary educational program from moratorium**

_____ **2. Re-titling, terminating or revising a campus certificate of 29 credits or less**

_____ **3. Offering an existing postsecondary educational program via distance or online delivery**

Montana Board of Regents

ACADEMIC PROPOSAL REQUEST FORM

OCHE Approvals

____ **4. Re-titling an existing postsecondary educational program**

X **5. Terminating an existing postsecondary educational program** (Program Termination and Moratorium Form)

____ **6. Consolidating existing postsecondary educational programs** (Curriculum Proposal Form)

____ **7. Establishing a new minor where there is a major or an option in a major** (Curriculum Proposal Form)

____ **8. Revising a postsecondary educational program** (Curriculum Proposal Form)

____ **9. Establishing a temporary C.A.S. or A.A.S. degree program Approval limited to 2 years**

____ **10. Withdrawing a postsecondary program from moratorium**

____ **11. Establishing a campus certificate of 29 credits or less (Curriculum Proposal Form)**

____ **B. Level II:**

____ **1. Establishing a new postsecondary educational program** (Curriculum Proposal and Completed Request to Plan Form)

____ **2. Requesting Permanent authorization for a temporary C.A.S. or A.A.S degree program** (Curriculum Proposal and Completed Request to Plan Form)

____ **3. Requesting a variation of the 120-credit baccalaureate degrees** *Exception to policy 301.11*

____ **4. Forming, eliminating or consolidating an academic, administrative, or research unit** (Curriculum or Center/Institute Proposal and completed Request to Plan, except when eliminating or consolidating)

____ **5. Re-titling an academic, administrative, or research unit**

Montana University System

PROGRAM TERMINATION/MORATORIUM FORM

Please complete the following questionnaire prior to submission of a program for termination or placement into moratorium. Please add additional comments beneath each question where applicable.

Program Title: **BFA in Sound Design and Media Technology**

Program is being ____ **Placed into moratorium** **X** **Terminated**

1. **Are there currently students enrolled in the program? (If yes, please answer questions a - c below.)** **Y: X N: ____**

   There are currently 13 students enrolled.

   a.) **Have all students currently enrolled in the program been met with and informed of the impending termination/moratorium?** **Y: X N: ____**

   b.) **What is the expected graduation date of all students from the program?**

   Spring 2028

   c.) **Have course offerings been planned to allow for students in the program to complete the degree in a reasonable fashion?** **Y: X N: ____**

2. **Will any faculty layoffs or changes in working conditions occur because of the termination/moratorium? (If yes, please answer questions a - b below.)** **Y: ____ N: X**

   a.) **Have the faculty affected by the program termination/moratorium been notified?** **Y: ____ N: ____**

   b.) **Please describe any layoffs that will occur including the date expected?**

Montana University System

PROGRAM TERMINATION/MORATORIUM FORM

3. **The following parties, where applicable, have been notified of the impending program termination/moratorium. (Please mark X for completed, NA for not applicable):**

   a.) **Internal Curriculum Committees** X

   b.) **Faculty Senate** X

   c.) **Program Public Advisory Committee** NA

   d.) **Articulation Partners** NA

4. **Has there been any negative feedback received from students, faculty, or other constituents regarding the impending termination/moratorium? (If yes, please explain below.)** Y: ____ N: X

Montana Board of Regents

ACADEMIC PROPOSAL REQUEST FORM

April 2026

ITEM 1005-LI0526

Notification to place multiple minors in moratorium:

- **Minor in Russian Studies**
- **Minor in European Studies**
- **Minor in Arabic Studies**

Institution: **University of Montana-Missoula** CIP Code: **Various**

Program/Center/Institute Title: **College of Humanities and Social Sciences**

Includes (please specify below): Face-to-face Offering: _____ Online Offering: _____ Blended Offering: _____

Options: _____

Proposal Summary [360 words maximum]

What: We are placing these minors in moratorium due to limited enrollments or completions in the last seven years. The parent major for Russian Studies will remain active and available to students.

Why: This is part of the ongoing Academic Portfolio Review process at the University of Montana. Duplicated headcount data (fall and spring enrollments) limited overall participation. Completion outcomes have remained consistently low over time.

Duplicated Headcount							
	18-19	**19-20**	**20-21**	**21-22**	**22-23**	**23-24**	**24-25**
Arabic Studies	53	36	26	13	9	15	12
European Studies	5	10	14	8	7	9	4
Russian Studies	4	1	8	8	6	3	2
Completions							
	FY19	**FY20**	**FY21**	**FY22**	**FY23**	**FY24**	**FY25**
Arabic Studies	8	10	7	4	1	2	3
European Studies	1	1	3	3	3	1	3
Russian Studies	3	2	1	0	1	1	0

Placing theses minors into moratorium allows the University to pause new admissions, support currently enrolled students through a structured teach-out plan and reassess future curricular options in alignment with demonstrated demand, instructional capacity, and long-term sustainability.

Resources: The department will work closely with academic advisors to ensure a clear and supportive teach-out plan, including course availability, advising support, and timely completion pathways. Instructional resources required to support currently

Montana Board of Regents
ACADEMIC PROPOSAL REQUEST FORM

enrolled students will be deployed within existing departmental capacity. The Interdisciplinary BA in Central and Southwest Asian Studies that includes Arabic as an optional language requirement has been consulted and will direct students to Russian language options during the moratorium.

ATTACHMENTS

- **MORATORIUM_A: Minor in Russian Studies**
- **MORATORIUM_B: Minor in European Studies**
- **MORATORIUM_C: Minor in Arabic Studies**

Please mark the appropriate type of request and submit with any additional materials, including those listed in parentheses following the type of request. For more information pertaining to the types of requests listed below, how to complete an item request, or additional forms please visit http://mus.edu/che/arsa/academicproposals.asp.

X **A. Level I:**

OCHE Notification

X **1a. Placing a postsecondary educational program into moratorium** (Program Termination and Moratorium Form)

____ **1b. Withdrawing a postsecondary educational program from moratorium**

____ **2. Re-titling, terminating or revising a campus certificate of 29 credits or less**

____ **3. Offering an existing postsecondary educational program via distance or online delivery**

OCHE Approvals

____ **4. Re-titling an existing postsecondary educational program**

____ **5. Terminating an existing postsecondary educational program** (Program Termination and Moratorium Form)

____ **6. Consolidating existing postsecondary educational programs** (Curriculum Proposal Form)

____ **7. Establishing a new minor where there is a major or an option in a major** (Curriculum Proposal Form)

____ **8. Revising a postsecondary educational program** (Curriculum Proposal Form)

____ **9. Establishing a temporary C.A.S. or A.A.S. degree program Approval limited to 2 years**

____ **10. Withdrawing a postsecondary program from moratorium**

Montana Board of Regents
ACADEMIC PROPOSAL REQUEST FORM

11. Establishing a campus certificate of 29 credits or less (Curriculum Proposal Form)

B. Level II:

1. Establishing a new postsecondary educational program (Curriculum Proposal and Completed Request to Plan Form)

2. Requesting Permanent authorization for a temporary C.A.S. or A.A.S degree program (Curriculum Proposal and Completed Request to Plan Form)

3. Requesting a variation of the 120-credit baccalaureate degrees *Exception to policy 301.11*

4. Forming, eliminating or consolidating an academic, administrative, or research unit (Curriculum or Center/Institute Proposal and completed Request to Plan, except when eliminating or consolidating)

5. Re-titling an academic, administrative, or research unit

Montana University System

PROGRAM TERMINATION/MORATORIUM FORM

Please complete the following questionnaire prior to submission of a program for termination or placement into moratorium. Please add additional comments beneath each question where applicable.

Program Title: **Russian Studies Minor**

Program is being **X** **Placed into moratorium** ____ **Terminated**

1. **Are there currently students enrolled in the program? (If yes, please answer questions a - c below.)** **Y:** ____ **N:** **X**

   a.) **Have all students currently enrolled in the program been met with and informed of the impending termination/moratorium?** **Y:** ____ **N:** **X**

   b.) **What is the expected graduation date of all students from the program?**

   c.) **Have course offerings been planned to allow for students in the program to complete the degree in a reasonable fashion?** **Y:** **Y** **N:** ____

   This is an interdisciplinary minor made up of courses from across campus but was duplicative of the Russian Language minor in many ways. That minor remains and so does the course work.

2. **Will any faculty layoffs or changes in working conditions occur because of the termination/moratorium? (If yes, please answer questions a - b below.)** **Y:** ____ **N:** **X**

   a.) **Have the faculty affected by the program termination/moratorium been notified?** **Y:** ____ **N:** ____

   b.) **Please describe any layoffs that will occur including the date expected?**

Montana University System
PROGRAM TERMINATION/MORATORIUM FORM

3. The following parties, where applicable, have been notified of the impending program termination/moratorium. (Please mark X for completed, NA for not applicable):

a.) Internal Curriculum Committees X

b.) Faculty Senate X

c.) Program Public Advisory Committee NA

d.) Articulation Partners NA

4. Has there been any negative feedback received from students, faculty, or other constituents regarding the impending termination/moratorium? (If yes, please explain below.) Y: ___ N: X

Montana University System

PROGRAM TERMINATION/MORATORIUM FORM

Please complete the following questionnaire prior to submission of a program for termination or placement into moratorium. Please add additional comments beneath each question where applicable.

Program Title: **European Studies Minor**

Program is being **X** **Placed into moratorium** ____ **Terminated**

1. **Are there currently students enrolled in the program? (If yes, please answer questions a - c below.)** **Y: X N: ____**

   a.) **Have all students currently enrolled in the program been met with and informed of the impending termination/moratorium?** **Y: X N: ____**

   b.) **What is the expected graduation date of all students from the program?**

   c.) **Have course offerings been planned to allow for students in the program to complete the degree in a reasonable fashion?** **Y: ____ N: X**

   This is an interdisciplinary minor made up of courses from across campus which will still be available. Students will have access to that curriculum in order to complete their minors.

2. **Will any faculty layoffs or changes in working conditions occur because of the termination/moratorium? (If yes, please answer questions a - b below.)** **Y: ____ N: X**

   a.) **Have the faculty affected by the program termination/moratorium been notified?** **Y: ____ N: ____**

   b.) **Please describe any layoffs that will occur including the date expected?**

Montana University System
PROGRAM TERMINATION/MORATORIUM FORM

3. The following parties, where applicable, have been notified of the impending program termination/moratorium. (Please mark X for completed, NA for not applicable):

a.) Internal Curriculum Committees X

b.) Faculty Senate X

c.) Program Public Advisory Committee NA

d.) Articulation Partners NA

4. Has there been any negative feedback received from students, faculty, or other constituents regarding the impending termination/moratorium? (If yes, please explain below.) Y: ___ N: X

Montana University System

PROGRAM TERMINATION/MORATORIUM FORM

Please complete the following questionnaire prior to submission of a program for termination or placement into moratorium. Please add additional comments beneath each question where applicable.

Program Title: **Arabic Studies Minor**

Program is being **X** **Placed into moratorium** ____ **Terminated**

1. **Are there currently students enrolled in the program? (If yes, please answer questions a - c below.)** **Y: X N: ____**

   a.) **Have all students currently enrolled in the program been met with and informed of the impending termination/moratorium?** **Y: X N: ____**

   Students have been informed by the current faculty member leading the program.

   b.) **What is the expected graduation date of all students from the program?**

   One student is expected to graduate this spring. Three students are in their final required course for the minor. Three students have ARAB 202 in progress, but still require electives to complete the minor.

   c.) **Have course offerings been planned to allow for students in the program to complete the degree in a reasonable fashion?** **Y: X N: ____**

   Currently there are no Arabic language courses on the schedule for the next Academic Year, but the elective courses required for the remaining students will be available. Substitutions from related curriculum will be considered and upper division literature and culture courses will continue to be taught during the teach-out period.

2. **Will any faculty layoffs or changes in working conditions occur because of the termination/moratorium? (If yes, please answer questions a - b below.)** **Y: ____ N: X**

Y: ____ N: ____

Montana University System
PROGRAM TERMINATION/MORATORIUM FORM

a.) **Have the faculty affected by the program termination/moratorium been notified?**

b.) **Please describe any layoffs that will occur including the date expected?**

3. **The following parties, where applicable, have been notified of the impending program termination/moratorium. (Please mark X for completed, NA for not applicable):**

a.) **Internal Curriculum Committees** **X**

b.) **Faculty Senate** **X**

c.) **Program Public Advisory Committee** **NA**

d.) **Articulation Partners** **NA**

4. **Has there been any negative feedback received from students, faculty, or other constituents regarding the impending termination/moratorium? (If yes, please explain below.)** **Y: X N:**

This moratorium was requested by the offering department and the faculty lead for the program. However, taken together with the moratorium for Chinese, Faculty Senate was concerned about that the overall reductions in the number of languages offered and campus, and the strategic importance of Arabic as a critical language.

Montana Board of Regents

ACADEMIC PROPOSAL REQUEST FORM

April 2026

ITEM 1006-LI0526

Request authorization to terminate multiple certificates:

- **Certificate in World Competencies**
- **Certificate in Sonic Arts**
- **Certificate in New West: Art and the Environment**
- **Certificate in Interactive Art & Media**
- **Certificate in Athletic Injury**
- **Certificate in Sports Coaching**
- **Certificate in Wilderness Emergency Medicine**
- **Certificate in Exercise is Medicine**

Institution: **University of Montana-Missoula** CIP Code: **Various**

Program/Center/Institute Title: **College of Humanities and Social Sciences; College of the Arts and Media; College of Health**

Includes (please specify below): Face-to-face Offering: _____ Online Offering: _____ Blended Offering: _____

Options: _____

Proposal Summary [360 words maximum]

What: We request to terminate these certificates due to limited to no enrollments or completions in the last seven years.

Why: This is part of the ongoing Academic Portfolio Review process at the University of Montana.

Resources: None

ATTACHMENTS

- **TERM_A: Certificate in World Competencies**
- **TERM_B: Certificate in Sonic Arts**
- **TERM_C: New West: Art and the Environment**
- **TERM_D: Sound Design**
- **TERM_E: Interactive Art & Media**
- **TERM_F: Certificate in Athletic Injury**
- **TERM_G: Certificate in Sports Coaching**
- **TERM_H: Certificate in Wilderness Emergency Medicine**
- **TERM_I: Certificate in Exercise is Medicine**

Montana Board of Regents

ACADEMIC PROPOSAL REQUEST FORM

Please mark the appropriate type of request and submit with any additional materials, including those listed in parentheses following the type of request. For more information pertaining to the types of requests listed below, how to complete an item request, or additional forms please visit http://mus.edu/che/arsa/academicproposals.asp.

X A. Level I:

OCHE Notification

_____ **1a. Placing a postsecondary educational program into moratorium** (Program Termination and Moratorium Form)

_____ **1b. Withdrawing a postsecondary educational program from moratorium**

_____ **2. Re-titling, terminating or revising a campus certificate of 29 credits or less**

_____ **3. Offering an existing postsecondary educational program via distance or online delivery**

OCHE Approvals

_____ **4. Re-titling an existing postsecondary educational program**

X **5. Terminating an existing postsecondary educational program** (Program Termination and Moratorium Form)

_____ **6. Consolidating existing postsecondary educational programs** (Curriculum Proposal Form)

_____ **7. Establishing a new minor where there is a major or an option in a major** (Curriculum Proposal Form)

_____ **8. Revising a postsecondary educational program** (Curriculum Proposal Form)

_____ **9. Establishing a temporary C.A.S. or A.A.S. degree program Approval limited to 2 years**

_____ **10. Withdrawing a postsecondary program from moratorium**

_____ **11. Establishing a campus certificate of 29 credits or less (Curriculum Proposal Form)**

_____ B. Level II:

_____ **1. Establishing a new postsecondary educational program** (Curriculum Proposal and Completed Request to Plan Form)

_____ **2. Requesting Permanent authorization for a temporary C.A.S. or A.A.S degree program** (Curriculum Proposal and Completed Request to Plan Form)

_____ **3. Requesting a variation of the 120-credit baccalaureate degrees** *Exception to policy 301.11*

Montana Board of Regents

ACADEMIC PROPOSAL REQUEST FORM

4. **Forming, eliminating or consolidating an academic, administrative, or research unit** (Curriculum or Center/Institute Proposal and completed Request to Plan, except when eliminating or consolidating)

5. **Re-titling an academic, administrative, or research unit**

Montana University System

PROGRAM TERMINATION/MORATORIUM FORM

Please complete the following questionnaire prior to submission of a program for termination or placement into moratorium. Please add additional comments beneath each question where applicable.

Program Title: **Certificate in World Competencies**

Program is being ____ **Placed into moratorium** **X** **Terminated**

1. **Are there currently students enrolled in the program? (If yes, please answer questions a - c below.)** **Y: X N: ____**

   a.) **Have all students currently enrolled in the program been met with and informed of the impending termination/moratorium?** **Y: X N: ____**

   b.) **What is the expected graduation date of all students from the program?**

   Students are all degree-seeking students, so their graduation date varies.

   c.) **Have course offerings been planned to allow for students in the program to complete the degree in a reasonable fashion?** **Y: X N: ____**

2. **Will any faculty layoffs or changes in working conditions occur because of the termination/moratorium? (If yes, please answer questions a - b below.)** **Y: ____ N: X**

   a.) **Have the faculty affected by the program termination/moratorium been notified?** **Y: ____ N: ____**

   b.) **Please describe any layoffs that will occur including the date expected?**

Montana University System

PROGRAM TERMINATION/MORATORIUM FORM

3. The following parties, where applicable, have been notified of the impending program termination/moratorium. (Please mark X for completed, NA for not applicable):

a.) Internal Curriculum Committees X

b.) Faculty Senate X

c.) Program Public Advisory Committee NA

d.) Articulation Partners NA

4. Has there been any negative feedback received from students, faculty, or other constituents regarding the impending termination/moratorium? (If yes, please explain below.) Y: ____ N: X

Montana University System

PROGRAM TERMINATION/MORATORIUM FORM

Please complete the following questionnaire prior to submission of a program for termination or placement into moratorium. Please add additional comments beneath each question where applicable.

Program Title: **Certificate in Sonic Arts**

Program is being ____ **Placed into moratorium** **X** **Terminated**

1. **Are there currently students enrolled in the program? (If yes, please answer questions a - c below.)** **Y: X N: ____**

   a.) **Have all students currently enrolled in the program been met with and informed of the impending termination/moratorium?** **Y: X N: ____**

   b.) **What is the expected graduation date of all students from the program?**

   Students are all degree-seeking students, so their graduation date varies.

   c.) **Have course offerings been planned to allow for students in the program to complete the degree in a reasonable fashion?** **Y: X N: ____**

2. **Will any faculty layoffs or changes in working conditions occur because of the termination/moratorium? (If yes, please answer questions a - b below.)** **Y: ____ N: X**

   a.) **Have the faculty affected by the program termination/moratorium been notified?** **Y: ____ N: ____**

   b.) **Please describe any layoffs that will occur including the date expected?**

Montana University System

PROGRAM TERMINATION/MORATORIUM FORM

3. The following parties, where applicable, have been notified of the impending program termination/moratorium. (Please mark X for completed, NA for not applicable):

a.) Internal Curriculum Committees X

b.) Faculty Senate X

c.) Program Public Advisory Committee NA

d.) Articulation Partners NA

4. Has there been any negative feedback received from students, faculty, or other constituents regarding the impending termination/moratorium? (If yes, please explain below.) Y: ____ N: X

Montana University System

PROGRAM TERMINATION/MORATORIUM FORM

Please complete the following questionnaire prior to submission of a program for termination or placement into moratorium. Please add additional comments beneath each question where applicable.

Program Title: **New West and the Environment**

Program is being ____ **Placed into moratorium** **X** **Terminated**

1. **Are there currently students enrolled in the program? (If yes, please answer questions a - c below.)** **Y:** ____ **N:** **X**

   a.) **Have all students currently enrolled in the program been met with and informed of the impending termination/moratorium?** **Y:** ____ **N:** **X**

   b.) **What is the expected graduation date of all students from the program?**

   c.) **Have course offerings been planned to allow for students in the program to complete the degree in a reasonable fashion?** **Y:** ____ **N:** ____

2. **Will any faculty layoffs or changes in working conditions occur because of the termination/moratorium? (If yes, please answer questions a - b below.)** **Y:** ____ **N:** **X**

   a.) **Have the faculty affected by the program termination/moratorium been notified?** **Y:** ____ **N:** ____

   b.) **Please describe any layoffs that will occur including the date expected?**

Montana University System
PROGRAM TERMINATION/MORATORIUM FORM

3. **The following parties, where applicable, have been notified of the impending program termination/moratorium. (Please mark X for completed, NA for not applicable):**

   a.) **Internal Curriculum Committees** X

   b.) **Faculty Senate** X

   c.) **Program Public Advisory Committee** NA

   d.) **Articulation Partners** NA

4. **Has there been any negative feedback received from students, faculty, or other constituents regarding the impending termination/moratorium? (If yes, please explain below.)** Y: ____ N: X

Montana University System

PROGRAM TERMINATION/MORATORIUM FORM

Please complete the following questionnaire prior to submission of a program for termination or placement into moratorium. Please add additional comments beneath each question where applicable.

Program Title: **Certificate in Sound Design**

Program is being ____ **Placed into moratorium** **X** **Terminated**

1. **Are there currently students enrolled in the program? (If yes, please answer questions a - c below.)** **Y: X N: ____**

   a.) **Have all students currently enrolled in the program been met with and informed of the impending termination/moratorium?** **Y: X N: ____**

   b.) **What is the expected graduation date of all students from the program?**

   Students are all degree-seeking students, so their graduation date varies.

   c.) **Have course offerings been planned to allow for students in the program to complete the degree in a reasonable fashion?** **Y: X N: ____**

2. **Will any faculty layoffs or changes in working conditions occur because of the termination/moratorium? (If yes, please answer questions a - b below.)** **Y: ____ N: X**

   a.) **Have the faculty affected by the program termination/moratorium been notified?** **Y: ____ N: ____**

   b.) **Please describe any layoffs that will occur including the date expected?**

Montana University System

PROGRAM TERMINATION/MORATORIUM FORM

3. The following parties, where applicable, have been notified of the impending program termination/moratorium. (Please mark X for completed, NA for not applicable):

a.) Internal Curriculum Committees X

b.) Faculty Senate X

c.) Program Public Advisory Committee NA

d.) Articulation Partners NA

4. Has there been any negative feedback received from students, faculty, or other constituents regarding the impending termination/moratorium? (If yes, please explain below.) Y: ____ N: X

Montana University System

PROGRAM TERMINATION/MORATORIUM FORM

Please complete the following questionnaire prior to submission of a program for termination or placement into moratorium. Please add additional comments beneath each question where applicable.

Program Title: **Certificate in Interactive Art and Media**

Program is being ____ **Placed into moratorium** **X** **Terminated**

1. **Are there currently students enrolled in the program? (If yes, please answer questions a - c below.)** **Y: X N: ____**

   a.) **Have all students currently enrolled in the program been met with and informed of the impending termination/moratorium?** **Y: X N: ____**

   b.) **What is the expected graduation date of all students from the program?**

   Students are all degree-seeking students, so their graduation date varies.

   c.) **Have course offerings been planned to allow for students in the program to complete the degree in a reasonable fashion?** **Y: X N: ____**

2. **Will any faculty layoffs or changes in working conditions occur because of the termination/moratorium? (If yes, please answer questions a - b below.)** **Y: ____ N: X**

   a.) **Have the faculty affected by the program termination/moratorium been notified?** **Y: ____ N: ____**

   b.) **Please describe any layoffs that will occur including the date expected?**

Montana University System

PROGRAM TERMINATION/MORATORIUM FORM

3. The following parties, where applicable, have been notified of the impending program termination/moratorium. (Please mark X for completed, NA for not applicable):

a.) Internal Curriculum Committees X

b.) Faculty Senate X

c.) Program Public Advisory Committee NA

d.) Articulation Partners NA

4. Has there been any negative feedback received from students, faculty, or other constituents regarding the impending termination/moratorium? (If yes, please explain below.) Y: ____ N: X

Montana University System

PROGRAM TERMINATION/MORATORIUM FORM

Please complete the following questionnaire prior to submission of a program for termination or placement into moratorium. Please add additional comments beneath each question where applicable.

Program Title: **Certificate in Athletic Injury**

Program is being ____ **Placed into moratorium** **X** **Terminated**

1. **Are there currently students enrolled in the program? (If yes, please answer questions a - c below.)** **Y: X N: ____**

   a.) **Have all students currently enrolled in the program been met with and informed of the impending termination/moratorium?** **Y: X N: ____**

   b.) **What is the expected graduation date of all students from the program?**

   2028.

   c.) **Have course offerings been planned to allow for students in the program to complete the degree in a reasonable fashion?** **Y: X N: ____**

2. **Will any faculty layoffs or changes in working conditions occur because of the termination/moratorium? (If yes, please answer questions a - b below.)** **Y: ____ N: X**

   a.) **Have the faculty affected by the program termination/moratorium been notified?** **Y: ____ N: ____**

   b.) **Please describe any layoffs that will occur including the date expected?**

Montana University System

PROGRAM TERMINATION/MORATORIUM FORM

3. The following parties, where applicable, have been notified of the impending program termination/moratorium. (Please mark X for completed, NA for not applicable):

a.) Internal Curriculum Committees X

b.) Faculty Senate X

c.) Program Public Advisory Committee NA

d.) Articulation Partners NA

4. Has there been any negative feedback received from students, faculty, or other constituents regarding the impending termination/moratorium? (If yes, please explain below.) Y: ____ N: X

Montana University System

PROGRAM TERMINATION/MORATORIUM FORM

Please complete the following questionnaire prior to submission of a program for termination or placement into moratorium. Please add additional comments beneath each question where applicable.

Program Title: **Certificate in Sports Coaching**

Program is being ____ **Placed into moratorium** **X** **Terminated**

1. **Are there currently students enrolled in the program? (If yes, please answer questions a - c below.)** **Y:** ____ **N:** **X**

   a.) **Have all students currently enrolled in the program been met with and informed of the impending termination/moratorium?** **Y:** ____ **N:** **X**

   b.) **What is the expected graduation date of all students from the program?**

   c.) **Have course offerings been planned to allow for students in the program to complete the degree in a reasonable fashion?** **Y:** ____ **N:** ____

2. **Will any faculty layoffs or changes in working conditions occur because of the termination/moratorium? (If yes, please answer questions a - b below.)** **Y:** ____ **N:** **X**

   a.) **Have the faculty affected by the program termination/moratorium been notified?** **Y:** ____ **N:** ____

   b.) **Please describe any layoffs that will occur including the date expected?**

Montana University System

PROGRAM TERMINATION/MORATORIUM FORM

3. The following parties, where applicable, have been notified of the impending program termination/moratorium. (Please mark X for completed, NA for not applicable):

a.) Internal Curriculum Committees X

b.) Faculty Senate X

c.) Program Public Advisory Committee NA

d.) Articulation Partners NA

4. Has there been any negative feedback received from students, faculty, or other constituents regarding the impending termination/moratorium? (If yes, please explain below.) Y: ____ N: X

Montana University System

PROGRAM TERMINATION/MORATORIUM FORM

Please complete the following questionnaire prior to submission of a program for termination or placement into moratorium. Please add additional comments beneath each question where applicable.

Program Title: **Certificate in Wilderness Emergency Medicine**

Program is being ____ **Placed into moratorium** **X** **Terminated**

1. **Are there currently students enrolled in the program? (If yes, please answer questions a - c below.)** **Y: X N: ____**

   a.) **Have all students currently enrolled in the program been met with and informed of the impending termination/moratorium?** **Y: X N: ____**

   b.) **What is the expected graduation date of all students from the program?**

   2028.

   c.) **Have course offerings been planned to allow for students in the program to complete the degree in a reasonable fashion?** **Y: X N: ____**

2. **Will any faculty layoffs or changes in working conditions occur because of the termination/moratorium? (If yes, please answer questions a - b below.)** **Y: ____ N: X**

   a.) **Have the faculty affected by the program termination/moratorium been notified?** **Y: ____ N: ____**

   b.) **Please describe any layoffs that will occur including the date expected?**

Montana University System

PROGRAM TERMINATION/MORATORIUM FORM

3. The following parties, where applicable, have been notified of the impending program termination/moratorium. (Please mark X for completed, NA for not applicable):

a.) Internal Curriculum Committees X

b.) Faculty Senate X

c.) Program Public Advisory Committee NA

d.) Articulation Partners NA

4. Has there been any negative feedback received from students, faculty, or other constituents regarding the impending termination/moratorium? (If yes, please explain below.) Y: ____ N: X

Montana University System

PROGRAM TERMINATION/MORATORIUM FORM

Please complete the following questionnaire prior to submission of a program for termination or placement into moratorium. Please add additional comments beneath each question where applicable.

Program Title: **Certificate in Exercise is Medicine**

Program is being ____ **Placed into moratorium** **X** **Terminated**

1. **Are there currently students enrolled in the program? (If yes, please answer questions a - c below.)** **Y: X N: ____**

   a.) **Have all students currently enrolled in the program been met with and informed of the impending termination/moratorium?** **Y: X N: ____**

   b.) **What is the expected graduation date of all students from the program?**

   2029

   c.) **Have course offerings been planned to allow for students in the program to complete the degree in a reasonable fashion?** **Y: X N: ____**

2. **Will any faculty layoffs or changes in working conditions occur because of the termination/moratorium? (If yes, please answer questions a - b below.)** **Y: ____ N: X**

   a.) **Have the faculty affected by the program termination/moratorium been notified?** **Y: ____ N: ____**

   b.) **Please describe any layoffs that will occur including the date expected?**

Montana University System

PROGRAM TERMINATION/MORATORIUM FORM

3. The following parties, where applicable, have been notified of the impending program termination/moratorium. (Please mark X for completed, NA for not applicable):

a.) Internal Curriculum Committees X

b.) Faculty Senate X

c.) Program Public Advisory Committee NA

d.) Articulation Partners NA

4. Has there been any negative feedback received from students, faculty, or other constituents regarding the impending termination/moratorium? (If yes, please explain below.) Y: ____ N: X

Montana Board of Regents

ACADEMIC PROPOSAL REQUEST FORM

April 2026

ITEM 1007-LI0526

Request for Authorization to Retitle the B.A. in Classics with a Concentration in Classical Civilization to B.A. in Classical Studies

Institution: **University of Montana—Missoula** CIP Code: **16.1200**

Program/Center/Institute Title: **College of Humanities and Social Sciences**

Includes (please specify below): Face-to-face Offering: _____ Online Offering: _____ Blended Offering: _____

Options: _____

Proposal Summary [360 words maximum]

What: The University of Montana requests authorization to retitle the B.A. in Classics with a concentration in Civilization to the B.A. in Classical Studies with no concentration.

Why: We are terminating the required concentrations associated with the B.A. in Classics to create a single, streamlined degree path. The associated retitling of the remaining BA in Classics with a Concentration in Classical Civilization to the B.A. in Classical Studies also reflects this curricular update to a single unified degree.

Resources: No resources are needed to implement this change.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachments

Please mark the appropriate type of request and submit with any additional materials, including those listed in parentheses following the type of request. For more information pertaining to the types of requests listed below, how to complete an item request, or additional forms please visit http://mus.edu/che/arsa/academicproposals.asp.

x A. Level I:

Campus Approvals

_____ **1a. Placing a postsecondary educational program into moratorium** (Program Termination and Moratorium Form)

_____ **1b. Withdrawing a postsecondary educational program from moratorium**

_____ **2. Establishing, re-titling, terminating or revising a campus certificate of 29 credits or less**

_____ **3. Establishing a B.A.S./A.A./A.S. area of study**

Montana Board of Regents
ACADEMIC PROPOSAL REQUEST FORM

4. Offering an existing postsecondary educational program via distance or online delivery

OCHE Approvals

X **5. Re-titling an existing postsecondary educational program**

6. Terminating an existing postsecondary educational program (Program Termination and Moratorium Form)

7. Consolidating existing postsecondary educational programs (Curriculum Proposal Form)

8. Establishing a new minor where there is a major or an option in a major (Curriculum Proposal Form)

9. Revising a postsecondary educational program (Curriculum Proposal Form)

10. Establishing a temporary C.A.S. or A.A.S. degree program *Approval limited to 2 years*

B. Level II:

1. Establishing a new postsecondary educational program (Curriculum Proposal and Completed Request to Plan Form)

2. Permanent authorization for a temporary C.A.S. or A.A.S degree program (Curriculum Proposal and Completed Request to Plan Form)

3. Exceeding the 120-credit maximum for baccalaureate degrees *Exception to policy 301.11*

4. Forming, eliminating or consolidating an academic, administrative, or research unit (Curriculum or Center/Institute Proposal and completed Request to Plan, except when eliminating or consolidating)

5. Re-titling an academic, administrative, or research unit

Montana Board of Regents

ACADEMIC PROPOSAL REQUEST FORM

April 2026
Fall 2026

ITEM 1008-LI0526

Request authorization to establish a certificate in Esports

Institution: **University of Montana** CIP Code: 50.0411

Program/Center/Institute Title: **College of the Arts and Media**

Includes (please specify below): Face-to-face Offering: X Online Offering: X Blended Offering: _____

Options: _____

Proposal Summary [360 words maximum]

What: This request proposes the creation of an Esports Certificate, which will be housed within the Game Design and Interactive Media program within the broader College of Arts and Media (CAM). This certificate will be an addition to any major at the University of Montana, enhancing and promoting the skills and career readiness that are already being developed within the program. It will include courses such as Esports Leadership, Esports Community Engagements, Esports Broadcasting, and Esports Competition.

Why: Within Grizzly Esports, there are over 400 student-athletes with an average of 100 competitive players per year. These athletes represent over 45 different majors across campus, all of whom are connected through gaming. The intent of this certificate is to increase career opportunities for these student-athletes by offering a tangible academic benefit to what they are already learning when they participate with us. It also increases the visibility of the esports program at the state, regional, and national levels. Finally, it will give a direct connection to UM's alumni network and enhance collaboration between community members and students.

Resources: The certificate will utilize existing resources, courses, instructors, and staff to administer.

ATTACHMENTS

Curriculum Form

Please mark the appropriate type of request and submit with any additional materials, including those listed in parentheses following the type of request. For more information pertaining to the types of requests listed below, how to complete an item request, or additional forms please visit http://mus.edu/che/arsa/academicproposals.asp.

X A. Level I:

Montana Board of Regents

ACADEMIC PROPOSAL REQUEST FORM

OCHE Notification

_____ **1a. Placing a postsecondary educational program into moratorium** (Program Termination and Moratorium Form)

_____ **1b. Withdrawing a postsecondary educational program from moratorium**

_____ **2. Re-titling, terminating or revising a campus certificate of 29 credits or less**

_____ **3. Offering an existing postsecondary educational program via distance or online delivery**

OCHE Approvals

_____ **4. Re-titling an existing postsecondary educational program**

_____ **5. Terminating an existing postsecondary educational program** (Program Termination and Moratorium Form)

_____ **6. Consolidating existing postsecondary educational programs** (Curriculum Proposal Form)

_____ **7. Establishing a new minor where there is a major or an option in a major** (Curriculum Proposal Form)

_____ **8. Revising a postsecondary educational program** (Curriculum Proposal Form)

_____ **9. Establishing a temporary C.A.S. or A.A.S. degree program Approval limited to 2 years**

_____ **10. Withdrawing a postsecondary program from moratorium**

X **11. Establishing a campus certificate of 29 credits or less (Curriculum Proposal Form)**

____ **B. Level II:**

_____ **1. Establishing a new postsecondary educational program** (Curriculum Proposal and Completed Request to Plan Form)

_____ **2. Requesting Permanent authorization for a temporary C.A.S. or A.A.S degree program** (Curriculum Proposal and Completed Request to Plan Form)

_____ **3. Requesting a variation of the 120-credit baccalaureate degrees** *Exception to policy 301.11*

_____ **4. Forming, eliminating or consolidating an academic, administrative, or research unit** (Curriculum or Center/Institute Proposal and completed Request to Plan, except when eliminating or consolidating)

_____ **5. Re-titling an academic, administrative, or research unit**

Montana Board of Regents

ACADEMIC PROPOSAL REQUEST FORM

Montana Board of Regents

CURRICULUM PROPOSAL FORM

1. **Institutional Accreditation.** Is the proposal considered a minor or major substantive change per NWCCU Guidelines? Consult the institutional Accreditation Liaison Officer for more information. *[Choose one]*

   Not Substantive__x___ Minor Change_____ Major Change_____

2. **Program Accreditation.** If applicable, describe specialized program accreditation requirements that inform this proposal, including the specific accrediting body and a summary of the standards being met. *[300 words]*

   N/A

3. **Program Summary:** List the program learning outcomes for the proposed program. Use assessable learner-centered statements that indicate what students will know and be able to do, upon completing the program.

1	Analyze the esports ecosystem by explaining the cultural, technological, competitive, and economic structures that shape contemporary esports and gaming industries.
2	Demonstrate effective leadership and teamwork through planning, managing, and reflecting on esports teams, events, and community initiatives using inclusive and ethical practices.
3	Apply competitive and operational skills by participating in esports competition, player development, and event execution while adhering to professional standards and fair play.
4	Design and produce esports media experiences by utilizing broadcasting, streaming, and audience engagement techniques to communicate effectively with diverse audiences.
5	Critically evaluate ethical, social, and technological impacts of gaming and AI by integrating interdisciplinary perspectives to make informed, responsible decisions within esports and gaming contexts.

   a. List the aggregate credits required to complete the program using the following table.

	Credits
Credits in required courses offered by the department offering the program	12
Credits in required courses offered by other departments	0
Credits in institutional general education curriculum	0
Credits of free electives	0
Total credits required to complete the program	12

   b. Please include a complete listing of the proposed new curriculum in Appendix A of this document.

Montana Board of Regents
CURRICULUM PROPOSAL FORM

4. **Need for the program.** What specific student, regional, and statewide needs is the institution responding to with the proposed program? How will the proposed program meet those needs? Consider workforce, student, economic, societal, and transfer needs in your response as appropriate. *[250 words]*

The proposed certificate responds to converging workforce, economic, and societal needs at the student, regional, and statewide levels. Esports has emerged as a multibillion-dollar industry generating demand for professionals skilled in broadcasting, event production, community management, leadership, and digital media, yet formal academic pathways into these careers remain scarce, particularly in rural states like Montana. The University of Montana's program directly addresses this gap by providing structured, credit-bearing preparation for students seeking careers in esports operations, content creation, and related media industries.

At the student level, the program meets growing demand from a generation of learners who engage deeply with competitive gaming culture but lack institutional support to translate that engagement into professional competency. Courses in broadcasting, leadership, community involvement, and AI literacy provide students with transferable skills applicable well beyond esports, including communication, project management, critical thinking, and responsible technology use; competencies valued across Montana's expanding technology and creative economy sectors.

Regionally, Montana's predominantly rural landscape creates both challenges and opportunities. The program supports scholastic and collegiate esports development across the state, addressing documented interest from rural high school communities where esports programs are growing but coaching and organizational expertise are limited. By developing a pipeline of trained esports professionals and leaders, the university strengthens esports infrastructure statewide.

Economically, the program positions UM graduates to enter a labor market where esports-adjacent roles in broadcasting, event coordination, digital media production, and community management are actively growing. The integration of generative AI literacy across multiple courses further ensures graduates are prepared for an evolving, technology-driven workforce.

5. **Similar programs.** Use the table below to identify and describe the relationship between any similar programs within the Montana University System.

N/A

a. Describe how this program's learning outcomes are related or tied to other programs on campus or within the Montana University System. *[100 words]*

The certificate's learning outcomes align closely with several existing programs at the University of Montana and across the Montana University System. Competencies in communication, leadership, and teamwork connect directly to UM's Communication Studies and Business Administration programs. Media production and broadcasting outcomes complement the School of Visual and Media Arts' existing film, media arts, and journalism curricula. AI literacy components parallel outcomes being developed across UM's broader AI education initiatives. Within the Montana University System, the program's emphasis on event management, community engagement, and digital media production creates natural articulation opportunities with media and business programs at Montana State University and other MUS institutions.

Montana Board of Regents
CURRICULUM PROPOSAL FORM

b. If the proposed program substantially duplicates another program offered in the Montana University System, provide a rationale as to why any resulting duplication is a net benefit to the state and its citizens. *[200 words]*

N/A

c. Describe any efforts that were made to collaborate with similar programs at other institutions, including specific contacts and their institutional affiliations. If no efforts were made, please explain why. *[200 words]*

N/A

6. Program assessment.

a. Describe the assessment process that will be used to evaluate how well students are achieving the intended learning outcomes of the program. When will assessment activities occur and at what frequency? Refer to specialized program accreditation assessments where appropriate. *[150 words]*

Assessment of student learning outcomes occurs continuously throughout the program via a combination of formative and summative measures applied across all courses. In lecture and hybrid courses such as Esports Leadership and Creatively Exploring Artificial Intelligence, homework assignments weighed at 60% of the final grade provide recurring, low-stakes checkpoints on conceptual understanding and skill development throughout the semester, with a culminating final project or portfolio (40%) evaluated at semester's end. Applied and practicum courses, including Esports Head Captain Practicum and Esports Broadcasting, use pass/no pass assessment tied to demonstrated professional competencies, with a minimum threshold of 70%. Community and event-focused courses such as Esports Community Involvement weight the capstone project more heavily (70%) to reflect applied learning. Courses covering game history, game types, and their societal themes incorporate both individual research assignments and peer critique activities to assess critical analysis skills. Program-level outcomes are reviewed annually through faculty evaluation of aggregate course performance data.

b. What direct and indirect measures will be used to assess student learning? *[100 words]*

Students will be primarily evaluated by reflection essays and technical proficiency in certain areas and tasks. Observation and participation will also be included in the evaluation.

c. How will you ensure that the assessment findings will be used to ensure the quality of the program? *[100 words]*

Montana Board of Regents
CURRICULUM PROPOSAL FORM

All courses will be evaluated mid-semester and at the end of the semester to ensure that the level of quality remains high for students and that we are appropriately adapting to the industry and their needs to ensure they are successful when the leave the institution.

Signature/Date

College or School Dean: Jennifer Cavanaugh, signed in CourseLeaf 2/25/26

Chief Academic Officer: John DeBoer, signed for Adrea Lawrence in CourseLeaf 3/31/26

Appendix A – Proposed New Curriculum

Montana Board of Regents

ACADEMIC PROPOSAL REQUEST FORM

April 2026

ITEM 1009-LI0526

Request authorization to establish a Planetarium Presenter Certificate

Institution: **University of Montana-Missoula** CIP Code: **09.0908**

Program/Center/Institute Title: **College of Science**

Includes (please specify below): Face-to-face Offering: _____ Online Offering: _____ Blended Offering: _____

Options: _____

Proposal Summary [360 words maximum]

What: The Department of Physics and Astronomy proposes the creation of a 15-credit undergraduate Planetarium Presenter Certificate within the astronomy discipline. This certificate provides students with structured training in astronomy content knowledge, planetarium operations, science communication, and public outreach. It formally recognizes the specialized skills developed by undergraduate planetarium presenters and offers an accessible credential for students from any major who want experience in astronomy education, science communication, or public engagement.

Why: Astronomy is a rapidly advancing discipline with strong public interest and significant scientific impact. The certificate will provide students with a competitive edge for graduate programs, internships, and careers in science and technology. It also aligns with the University of Montana's mission to foster innovation and broaden educational access. The required internship and capstone ensure practical experience and a culminating project suitable for professional portfolios or graduate school applications.

Resources: This certificate will use existing resources and integrate student interns into the operations of the UM Planetarium.

ATTACHMENTS

Curriculum Form

Please mark the appropriate type of request and submit with any additional materials, including those listed in parentheses following the type of request. For more information pertaining to the types of requests listed below, how to complete an item request, or additional forms please visit http://mus.edu/che/arsa/academicproposals.asp.

x A. Level I:

OCHE Notification

_____ **1a. Placing a postsecondary educational program into moratorium** (Program Termination and Moratorium Form)

Montana Board of Regents
ACADEMIC PROPOSAL REQUEST FORM

1b. Withdrawing a postsecondary educational program from moratorium

2. Re-titling, terminating or revising a campus certificate of 29 credits or less

3. Offering an existing postsecondary educational program via distance or online delivery

OCHE Approvals

4. Re-titling an existing postsecondary educational program

5. Terminating an existing postsecondary educational program (Program Termination and Moratorium Form)

6. Consolidating existing postsecondary educational programs (Curriculum Proposal Form)

7. Establishing a new minor where there is a major or an option in a major (Curriculum Proposal Form)

8. Revising a postsecondary educational program (Curriculum Proposal Form)

9. Establishing a temporary C.A.S. or A.A.S. degree program Approval limited to 2 years

10. Withdrawing a postsecondary program from moratorium

X **11. Establishing a campus certificate of 29 credits or less (Curriculum Proposal Form)**

B. Level II:

1. Establishing a new postsecondary educational program (Curriculum Proposal and Completed Request to Plan Form)

2. Requesting Permanent authorization for a temporary C.A.S. or A.A.S degree program (Curriculum Proposal and Completed Request to Plan Form)

3. Requesting a variation of the 120-credit baccalaureate degrees *Exception to policy 301.11*

4. Forming, eliminating or consolidating an academic, administrative, or research unit (Curriculum or Center/Institute Proposal and completed Request to Plan, except when eliminating or consolidating)

5. Re-titling an academic, administrative, or research unit

Montana Board of Regents
CURRICULUM PROPOSAL FORM

1. **Institutional Accreditation.** Is the proposal considered a minor or major substantive change per NWCCU Guidelines? Consult the institutional Accreditation Liaison Officer for more information. [Choose one]

   Not Substantive__X___ Minor Change_____ Major Change_____

2. **Program Accreditation.** If applicable, describe specialized program accreditation requirements that inform this proposal, including the specific accrediting body and a summary of the standards being met. [300 words]

   n/a

3. **Program Summary:** List the program learning outcomes for the proposed program. Use assessable learner-centered statements that indicate what students will know and be able to do, upon completing the program.

   Students who complete the Planetarium Presenter Certificate will be able to:

   - Demonstrate foundational astronomy knowledge
   - Operate planetarium technologies and production tools
   - Deliver engaging planetarium presentations
   - Communicate complex scientific ideas clearly and accurately
   - Apply professional practices relevant to science centers and nonprofit institutions
   - Produce a culmination project that demonstrates mastery

   a. List the aggregate credits required to complete the program using the following table.

	Credits
Credits in required courses offered by the department offering the program	9
Credits in required courses offered by other departments	
Credits in institutional general education curriculum	
Credits of free electives	6
Total credits required to complete the program	15

Montana Board of Regents
CURRICULUM PROPOSAL FORM

b. Please include a complete listing of the proposed new curriculum in Appendix A of this document.
c.

4. **Need for the program.** What specific student, regional, and statewide needs is the institution responding to with the proposed program? How will the proposed program meet those needs? Consider workforce, student, economic, societal, and transfer needs in your response as appropriate. [250 words]

   Astronomy is a rapidly advancing discipline with strong public interest and significant scientific impact. The certificate will provide students with a competitive edge for graduate programs, internships, and careers in science and technology. It also aligns with the University of Montana's mission to foster innovation and broaden educational access.

5. **Similar programs.** Use the table below to identify and describe the relationship between any similar programs within the Montana University System.

Institution Name	Degree	Program Title	What is the program enrollment for the last three academic years?
N/A			

   a. Describe how this program's learning outcomes are related or tied to other programs on campus or within the Montana University System. [100 words]
   We envision this program being open to any undergraduate with a passion for the sky and communicating scientific ideas. Perhaps a computer science major is interested in coding and building a new show or a film maker wishes to learn how to design a show for a planetarium – these two fields are growing and at the moment, most participants are self-educated. We would like to build on this certificate to become the place to go to learn about planetariums and to offer continuing education for teachers who may have defunct star labs sitting in a closet somewhere. We also envision building an outreach program with mobile units going to schools to teach science.

   b. If the proposed program substantially duplicates another program offered in the Montana University System, provide a rationale as to why any resulting duplication is a net benefit to the state and its citizens. [200 words]

Montana Board of Regents
CURRICULUM PROPOSAL FORM

To the best of our knowledge, no institution in the United States currently offers a credential specifically focused on planetarium presenting. Establishing this certificate positions the University of Montana as a national leader in undergraduate experiential astronomy education and lays the groundwork for possible future curriculum development in science communication and museum or planetarium management.

c. Describe any efforts that were made to collaborate with similar programs at other institutions, including specific contacts and their institutional affiliations. If no efforts were made, please explain why. [200 words]

The educational coordinator of the International Planetarium Society noted that there are no formal educational degrees for planetarium studies offered in the US or Europe. Her current professional role is at South Dakota
State University and they are talking about offering a similar certificate but have not yet implemented. I have discussed with the director of the Museum of the Rockies and with the MGSC managers at MSU and UM, they are interested in collaborating in the future on planetarium education studies for current teachers offered as a continuing education credit during the summer. MGSC noted that they may have funds for research-based projects in this field.

6. Program assessment.

a. Describe the assessment process that will be used to evaluate how well students are achieving the intended learning outcomes of the program. When will assessment activities occur and at what frequency? Refer to specialized program accreditation assessments where appropriate. [150 words]

Class grades for the assigned curriculum will be used to assess progress. The capstone project will be evaluated by the Planetarium Director and Dr. Mark Reiser. The number of school shows conducted during the certificate period will also be assessed (base line requirements not yet established).

b. What direct and indirect measures will be used to assess student learning? [100 words]

Montana Board of Regents
CURRICULUM PROPOSAL FORM

Trainings, practice shows, cooperative learning sessions held in the planetarium, direct observation from Physics & Astronomy staff/faculty, feedback from teachers and students who attend shows, and capstone evaluations.

c. How will you ensure that the assessment findings will be used to ensure the quality of the program? [100 words]

Students learn by doing – they are given feedback both by peers, supervisors, and attendees for continual growth and development of their creative, interpersonal, and technical skills.

Signature/Date

College or School Dean: Approved by Bruce Bowler in CourseLeaf, 1/29/26

Chief Academic Officer: Approved by John DeBoer for Adrea Lawrence in CourseLeaf, 1/29/26

Montana Board of Regents

CURRICULUM PROPOSAL FORM

Appendix A – Proposed New Curriculum

Total Credits: 15

Core Requirement Courses (9 credits):

ASTR 131N/134N, 132N/135N, or 142N (4 credits)

ASTR 498 Planetarium Internship (4 credits): One credit per semester for four semesters of school group planetarium presentations. This learning also includes: Digistar Training as well as running planetarium shows for student groups and the public.

ASTR 499 Capstone/Project (1 credit): Students develop and present a public show in the planetarium.

Elective Courses (6 credits):

ASTR 351 - Planetary and Exoplanet Science. 3 Credits.

ASTR 353 - Galaxies and Cosmology. 3 Credits.

ASTR 363 - Stellar Astronomy & Astrophysics I. 3 Credits.

ASTR 365 - Stellar Astrophysics II. 3 Credits.

CRWR 425 - Storytelling. 3 Credits.

COMX 111A - Public Speaking. 3 credits

NPAD 367 - Leadership and Nonprofits. 3 Credits.

COMX 391 Science Communication

PHSX 330 - Communicating Physics. 3 Credits.

MART 305 - 3D Animation 1. 3 credits

MART 460 - Fundamentals of the Unity Game Engine. 3 credits.

Montana Board of Regents

ACADEMIC PROPOSAL REQUEST FORM

April 2026

ITEM 1010-LI0526

Request authorization to establish a certificate in Global Change Biology

Institution: **University of Montana-Missoula** CIP Code: **26.1305**

Program/Center/Institute Title: **Division of Biological and Biomedical Sciences**

Includes (please specify below): Face-to-face Offering: X Online Offering: _____ Blended Offering: _____

Options: _____

Proposal Summary [360 words maximum]

What: The certificate formalizes existing curriculum on the biological consequences of global change, consolidating course content that is currently distributed across multiple offerings but not organized within a dedicated program. All coursework draws from existing DBS courses delivered through a range of modalities, including lecture, laboratory, field trips, and intensive field-based instruction. There are no comparable certificate programs in global change biology at UM or elsewhere in the Montana University System.

Why: Anticipating and responding to the biological consequences of global change is among the most significant challenges of the 21st century. Society depends on living organisms and the ecosystems they support for food, medicine, water quality, erosion control, and pollination. Addressing this challenge requires deep grounding in biological science and quantitative analytical approaches. Student interest in this area is strong and broad, spanning prospective pathways in biomedical sciences, biotechnology, conservation, resource management, and ecological restoration. This certificate responds directly to that demand by providing a structured, recognized credential in a domain where UM has existing faculty expertise and curricular depth. The program also aligns with the UM Academic Priorities and Planning Statement, specifically its emphasis on interdisciplinary capabilities, multiple instructional modalities, and 21st-century workforce preparation. Because the program draws on biological sciences while connecting naturally to fields such as geoscience, chemistry, economics, and law, it has potential to serve as a foundation for broader interdisciplinary program development across campus and across MUS institutions in the future.

Resources: The certificate curriculum is composed entirely of existing courses currently offered by DBS faculty. Implementation is contingent only on formal program approval and catalog registration.

ATTACHMENTS

Curriculum Form

Please mark the appropriate type of request and submit with any additional materials, including those listed in parentheses following the type of request. For more information pertaining to the types of requests listed below, how to complete an item request, or additional forms please visit http://mus.edu/che/arsa/academicproposals.asp.

Montana Board of Regents

ACADEMIC PROPOSAL REQUEST FORM

A. Level I:

OCHE Notification

1a. Placing a postsecondary educational program into moratorium (Program Termination and Moratorium Form)

1b. Withdrawing a postsecondary educational program from moratorium

2. Re-titling, terminating or revising a campus certificate of 29 credits or less

3. Offering an existing postsecondary educational program via distance or online delivery

OCHE Approvals

4. Re-titling an existing postsecondary educational program

5. Terminating an existing postsecondary educational program (Program Termination and Moratorium Form)

6. Consolidating existing postsecondary educational programs (Curriculum Proposal Form)

7. Establishing a new minor where there is a major or an option in a major (Curriculum Proposal Form)

8. Revising a postsecondary educational program (Curriculum Proposal Form)

9. Establishing a temporary C.A.S. or A.A.S. degree program Approval limited to 2 years

10. Withdrawing a postsecondary program from moratorium

11. Establishing a campus certificate of 29 credits or less (Curriculum Proposal Form)

B. Level II:

1. Establishing a new postsecondary educational program (Curriculum Proposal and Completed Request to Plan Form)

2. Requesting Permanent authorization for a temporary C.A.S. or A.A.S degree program (Curriculum Proposal and Completed Request to Plan Form)

3. Requesting a variation of the 120-credit baccalaureate degrees *Exception to policy 301.11*

Montana Board of Regents

ACADEMIC PROPOSAL REQUEST FORM

4. **Forming, eliminating or consolidating an academic, administrative, or research unit** (Curriculum or Center/Institute Proposal and completed Request to Plan, except when eliminating or consolidating)

5. **Re-titling an academic, administrative, or research unit**

Montana Board of Regents

CURRICULUM PROPOSAL FORM

1. **Institutional Accreditation.** Is the proposal considered a minor or major substantive change per NWCCU Guidelines? Consult the institutional Accreditation Liaison Officer for more information. *[Choose one]*

   Not Substantive___X__ Minor Change_____ Major Change_____

2. **Program Accreditation.** If applicable, describe specialized program accreditation requirements that inform this proposal, including the specific accrediting body and a summary of the standards being met. *[300 words]*

   NA

3. **Program Summary:** List the program learning outcomes for the proposed program. Use assessable learner-centered statements that indicate what students will know and be able to do, upon completing the program.

   a. List the aggregate credits required to complete the program using the following table.

	Credits
Credits in required courses offered by the department offering the program	24-27
Credits in required courses offered by other departments	NA
Credits in institutional general education curriculum	NA
Credits of free electives	NA
Total credits required to complete the program	24-27

   b. Please include a complete listing of the proposed new curriculum in Appendix A of this document.

4. **Need for the program.** What specific student, regional, and statewide needs is the institution responding to with the proposed program? How will the proposed program meet those needs? Consider workforce, student, economic, societal, and transfer needs in your response as appropriate. *[250 words]*

Montana Board of Regents
CURRICULUM PROPOSAL FORM

Perhaps the biggest challenge of the 21st century is anticipating and addressing the consequences of global change for biological systems. Society depends on living organisms (e.g., for food, resources, medicines), and on the biological processes these organisms support, such as the maintenance of water quality, erosion control, and pollination. Facing this challenge requires an deep understanding of the biology of the organisms involved. This knowledge lays a foundation for many disciplines including biomedical sciences, biotechnology, conservation, management and restoration. We propose a Global Change Biology certificate that will address these needs by focusing on the biological consequences of global change.

We expect that this certificate will be popular among a broad swath of students, and we anticipate many opportunities for interdisciplinary growth via cross linking with other sciences (e.g, physics, geoscience, chemistry) and human dimensions (e.g., economics, law, business, etc.). As a result, this certificate program may serve as a springboard for the development of other integrative programs that span units across campus in the future.

5. **Similar programs. Use the table below to identify and describe the relationship between any similar programs within the Montana University System.**

Institution Name	Degree	Program Title	What is the program enrollment for the last three academic years?

There are no other certificate programs that specialize in the biological impacts of global change on the UM campus or elsewhere in the MUS.

Montana Board of Regents
CURRICULUM PROPOSAL FORM

a. Describe how this program's learning outcomes are related or tied to other programs on campus or within the Montana University System. *[100 words]*

This program will meet several academic priorities outlined in the most recent UM Academic Priorities and Planning Statement. These include the development of interdisciplinary capabilities, education through multiple modalities, and imparting 21st century skills on our students. The certificate in global change biology is inherently multidisciplinary, drawing on insights, concepts and techniques from multiple fields in the biological sciences. These courses implement a variety of modalities to deliver course content, including laboratory exercises, field trips, intensive field-based courses, and traditional lectures. Understanding and mitigating the biotic impacts of global change is one of the most pressing challenges facing humanity. Meeting this challenge requires deep knowledge of biological concepts and cutting-edge analytical approaches. This certificate program will impart this knowledge base to our students enabling them to meet this uniquely 21st century challenge.

b. If the proposed program substantially duplicates another program offered in the Montana University System, provide a rationale as to why any resulting duplication is a net benefit to the state and its citizens. *[200 words]*

There are no other certificate programs for global change biology in the MUS. While there are other programs focused on aspects of global change ours is unique in its focus on the biotic impacts of global change on human health and ecosystem integrity

c. Describe any efforts that were made to collaborate with similar programs at other institutions, including specific contacts and their institutional affiliations. If no efforts were made, please explain why. *[200 words]*

We did not make efforts to collaborate with other similar programs at other institutions. As noted above there are no other comparable programs in the MUS that focus specifically on the biotic aspects of global change *writ large* (i.e. beyond climate change). The certificate is built on courses already in place at UM; the curriculum draws from existing courses that already exist and are being offered by DBS faculty as a result we can launch the certificate program within DBS at UM. However, we will welcome opportunities for inter-institutional collaboration as the program grows.

6. **Program assessment.**

a. Describe the assessment process that will be used to evaluate how well students are achieving the intended learning outcomes of the program. When will assessment activities occur and at what frequency? Refer to specialized program accreditation assessments where appropriate. *[150 words]*

Montana Board of Regents
CURRICULUM PROPOSAL FORM

This program is designed to create leaders in understanding and mitigating the biotic impacts of global change. Specific subject knowledge will be assessed within component courses, and because course concepts often build on one another, synthetic learning can be assessed during progression through certificate program through performance in higher level classes.

b. What direct and indirect measures will be used to assess student learning? *[100 words]*

Again, specific subject knowledge will be assessed using formal assessments in component courses. Synthetic learning can be assessed during progression through certificate program through performance in higher level classes. We will monitor career impacts through alumni surveys every three years.

c. How will you ensure that the assessment findings will be used to ensure the quality of the program? *[100 words]*

We will monitor student performance during program progression, and student course feedback for each of the courses included in the certificate to identify successful courses and those that need improvement. Program evaluation of these metrics will take place every three years with prescribed changes based on that information and feedback. We will also monitor new relevant courses that may be offered in the future and incorporate those where appropriate.

Signature/Date

College or School Dean: Bruce Bowler, Signed via CourseLeaf 9/24/25

Chief Academic Officer: John DeBoer, Signed for Adrea Lawrence via CourseLeaf 1/7/2026

Montana Board of Regents
CURRICULUM PROPOSAL FORM

Appendix A – Proposed New Curriculum

Required:
BIOE 370 - General Ecology (3 Cr)

BIOB 435 - Comparative Animal Physiology (3 Cr)

BIOE 448 - Terrestrial Plant Ecology (4 Cr)

BIOB 260 - Cellular and Molecular Biology (4 Cr)

BIOB 272 - Genetics and Evolution (4 Cr)

Any two of the following:
BIOE 416 - Alpine Ecology (3 Cr.)

BIOE 428 - Freshwater Ecology (5 Cr)

BIOB 433 - Plant Physiology (3 Cr.)

BIOE 439 - Stream Ecology (2 Cr).

BIOE 447 - Ecosystem Ecology (3 Cr.)

BIOE 458 - Forest and Fire Ecology (3 Cr.)

BIOB 470 - Ornithology (4 Cr.)

BIOB 475 - Mammalogy (4 Cr.)

Montana Board of Regents

ACADEMIC PROPOSAL REQUEST FORM

April 2026

ITEM 1013-LI0526

Notification to place the minor in Chinese into moratorium

Institution: **University of Montana-Missoula** CIP Code: **16.0301**

Program/Center/Institute Title: **Chinese Minor**

Includes (please specify below): Face-to-face Offering: X Online Offering: _____ Blended Offering: _____

Options: _____

Proposal Summary [360 words maximum]

What: This request notifies the board of our intention to place the Chinese minor into moratorium. No new students will be admitted to the minor during the moratorium period.

Why: This decision is informed by and reflects persistently low completion outcomes for the Chinese minor, despite continued enrollment in lower-division coursework.

Duplicated headcount data (fall and spring enrollments) indicate a long-term decline in overall participation, from a high of 53 students in AY19–20 to 19 students in AY24–25, with a three-year average of 23 and a seven-year average of 37. Completion outcomes have remained consistently low over time. Between FY19 and FY25, the Chinese minor was awarded with a total of 25 degrees, with the three-year average at 3 and seven-year average at 4 completions per year.

Duplicated Headcount								
18-19	**19-20**	**20-21**	**21-22**	**22-23**	**23-24**	**24-25**	**3YA**	**7YA**
49	53	50	36	26	23	19	23	37
Degrees Awarded								
FY19	**FY20**	**FY21**	**FY22**	**FY23**	**FY24**	**FY25**	**3YA**	**7YA**
1	3	9	3	4	3	2	3	4

CHIN 101/102 (Elementary Chinese) continues to enroll students each year and serves as an entry point for language study.

	20-21		**21-22**		**22-23**		**23-24**		**24-25**		**25-26**	
Courses	Fall	Spring	Fall	Spring	Fall	Spring	Fall	Spring	Fall	Spring	Fall	Spring
CHIN101/102	8	6	14	10	12	6	7	5	6	4	16	13
CHIN201/202	8	6	4	4	9	5	3	3	6	5	3	3

Enrollment in these courses fluctuated between 5 and 16 students per term over the past five academic years, indicating ongoing interest at the introductory level. However, progression to CHIN 201/202 (Intermediate Chinese), which forms the

Montana Board of Regents
ACADEMIC PROPOSAL REQUEST FORM

next core requirement for the minor, is substantially lower and more variable, with typical enrollments ranging from 3 to 6 students per term.

Taken together, these data suggest that while introductory language courses continue to serve a general education and exploratory role, relatively few students progress through the intermediate sequence and ultimately complete the minor. The sustained gap between lower-division course enrollment and program completion indicates structural challenges in converting early interest into attainment.

Placing the Chinese minor into moratorium allows the University to pause new admissions, support currently enrolled students through a structured teach-out plan and reassess future curricular options in alignment with demonstrated demand, instructional capacity, and long-term sustainability.

Resources:

The department will work closely with academic advisors and affected students to ensure a clear and supportive teach-out plan, including course availability, advising support, and timely completion pathways. Instructional resources required to support currently enrolled students will be deployed within existing departmental capacity. Interdisciplinary bachelor's programs in East Asian Studies and Central and Southwest Asian Studies that include Chinese as an optional language requirement have been consulted and will direct students to Japanese and Russian language options during the moratorium.

ATTACHMENTS

Moratorium Form

Please mark the appropriate type of request and submit with any additional materials, including those listed in parentheses following the type of request. For more information pertaining to the types of requests listed below, how to complete an item request, or additional forms please visit http://mus.edu/che/arsa/academicproposals.asp.

____ A. Level I:

OCHE Notification

X **1a. Placing a postsecondary educational program into moratorium** (Program Termination and Moratorium Form)

____ **1b. Withdrawing a postsecondary educational program from moratorium**

____ **2. Re-titling, terminating or revising a campus certificate of 29 credits or less**

____ **3. Offering an existing postsecondary educational program via distance or online delivery**

OCHE Approvals

____ **4. Re-titling an existing postsecondary educational program**

Montana Board of Regents
ACADEMIC PROPOSAL REQUEST FORM

5. **Terminating an existing postsecondary educational program** (Program Termination and Moratorium Form)

6. **Consolidating existing postsecondary educational programs** (Curriculum Proposal Form)

7. **Establishing a new minor where there is a major or an option in a major** (Curriculum Proposal Form)

8. **Revising a postsecondary educational program** (Curriculum Proposal Form)

9. **Establishing a temporary C.A.S. or A.A.S. degree program Approval limited to 2 years**

10. **Withdrawing a postsecondary program from moratorium**

11. **Establishing a campus certificate of 29 credits or less (Curriculum Proposal Form)**

B. Level II:

1. **Establishing a new postsecondary educational program** (Curriculum Proposal and Completed Request to Plan Form)

2. **Requesting Permanent authorization for a temporary C.A.S. or A.A.S degree program** (Curriculum Proposal and Completed Request to Plan Form)

3. **Requesting a variation of the 120-credit baccalaureate degrees** *Exception to policy 301.11*

4. **Forming, eliminating or consolidating an academic, administrative, or research unit** (Curriculum or Center/Institute Proposal and completed Request to Plan, except when eliminating or consolidating)

5. **Re-titling an academic, administrative, or research unit**

Montana Board of Regents

ACADEMIC PROPOSAL REQUEST FORM

April 2026

ITEM 1015-LI0526

Request authorization to terminate the MA in Economics

Institution: **University of Montana-Missoula** CIP Code: **45.0601**

Program/Center/Institute Title: **MA in Economics**

Includes (please specify below): Face-to-face Offering: X Online Offering: _____ Blended Offering: _____

Options: _____

Proposal Summary [360 words maximum]

What: The University of Montana requests approval to terminate the Master of Arts in Economics.

Why: The decision to pursue termination is driven by broader institutional considerations, including federal policy changes affecting graduate student financing and the need to steward limited instructional and assistantship resources toward areas of highest strategic priority and student impact.

Enrollment and completion data indicate that the program operates at a small but stable scale. Duplicated headcount has ranged from 10 to 16 students annually over the past six academic years, with a three-year average of 12 and a seven-year average of 14. Degree completions have averaged three per year over the same period, with a three-year average of four and a seven-year average of three. These data suggest that the program serves a limited number of students consistently but cannot operate at a sustainable scale given prospective students' expectations for funding and increasing competition regionally and nationally.

Duplicated Headcount								
18-19	**19-20**	**20-21**	**21-22**	**22-23**	**23-24**	**24-25**	**3YA**	**7YA**
17	12	15	16	16	16	10	12	14
Degrees Awarded								
FY19	**FY20**	**FY21**	**FY22**	**FY23**	**FY24**	**FY25**	**3YA**	**7YA**
3	3	2	2	3	5	3	4	3

Ultimately, this action is best understood as part of a strategic realignment of graduate offerings in response to external constraints and institutional priorities, rather than a reflection of program quality, student outcomes, or faculty contributions.

Resources: Resources previously allocated to support the MA program, including graduate assistantships, will be reassigned in alignment with institutional priorities. The Economics Department plays a critical role in delivering high-demand undergraduate curriculum, including general education and service courses that support multiple colleges. This change was not sought by the department, but with proper planning will allow the University to sustain undergraduate instruction in Economics, while preserving faculty capacity for teaching and scholarship.

ATTACHMENTS

Termination From

Montana Board of Regents

ACADEMIC PROPOSAL REQUEST FORM

Please mark the appropriate type of request and submit with any additional materials, including those listed in parentheses following the type of request. For more information pertaining to the types of requests listed below, how to complete an item request, or additional forms please visit http://mus.edu/che/arsa/academicproposals.asp.

___ A. Level I:

OCHE Notification

___ **1a. Placing a postsecondary educational program into moratorium** (Program Termination and Moratorium Form)

___ **1b. Withdrawing a postsecondary educational program from moratorium**

___ **2. Re-titling, terminating or revising a campus certificate of 29 credits or less**

___ **3. Offering an existing postsecondary educational program via distance or online delivery**

OCHE Approvals

___ **4. Re-titling an existing postsecondary educational program**

X **5. Terminating an existing postsecondary educational program** (Program Termination and Moratorium Form)

___ **6. Consolidating existing postsecondary educational programs** (Curriculum Proposal Form)

___ **7. Establishing a new minor where there is a major or an option in a major** (Curriculum Proposal Form)

___ **8. Revising a postsecondary educational program** (Curriculum Proposal Form)

___ **9. Establishing a temporary C.A.S. or A.A.S. degree program Approval limited to 2 years**

___ **10. Withdrawing a postsecondary program from moratorium**

___ **11. Establishing a campus certificate of 29 credits or less (Curriculum Proposal Form)**

___ B. Level II:

___ **1. Establishing a new postsecondary educational program** (Curriculum Proposal and Completed Request to Plan Form)

___

Montana Board of Regents

ACADEMIC PROPOSAL REQUEST FORM

_____ **2. Requesting Permanent authorization for a temporary C.A.S. or A.A.S degree program** (Curriculum Proposal and
_____ Completed Request to Plan Form)

3. Requesting a variation of the 120-credit baccalaureate degrees *Exception to policy 301.11*

_____

4. Forming, eliminating or consolidating an academic, administrative, or research unit (Curriculum or Center/Institute Proposal and completed Request to Plan, except when eliminating or consolidating)

_____

5. Re-titling an academic, administrative, or research unit

_____

Montana University System

PROGRAM TERMINATION/MORATORIUM FORM

Please complete the following questionnaire prior to submission of a program for termination or placement into moratorium. Please add additional comments beneath each question where applicable.

Program Title: **MA in Economics**

Program is being ____ **Placed into moratorium** **X** **Terminated**

1. **Are there currently students enrolled in the program? (If yes, please answer questions a - c below.)** **Y: X N: ____**

   8 Students currently enrolled.

   a.) **Have all students currently enrolled in the program been met with and informed of the impending termination/moratorium?** **Y: X N: ____**

   b.) **What is the expected graduation date of all students from the program?**

   3 Students are currently completing their thesis and will graduate Spring or Summer 2026.

   5 Students need to complete their thesis and are expected to graduate by Spring or Summer 2027.

   c.) **Have course offerings been planned to allow for students in the program to complete the degree in a reasonable fashion?** **Y: X N: ____**

2. **Will any faculty layoffs or changes in working conditions occur because of the termination/moratorium? (If yes, please answer questions a - b below.)** **Y: ____ N: X**

   a.) **Have the faculty affected by the program termination/moratorium been notified?** **Y: ____ N: ____**

Montana University System
PROGRAM TERMINATION/MORATORIUM FORM

b.) Please describe any layoffs that will occur including the date expected?

3. The following parties, where applicable, have been notified of the impending program termination/moratorium. (Please mark X for completed, NA for not applicable):

a.) Internal Curriculum Committees **X**

b.) Faculty Senate **X**

c.) Program Public Advisory Committee **N/A**

d.) Articulation Partners **X**

4. Has there been any negative feedback received from students, faculty, or other constituents regarding the impending termination/moratorium? (If yes, please explain below.) **Y: X N: ____**

The Faculty Senate and its curriculum committees did not vote to recommend this action. The senate vote was 34 Yay, 6 Nay, 3 Abstain to not recommend the termination. The non-recommendation reflects shared governance concerns about process sequencing; however, the CBA and Faculty Senate Procedures were followed. The administration acknowledges that there are design gaps in the current review framework and is committed to addressing them in future cycles.

The Economics Department formally opposes the termination and its objections are part of this record transmitted to OCHE. The department raised concerns about the transparency of the process, the absence of comparative analysis explaining why the MA in Economics was identified over other graduate programs or general fund expenditures, and the characterization that the FY24 APR's "monitor for improvement" designation for the undergraduate program was a sufficient warning. The department also noted that the stated rationale that the program is not sustainable without GA support does fully account

Montana University System
PROGRAM TERMINATION/MORATORIUM FORM

for why GA support was removed in the first place. The administration's position is that the GA allocation decision was made under a separate procedure governed by the Graduate School Dean, and that the two processes, while working together, are distinct procedures that were followed appropriately.

The department requested that the program be placed in moratorium rather than recommended for termination, citing the nascent 4+1 pathway and potential interdisciplinary collaborations as alternatives worth evaluating. The administration determined that moratorium would preserve an academic structure that cannot function without GA resources, and that the alternatives identified are not yet sufficiently developed to address concerns about program sustainability. The value of graduate economics education to Montana employers, public agencies, and communities is acknowledged; the termination reflects a resource constraint, not a judgment about that value.

Montana Board of Regents

ACADEMIC PROPOSAL REQUEST FORM

April 2026

ITEM 1018-LI0526

Notification to offer the B.S. in Public Health online

Institution: **University of Montana - Missoula** CIP Code: **52.2201**

Program/Center/Institute Title: **B.S. Public Health**

Includes (please specify below): Face-to-face Offering: ____ Online Offering: X Blended Offering: _____

Options: _____

Proposal Summary [360 words maximum]

What: Offering the undergraduate-level B.S. in Public Health as an official online program.

Why: This proposal seeks to develop the current Face-to-Face B.S. in Public Health in a fully online format. The shift to online delivery aims to enhance accessibility and flexibility for students pursuing a career in public health and will greatly facilitate access for our remote students and students in our existing 2+2 program with Salish Kootenai College. As our graduate programs are already offered online, this offering aligns with existing delivery methods and faculty experience, and will make degree completion more feasible for a wider range of students.

Resources: Support from UMOnline has already been secured for the development of online sections of existing courses. Many of both the core and elective courses in this degree are already available online.

ATTACHMENTS

None

Please mark the appropriate type of request and submit with any additional materials, including those listed in parentheses following the type of request. For more information pertaining to the types of requests listed below, how to complete an item request, or additional forms please visit http://mus.edu/che/arsa/academicproposals.asp.

x A. Level I:

Campus Approvals

1a. Placing a postsecondary educational program into moratorium (Program Termination and Moratorium Form)

1b. Withdrawing a postsecondary educational program from moratorium

2. Establishing, re-titling, terminating or revising a campus certificate of 29 credits or less

Montana Board of Regents

ACADEMIC PROPOSAL REQUEST FORM

3. Establishing a B.A.S./A.A./A.S. area of study

X **4. Offering an existing postsecondary educational program via distance or online delivery**

OCHE Approvals

5. Re-titling an existing postsecondary educational program

6. Terminating an existing postsecondary educational program (Program Termination and Moratorium Form)

7. Consolidating existing postsecondary educational programs (Curriculum Proposal Form)

8. Establishing a new minor where there is a major or an option in a major (Curriculum Proposal Form)

9. Revising a postsecondary educational program (Curriculum Proposal Form)

10. Establishing a temporary C.A.S. or A.A.S. degree program *Approval limited to 2 years*

B. Level II:

1. Establishing a new postsecondary educational program (Curriculum Proposal and Completed Request to Plan Form)

2. Permanent authorization for a temporary C.A.S. or A.A.S degree program (Curriculum Proposal and Completed Request to Plan Form)

3. Exceeding the 120-credit maximum for baccalaureate degrees *Exception to policy 301.11*

4. Forming, eliminating or consolidating an academic, administrative, or research unit (Curriculum or Center/Institute Proposal and completed Request to Plan, except when eliminating or consolidating)

5. Re-titling an academic, administrative, or research unit

Montana Board of Regents

ACADEMIC PROPOSAL REQUEST FORM

April 2026

1011-LII0526

Request authorization to consolidate the Learning and Belonging (LAB) School within the Institution for Early Childhood Education

Institution: **University of Montana-Missoula** CIP Code: _____

Program/Center/Institute Title: **Institute for Early Childhood Education**

Includes (please specify below): Face-to-face Offering: _____ Online Offering: _____ Blended Offering: _____

Options: _____

Proposal Summary [360 words maximum]

What: The University of Montana Institute for Early Childhood Education is an established specialty unit advancing early childhood (birth–age eight) research, model demonstration, and outreach across Montana and the greater region. The primary focus of this Level II proposal is to formally integrate the Learning and Belonging (LAB) School within the Institute as a focus unit. This integration will strengthen the Institute's unified infrastructure for applied research, clinical practice, educator preparation, and dissemination of evidence-based practices statewide.

Why: Early childhood services and research efforts often occur in silos, and delivery systems in rural states like Montana are frequently isolated and under-resourced. The Institute addresses this need by convening researchers, faculty, students, community professionals, and policymakers to promote high-quality early learning opportunities for all children from birth to 3rd grade. Integrating the LAB School as the Institute's core demonstration and applied research site will formalize existing collaboration, strengthen alignment and visibility, enhance sustainability, and increase the University's capacity to secure external funding and scale impact through coordinated research, demonstration, and outreach efforts.

Resources: This proposal builds from existing resources within the Phyllis J. Washington College of Education. The Institute will continue to leverage current personnel and infrastructure while expanding capacity through external grants and contracts aligned with early childhood research, implementation, and professional learning priorities. Organizationally, the Institute will remain a specialty unit within the College of Education, with the LAB School integrated underneath as the core demonstration and clinical practice hub; the LAB School Director will report to the Institute Faculty Director and collaborate with faculty and community catalysts and the Advisory Council.

ATTACHMENTS

NA

Please mark the appropriate type of request and submit with any additional materials, including those listed in parentheses following the type of request. For more information pertaining to the types of requests listed below, how to complete an item request, or additional forms please visit http://mus.edu/che/arsa/academicproposals.asp.

Montana Board of Regents

ACADEMIC PROPOSAL REQUEST FORM

A. Level I:

OCHE Notification

1a. Placing a postsecondary educational program into moratorium (Program Termination and Moratorium Form)

1b. Withdrawing a postsecondary educational program from moratorium

2. Re-titling, terminating or revising a campus certificate of 29 credits or less

3. Offering an existing postsecondary educational program via distance or online delivery

OCHE Approvals

4. Re-titling an existing postsecondary educational program

5. Terminating an existing postsecondary educational program (Program Termination and Moratorium Form)

6. Consolidating existing postsecondary educational programs (Curriculum Proposal Form)

7. Establishing a new minor where there is a major or an option in a major (Curriculum Proposal Form)

8. Revising a postsecondary educational program (Curriculum Proposal Form)

9. Establishing a temporary C.A.S. or A.A.S. degree program Approval limited to 2 years

10. Withdrawing a postsecondary program from moratorium

11. Establishing a campus certificate of 29 credits or less (Curriculum Proposal Form)

B. Level II:

1. Establishing a new postsecondary educational program (Curriculum Proposal and Completed Request to Plan Form)

2. Requesting Permanent authorization for a temporary C.A.S. or A.A.S degree program (Curriculum Proposal and Completed Request to Plan Form)

3. Requesting a variation of the 120-credit baccalaureate degrees *Exception to policy 301.11*

Montana Board of Regents

ACADEMIC PROPOSAL REQUEST FORM

	4. Forming, eliminating or consolidating an academic, administrative, or research unit (Curriculum or Center/Institute Proposal and completed Request to Plan, except when eliminating or consolidating)
X	
	5. Re-titling an academic, administrative, or research unit

Montana Board of Regents

ACADEMIC PROPOSAL REQUEST FORM

April 2025

ITEM 1017-LII0526

Request Authorization to Establish the Institute for Human-Centered Artificial Intelligence

Institution: **University of Montana-Missoula** CIP Code: _____

Program/Center/Institute Title: **Institute for Human-Centered Artificial Intelligence**

Includes (please specify below): Face-to-face Offering: ____ Online Offering: ____ Blended Offering: ____

Options: _____

Proposal Summary [360 words maximum]

What: The University of Montana proposes the establishment of the Institute for Human-Centered Artificial Intelligence, an interdisciplinary institute organized under UM's Graduate School and Office of Research and Creative Scholarship. The Institute will serve as a system-level resource for the Montana University System, coordinating AI education, research, and workforce development across MUS institutions, tribal colleges, and K-12 partners. It will operate through a joint Advisory Council with MSU's AI Institute to ensure complementary programming, shared infrastructure, and unified external representation of Montana's AI capacity. The Institute's core programming will span three areas: AI literacy and faculty professional development integrated across academic disciplines; applied and interdisciplinary research supporting graduate education; and community and workforce engagement with industry, state agencies, and K-12 schools statewide.

Why: Artificial intelligence is reshaping every sector of the economy and every field of scholarly inquiry. Montana institutions face the same imperative as universities nationally: to prepare students for AI-enabled careers while producing research that shapes how AI is developed and governed. UM is well positioned to lead this work. The FUTURE Project (2023-2025) engaged more than 1,500 UM faculty, staff, and students in examining AI's role in education and research, establishing broad stakeholder buy-in and identifying institutional priorities. An institute structure enables UM to consolidate existing interdisciplinary capacity, pursue competitive federal funding, and serve MUS institutions equitably rather than leaving smaller campuses without access to AI infrastructure, training, and support. The human-centered framing centers the humanities, social sciences, ethics, and Indigenous perspectives alongside technical disciplines, differentiating Montana's approach and addressing needs specific to rural and tribal communities.

Resources: The Institute is designed for a fiscally conservative launch. No new permanent faculty lines are required at initial implementation. The Institute will operate through affiliate faculty appointments, workload adjustments, and professional development funding supported by external grants. Administrative coordination will be provided through the Provost's Office and Graduate School. Physical and digital infrastructure will draw on existing classrooms, laboratories, and meeting spaces. Sustained financial viability will be pursued through competitive federal grants (NSF AI Research Institutes program, Department of Education, NIH), industry partnerships, and philanthropic support. As external funding is secured, the Institute may support graduate research assistants, postdoctoral scholars, and visiting faculty to expand research capacity and educational programming.

ATTACHMENTS

Institute Proposal Form
November 2025 Request to Plan

Montana Board of Regents

ACADEMIC PROPOSAL REQUEST FORM

Please mark the appropriate type of request and submit with any additional materials, including those listed in parentheses following the type of request. For more information pertaining to the types of requests listed below, how to complete an item request, or additional forms please visit http://mus.edu/che/arsa/academicproposals.asp.

____ A. Level I:

OCHE Notification

____ **1a. Placing a postsecondary educational program into moratorium** (Program Termination and Moratorium Form)

____ **1b. Withdrawing a postsecondary educational program from moratorium**

____ **2. Re-titling, terminating or revising a campus certificate of 29 credits or less**

____ **3. Offering an existing postsecondary educational program via distance or online delivery**

OCHE Approvals

____ **4. Re-titling an existing postsecondary educational program**

____ **5. Terminating an existing postsecondary educational program** (Program Termination and Moratorium Form)

____ **6. Consolidating existing postsecondary educational programs** (Curriculum Proposal Form)

____ **7. Establishing a new minor where there is a major or an option in a major** (Curriculum Proposal Form)

____ **8. Revising a postsecondary educational program** (Curriculum Proposal Form)

____ **9. Establishing a temporary C.A.S. or A.A.S. degree program Approval limited to 2 years**

____ **10. Withdrawing a postsecondary program from moratorium**

____ **11. Establishing a campus certificate of 29 credits or less (Curriculum Proposal Form)**

X B. Level II:

____ **1. Establishing a new postsecondary educational program** (Curriculum Proposal and Completed Request to Plan Form)

____

Montana Board of Regents

ACADEMIC PROPOSAL REQUEST FORM

_____ **2. Requesting Permanent authorization for a temporary C.A.S. or A.A.S degree program** (Curriculum Proposal and
_____ Completed Request to Plan Form)

_____ **3. Requesting a variation of the 120-credit baccalaureate degrees** *Exception to policy 301.11*

X **4. Forming, eliminating or consolidating an academic, administrative, or research unit** (Curriculum or Center/Institute Proposal and completed Request to Plan, except when eliminating or consolidating)

_____ **5. Re-titling an academic, administrative, or research unit**

Montana Board of Regents

RESEARCH CENTER AND INSTITUTE PROPOSAL FORM

1. State the proposed Institute/Center's name and purpose.

The University of Montana seeks to establish the **Institute for Human-Centered Artificial Intelligence (HCAI)** to serve as a partner in the Montana University System's coordinating hub for teaching, learning, research, and statewide collaboration in artificial intelligence. The Institute will promote the responsible and innovative use of AI in higher education, workforce development, and public service, ensuring that technology strengthens human creativity, integrity, and community well-being.

The proposed HCAI builds on the foundation of *The FUTURE Project* (2023–2025), a university-wide initiative that engaged **more than 1,500 faculty, staff, and students** in shaping UM's strategic approach to AI in education and research. This work positioned UM as a state and regional leader in developing thoughtful, inclusive frameworks for responsible AI adoption.

The Institute will provide a permanent structure to:

- Advance **AI in education and research** across all disciplines;
- Equip students, faculty, and staff with AI competencies aligned to Montana's workforce needs;
- Foster **collaboration among UM, MSU, and affiliate campuses** to coordinate curricula, research, and outreach;
- Serve as a **statewide convener** connecting MUS institutions, K–12 partners, tribal colleges, and industry; and
- Position Montana to attract **federal, philanthropic, and industry investment** in AI education and innovation.

The Institute will launch using existing resources and partnerships, formalizing work already underway and ensuring the Montana University System leads with integrity and purpose in the era of artificial intelligence.

2. A comprehensive statement of the Institute/Center's mission and its relationship to the University mission.

A. State the Institute/Center's mission.

The mission of the University of Montana, Institute for Human-Centered Artificial Intelligence (HCAI) is to serve as the statewide hub for teaching, learning, research, and collaboration in artificial intelligence. As Montana's flagship, R1 research university, UM is uniquely positioned to lead this effort, integrating innovation with responsibility and ensuring that AI strengthens human creativity, academic integrity, and community well-being.

The vision for the Institute is to position Montana as a national model for human-centered innovation—equipping students, educators, and communities to thrive in an AI-enabled world by advancing education, fostering research, and promoting ethical, equitable use of technology.

Montana Board of Regents

RESEARCH CENTER AND INSTITUTE PROPOSAL FORM

B. Identify the Institute/Center's goals and objectives.

GOAL 1 – EDUCATION AND LEARNING
Advance AI literacy and human-centered learning across disciplines.
Objective 1 – Faculty Development: Support instructors in developing and implementing AI-informed pedagogies and curricula.
Objective 2 – Student Preparedness: Integrate AI and data literacy into general education and program-specific learning outcomes.
Objective 3 – Digital Access: Ensure equitable access to AI tools, training, and opportunities for all MUS students, faculty, and staff.
Objective 4 – Assessment and Evaluation: Provide assessment support and develop discipline-specific evaluation methods for AI-related learning outcomes, helping faculty evaluate student learning in AI-enabled environments while maintaining academic integrity.

GOAL 2 – RESEARCH AND SCHOLARSHIP
Promote interdisciplinary research that examines the ethical, creative, and practical dimensions of AI. UM will leverage its research capacity and partnerships to lead collaborative projects across the MUS and with national and industry partners.
Objective 1 – Interdisciplinary Research Networks: Build collaborative research groups across UM, MSU, and affiliate campuses.
Objective 2 – External Funding and Partnerships: Pursue federal, philanthropic, and industry funding for AI-related education and research.
Objective 3 – Ethical AI Leadership: Position Montana as a leader in responsible and transparent AI practices.

GOAL 3 – WORKFORCE AND COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS
Align AI education and research with statewide workforce and economic needs.
Objective 1 – Workforce Readiness: Partner with industry and employers to align curricula with emerging AI-driven workforce demands.
Objective 2 – K–12 and Tribal Partnerships: Collaborate with K–12, tribal colleges, and statewide digital learning initiatives to expand AI exposure and career pathways.
Objective 3 – Statewide Coordination: Create shared MUS programming and professional development resources that reduce duplication and strengthen collaboration.

GOAL 4 – INNOVATION AND OUTREACH
Foster statewide and national engagement in AI policy, education, and innovation.
Objective 1 – Thought Leadership: Convene public discussions, symposia, and working groups on AI ethics, innovation, and the future of learning.
Objective 2 – Community and Government Partnerships: Support public sector innovation through applied research, policy analysis, and outreach.
Objective 3 – Inclusive Excellence: Promote the participation of underrepresented and rural communities in AI education and workforce programs.

C. What specific need is being responded to in developing the proposed Institute/Center?

Montana Board of Regents
RESEARCH CENTER AND INSTITUTE PROPOSAL FORM

Artificial intelligence is rapidly reshaping higher education, research, and employment. Without coordinated leadership, Montana risks fragmented efforts and uneven access to resources. Employers increasingly identify AI literacy, problem-solving, and ethical reasoning as essential skills. HCAI responds to this need by providing a system-level structure to integrate AI into education and research while ensuring that implementation remains responsible, equitable, and sustainable. The Institute builds on *The FUTURE Project* (2023–2025), which engaged over **1,500 faculty, staff, and students** in exploring AI's role in education and research, laying a strong foundation for this statewide initiative.

D. Describe how the Institute/Center benefits the department, college, or institution.

HCAI will benefit the University of Montana and the Montana University System by serving as a multidisciplinary hub that unites existing strengths across campuses. UM is positioned to anchor this system-wide collaboration, leveraging its research capacity, statewide partnerships, and academic leadership.

The Institute will:
• Provide a venue for collaboration that extends beyond departmental or disciplinary boundaries;
• Amplify research productivity and funding competitiveness through interdisciplinary projects and shared resources;
• Support faculty and student success through coordinated training, curriculum development, and mentorship; and
• Elevate Montana's reputation as a leader in human-centered AI, research excellence, and workforce development.

E. Describe the Institute/Center's relationship to the University mission.

The Institute aligns directly with the University of Montana's mission to "transform lives by providing high-quality and accessible education and by generating world-class research and creative scholarship." UM has the capacity to lead the state in advancing human-centered innovation. HCAI advances this mission by ensuring that artificial intelligence enhances—rather than replaces—the distinctly human dimensions of learning, discovery, and service. Through this work, the Institute embodies UM's commitment to equity, ethical leadership, and statewide impact.

3. Briefly describe the Institute/Center's anticipated activities.

FACULTY DEVELOPMENT AND CURRICULUM INNOVATION: The Institute will coordinate faculty development programs across the MUS, equipping instructors to integrate AI responsibly into their teaching. Through workshops, learning communities, and curriculum design support, faculty will develop AI literacy and learn to leverage AI tools while maintaining focus on critical thinking, creativity, and academic integrity. The Institute will facilitate course-sharing and collaborative curriculum development among MUS institutions to reduce duplication and strengthen educational offerings statewide.

INTERDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH AND SCHOLARSHIP: The Institute will foster collaborative research projects that examine AI from multiple perspectives—technical, ethical, creative, educational, and policy-oriented. Research teams will bring together computer scientists, educators, humanists,

business scholars, artists, and social scientists to address complex questions about AI's impact on society. UM will lead efforts to secure federal and philanthropic funding for interdisciplinary AI research that serves Montana and the nation.

WORKFORCE AND INDUSTRY PARTNERSHIPS: The Institute will collaborate with Montana employers and industry partners to align academic programs with workforce needs. Through advisory boards, experiential learning opportunities, and co-developed training programs, the Institute will ensure students graduate with AI competencies valued in the job market. Partnerships with K–12 schools and tribal colleges will create pathways from secondary to postsecondary education, expanding access to AI education for all Montana students.

STUDENT TRAINING AND SUPPORT: The Institute will develop programming to equip students across disciplines with AI literacy and practical skills. This includes workshops on responsible AI use, data literacy, prompt engineering, and critical evaluation of AI-generated content. Students will have opportunities to engage in applied research projects, internships, and experiential learning that prepare them for AI-enabled careers while fostering ethical awareness and human-centered values.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT AND POLICY LEADERSHIP: The Institute will serve as a convener for public dialogue on AI's role in society. Through symposia, community forums, and policy working groups, the Institute will engage diverse stakeholders—educators, policymakers, industry leaders, and community members—in conversations about AI ethics, regulation, and innovation. The Institute will position Montana as a thought leader in responsible AI adoption and provide evidence-based guidance for policymakers at local, state, and federal levels.

STATEWIDE COORDINATION AND COLLABORATION: The Institute will coordinate AI initiatives across the Montana University System, ensuring that all institutions benefit from shared resources, expertise, and opportunities. By connecting faculty networks, pooling research capacity, and coordinating professional development, the Institute will amplify the collective impact of MUS institutions. This collaborative approach will reduce inefficiencies, strengthen competitiveness for external funding, and ensure equitable access to AI education and research opportunities across Montana.

A. Identify faculty expertise available for participation in the Institute/Center's activities.

The Institute will draw on faculty expertise from across the University of Montana and the Montana University System. Key participating faculty include:

- Computer Science faculty with expertise in machine learning, natural language processing, and AI ethics
- Education faculty researching AI's impact on pedagogy, assessment, and learning outcomes
- Business and management faculty exploring AI's role in organizational decision-making and workforce development
- Humanities scholars examining AI's ethical, philosophical, and cultural dimensions
- Creative arts faculty exploring AI as a tool for artistic expression and innovation
- Health sciences faculty investigating AI applications in healthcare delivery and medical education
- Faculty from MSU and affiliate campuses contributing disciplinary expertise and regional

perspectives

The Institute will engage faculty through affiliate appointments, collaborative research teams, and professional development programming. Faculty participation will be coordinated through existing structures to avoid duplicative efforts and maximize efficiency.

B. Which departments on campus will be involved and how will the Institute/Center contribute to the academic programs of the institution?

AI touches every department on campus. The Institute will serve as the central hub for support and guidance across the entire university, facilitating AI integration in ways that strengthen teaching, research, and service across all disciplines.

Rather than limiting involvement to specific departments, the Institute is designed to support faculty and programs university-wide. This includes humanities, sciences, social sciences, education, business, health professions, fine arts, and professional programs. Every discipline faces questions about how AI affects their field, how to prepare students for AI-enabled careers, and how to integrate AI responsibly into research and teaching.

The Institute will contribute to academic programs by:
• Supporting faculty in integrating AI literacy into existing courses across disciplines
• Providing assessment support and developing discipline-specific evaluation methods for AI-related learning outcomes. Faculty and programs need clear guidance on assessing student learning in an AI-driven environment while upholding academic integrity and fostering innovation.
• Developing shared AI-related coursework that can be cross-listed among departments
• Creating experiential learning opportunities for students through applied research projects
• Coordinating interdisciplinary research teams that enhance scholarly productivity
• Providing professional development for instructors to enhance teaching effectiveness
• Assisting with program-level assessment of AI competencies and learning outcomes

4. Identify the organizational structure of the Institute/Center within the institution.

The Institute will be housed at the University of Montana and report to the Office of the Provost. The organizational structure will consist of:

Director: A director will provide strategic leadership and coordinate Institute activities. The director will be appointed by the Provost in consultation with the Dean of Graduate School and other relevant administrators. The director will maintain regular coordination with MSU's AI Institute director to ensure complementary programming and avoid duplication.

Faculty Affiliates: Faculty from across UM and MUS institutions will participate through affiliate appointments, contributing expertise in their respective disciplines while maintaining their primary departmental homes. MSU faculty with human-centered AI interests will be eligible for affiliate appointments, facilitating cross-institutional collaboration.

Advisory Council: An advisory council will provide strategic guidance and ensure the Institute remains responsive to stakeholder needs. The council will include standing representation from

MSU's AI Institute to ensure ongoing coordination and collaboration. Representatives from MUS institutions, industry partners, K–12 education, tribal colleges, and state agencies will provide diverse perspectives.

Coordination with MSU: A formal memorandum of understanding will establish coordination protocols with MSU's AI Institute, including regular director meetings, joint programming opportunities, shared faculty development initiatives, collaborative grant proposals, and unified external representation.

Administrative Support: The Institute will utilize existing administrative infrastructure to support operations, event coordination, and communications.

The Institute will function as a system-level resource while being administratively housed at UM. Governance structures will ensure meaningful participation from MSU and affiliate campuses, with collaborative decision-making on programming, resource allocation, and strategic priorities.

A. Identify all agencies, organizations and/or institutions that will be involved.

The Institute will engage the following stakeholders:

Montana University System Institutions:
- Montana State University (MSU)
- Montana Technological University
- Montana Western
- UM-Helena, UM-Missoula College, MSU-Billings, MSU-Northern, and other two-year colleges

Tribal Colleges:
- Seven tribal colleges across Montana

K–12 Partners:
- Montana Office of Public Instruction
- Montana Digital Academy
- School districts statewide

Industry and Economic Development:
- Montana High Tech Business Alliance
- Montana Chamber of Commerce
- Technology and AI companies operating in Montana

State and Federal Agencies:
- Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education
- Montana Department of Labor and Industry
- National Science Foundation AI Research Institutes Network

B. Identify advisory council information.

The Institute's Advisory Council will provide strategic guidance, ensure responsiveness to stakeholder needs, and facilitate collaboration across sectors. The council will meet semi-annually

and include representatives from:

• MUS institutional leadership, including designated representatives from both UM and MSU's AI institutes to ensure coordination
• MSU AI Institute leadership (standing member to ensure alignment and collaboration)
• Faculty from diverse disciplines across MUS institutions
• Tribal college administrators and faculty
• K–12 education leaders
• Industry representatives from Montana's technology sector
• State agency officials
• Student representatives

The Advisory Council will serve as the primary coordination mechanism between UM's Human-Centered AI Institute and MSU's AI Institute, ensuring complementary programming, joint project development, shared infrastructure for the MUS system, and unified external representation of Montana's AI capacity.

Council membership will be appointed by the Institute Director in consultation with the Provost and key stakeholders, including MSU Institute leadership. Terms will be staggered to ensure continuity. A formal memorandum of understanding between the two institutes will establish coordination protocols, shared programming opportunities, and mechanisms for conflict resolution.

5. Identify first year and continuing finances necessary to support the Center/Institute, including the sources of funding.

The Institute will launch using existing resources and scale responsibly through strategic partnerships and external funding. The initial phase will leverage:

Existing Faculty Expertise: Faculty across disciplines will contribute through affiliate appointments and collaborative research, utilizing existing salary lines and workload structures.

Administrative Infrastructure: Existing administrative support within the Provost's Office and Graduate School will provide operational coordination.

Physical and Digital Resources: The Institute will utilize existing classrooms, laboratories, meeting spaces, and digital infrastructure.

Sustainability will be ensured through:

Federal Funding: The Institute will pursue competitive grants from the National Science Foundation (NSF AI Research Institutes program), Department of Education, National Institutes of Health, and other federal agencies supporting AI education and research.

Industry Partnerships: Collaborations with technology companies and employers will provide financial support, internship opportunities, and applied research projects.

Philanthropic Support: The Institute will cultivate relationships with foundations and donors

interested in education innovation, workforce development, and ethical technology.

State Support: As AI literacy becomes recognized as critical to workforce competitiveness, the Institute will work with state agencies and the Montana Legislature to identify potential funding opportunities.

The Institute's fiscally conservative launch strategy ensures immediate impact without requiring new permanent funding, while positioning Montana to compete successfully for major external investments in AI education and research.

A. Will additional faculty and other resources be required to implement this Center/Institute? If yes, please describe the need and indicate the plan for meeting this need.

No additional faculty lines are required for initial implementation. The Institute will function through faculty affiliate appointments, allowing participation without creating new positions. Faculty contributions will be recognized through workload adjustments, research support, and professional development opportunities funded through external grants.

As external funding is secured, the Institute may support graduate research assistants, postdoctoral scholars, and visiting faculty to enhance research capacity and educational programming.

B. Are other, additional resources required to ensure the success of the proposed Center/Institute? If yes, please describe the need and indicate the plan for meeting this need.

No additional resources are required at launch. The Institute will utilize existing infrastructure, administrative support, and faculty expertise. As programming expands through external funding, resources may be allocated to:

- Event coordination and community engagement
- Research project management and grant administration
- Technology infrastructure to support collaborative projects
- Student support (graduate assistantships, internships, research opportunities)

These needs will be met through competitive grant funding and industry partnerships, ensuring the Institute remains financially sustainable without requiring permanent institutional budget increases.

6. Describe other similar Centers/Institutes or research capacities in the state and surrounding region.

Montana State University has proposed an Institute for Artificial Intelligence. The University of Montana is proposing the Institute for Human-Centered Artificial Intelligence. Rather than creating competition, these initiatives **can coexist** productively through clear coordination and differentiated programming.

Both institutes can strengthen Montana by focusing on complementary programming rather than duplicating efforts. The key to success is intentional coordination, transparent communication, and a commitment to serving the entire MUS system collaboratively.

Coordination mechanisms will include:

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RESEARCH CENTER AND INSTITUTE PROPOSAL FORM

- Joint advisory council representation ensuring alignment of programming and resource allocation
- Shared infrastructure development serving all MUS institutions
- Collaborative grant proposals positioning Montana comprehensively for federal funding
- Regular coordination between institute leadership to prevent duplication
- Unified external engagement representing Montana's full AI capacity

This approach allows both institutions to contribute their respective strengths while ensuring the MUS system benefits from coordinated rather than fragmented AI initiatives. Montana's two-institute model succeeds only through genuine collaboration, shared resources, and clear communication about roles and responsibilities.

Regional examples demonstrate that multiple AI institutes can coexist when differentiation is clear and coordination is strong. Montana will follow this model while addressing unique needs related to rural communities, tribal partnerships, and distributed higher education.

A. Describe the relationship between the proposed Center/Institute and any similar Centers/Institutes, programs, or research capacities within the Montana University System.

Montana State University has proposed an Institute for Artificial Intelligence. The University of Montana's Institute for Human-Centered Artificial Intelligence is designed to complement MSU's initiative through clear coordination and differentiated programming.

The relationship between the two institutes requires clear coordination:

Preventing Duplication:
- Both institutes must coordinate programming to avoid redundant efforts
- Shared infrastructure serving all MUS institutions rather than competing systems
- Joint planning for faculty development, curriculum resources, and research initiatives

Leveraging Complementary Strengths:
- Both institutions bring research capacity and technical expertise
- Coordination allows Montana to present unified AI capacity to federal funders
- Collaborative projects benefit from diverse disciplinary perspectives across both campuses

System-Wide Service:
- All MUS institutions require access to AI infrastructure, training, and support
- Coordinated approach ensures equitable access rather than leaving some campuses behind
- Both institutes share responsibility for serving Montana's distributed higher education system

Within the broader MUS:
- Computer science and technical programs exist at both UM and MSU, requiring coordination
- All disciplines—sciences, humanities, education, business, health—need AI integration support
- Tribal colleges and rural institutions require sustained partnership and capacity building

The success of two institutes depends on transparent communication, genuine collaboration, and clear delineation of responsibilities to serve Montana effectively.

B. In cases of substantial duplication, explain the rationale for the proposed Center/Institute.

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The coexistence of two AI institutes in Montana requires **intentional coordination** and **clear communication**. The University of Montana has demonstrated leadership in AI education, research, and technical implementation across the state through NSF-funded infrastructure deployment, comprehensive strategic planning via The FUTURE Project, and active service to MUS institutions.

Both institutes can succeed through:
- Transparent coordination preventing duplication of programming and resources
- Shared infrastructure serving all MUS institutions equitably
- Joint external engagement positioning Montana comprehensively for federal funding
- Regular communication between institute leadership
- Collaborative rather than competitive approach to serving Montana

Montana benefits when both institutions work together to serve the entire MUS system rather than pursuing parallel or competing initiatives.

7. Assessment: How will the success of the center/institute be measured?

The Institute will employ a comprehensive assessment framework that measures impact across education, research, workforce development, and statewide engagement:

Education and Learning Metrics:
- Number of faculty participating in professional development programs
- Number of courses integrating AI literacy across disciplines
- Student enrollment in AI-related coursework and programs
- Student satisfaction and learning outcomes assessments

Research and Scholarship Metrics:
- External funding secured (federal grants, industry partnerships, philanthropic support)
- Number of collaborative research projects across institutions and disciplines
- Publications, presentations, and creative outputs
- Graduate student and postdoctoral researcher mentorship

Workforce and Community Partnership Metrics:
- Number of industry partnerships and internship placements
- Student career outcomes in AI-related fields
- K–12 and tribal college engagement activities
- Community outreach events and participant feedback

Statewide Coordination Metrics:
- Number of MUS institutions actively participating in Institute programming
- Shared courses and collaborative curricula developed across institutions
- Cross-campus research collaborations and funding proposals
- Advisory council engagement and stakeholder satisfaction

The Institute will conduct annual assessments and produce reports documenting progress, impact, and areas for improvement. Assessment data will inform strategic planning and demonstrate accountability to stakeholders.

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RESEARCH CENTER AND INSTITUTE PROPOSAL FORM

8. State the internal campus review and approval process which has occurred prior to submission to the Commissioner's Office. Indicate, where appropriate, involvement by faculty, students, community members, professional constituencies, etc.

The Institute proposal has undergone extensive consultation and approval through the following process:

Foundation: The FUTURE Project (2023–2025)
The Institute builds directly on The FUTURE Project, which engaged more than 1,500 faculty, staff, and students across the University of Montana in exploring AI's role in education and research. This deliberative, inclusive process established broad stakeholder buy-in and identified key priorities that inform the Institute's mission and programming.

Faculty Consultation:
- Presentations to Faculty Senate and discussion of the Institute's role in supporting academic programs
- Consultation with department chairs and deans across colleges
- Input from faculty across disciplines with AI-related expertise and interests

Administrative Review:
- Approval from the Office of the Provost and the Office of the President
- Review by the Graduate School and Office of Research and Creative Scholarship
- Coordination with college deans to ensure alignment with institutional priorities

External Stakeholder Engagement:
- Consultation with Montana State University leadership and faculty
- Discussion with tribal college partners
- Input from industry representatives and employers
- Feedback from K–12 education partners

Student Input:
Student perspectives were integral to The FUTURE Project and have informed the Institute's focus on preparing graduates for AI-enabled careers while maintaining emphasis on human creativity, critical thinking, and ethical reasoning.

Request to Plan Approval:
In November 2025, a Request to Plan was submitted to the ARSA committee members, the Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education, and the Board of Regents. The full proposal has been circulated to administrators at colleges across the University of Montana and through the campus Faculty Senate approval process.

This comprehensive consultation process ensures that the Institute reflects broad stakeholder priorities, complements existing programs, and serves the collective needs of the Montana University System and the state of Montana.

Montana University System

REQUEST TO PLAN FORM – ACADEMIC, ADMINISTRATIVE OR RESEARCH UNIT

ITEM 1017-LII0526 **Novemeber 2025**

Item Name

Center/Institute/Unit Title: **Center for Human-Centered AI**

Campus: **University of Montana-Missoula** Expected Final Submission Date: **May 2026**

Contact Name/Info: **Zach Rossmiller**

This form is meant to increase communication, collaboration, and problem-solving opportunities throughout the MUS in the center/institute development process. The completed form should exceed 2-3 pages. For more information regarding the center/institute approval process, please visit http://mus.edu/che/arsa/academicproposals.asp.

1) Provide a brief description of the new center/institute (unit).

The Center for Human-Centered AI will serve as a convener and collaborator across the Montana University System and beyond. Internally, it will connect faculty and staff across disciplines—education, business, computer science, humanities, health, and the creative arts—to develop shared approaches for integrating AI into teaching, learning, and research.

System-wide, the Center will build pathways for collaboration with other MUS campuses, including course sharing, faculty development, and joint research initiatives. It will also engage K–12 partners, statewide digital learning initiatives, and tribal colleges to expand access to AI education and support seamless pathways from secondary to postsecondary learning.

The Center will cultivate strong relationships with Montana employers and industry partners to align academic programs with workforce needs, co-develop applied research projects, and create opportunities for internships and experiential learning. At the national level, the Center will position UM and MUS to participate in regional and federal AI research and education networks, enhancing competitiveness for external funding and partnerships.

2) Describe the need for the center/institute. Specifically, how the center/institute meets current student, state, and industry research or community engagement needs. (Please cite sources in an addendum to this document).

Artificial intelligence is rapidly transforming education, research, and workforce expectations nationwide. For Montana, the stakes are particularly high: our state must prepare students not just to use AI but to shape it responsibly and innovatively. Employers are increasingly identifying AI literacy, critical thinking, and ethical reasoning as essential skills for graduates entering the workforce.

At the same time, AI is reshaping how faculty conduct research and how students learn. Without a coordinated statewide approach, efforts risk becoming fragmented, leaving institutions and communities behind. The Center will meet this need by serving as a hub for AI education and research across the MUS, ensuring that every Montana student and faculty member has equitable access to training, tools, and opportunities.

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This work builds on the momentum of The Future Project, which since 2023 has engaged hundreds of faculty, staff, and students in shaping UM's approach to AI. By formalizing that work in a Center, UM will ensure Montana has a durable structure to advance innovation, prepare an AI-ready workforce, and lead responsibly in this critical space.

3) Describe how the center/institute fits with the institutional mission, strategic plan, and the existing MUS and institutional portfolios (refer to the most recent institutional Academic Priorities and Planning Statement).

The University of Montana's mission emphasizes whole-person education, ethical leadership, and service to community. The Center directly advances these priorities by equipping students with AI competencies while ensuring education remains human-centered and value-driven.

UM's AI Commitment underscores the importance of equitable access, transparency, academic integrity, and faculty development. These principles will guide the Center's work, ensuring that the adoption of AI strengthens academic freedom, dignity, and human creativity.

At the MUS level, the Center aligns with system goals to expand research capacity, foster innovation, and support workforce readiness. By situating UM as the statewide hub for AI, the Center will complement existing institutional strengths and fill an emerging gap in MUS's academic and research portfolio.

4) Describe any opportunities for collaboration you have identified or initiated either within the institution or between MUS institutions (i.e. articulation, course-sharing, research collaboration). Include potential contacts and their institutional affiliation.

The Center is envisioned not as a single-campus initiative, but as a collaborative, statewide resource for the Montana University System. From the outset, its design and activities will be shaped through partnerships between the University of Montana, Montana State University, and affiliate campuses across the MUS. This ensures the Center is a unifying effort that strengthens all institutions rather than creating competition among them.

Collaboration will include course-sharing and curriculum development across campuses, joint faculty research initiatives, and coordinated professional development for instructors. By pooling expertise and resources, MUS institutions can collectively accelerate AI integration into teaching and research in ways no single campus could achieve alone.

The Center will also engage K–12 partners, statewide digital learning initiatives, and Montana's tribal colleges, ensuring broad and equitable access to AI education. Employers and industry partners will be integral collaborators, helping align programs with workforce needs and offering applied research opportunities. Finally, at the national level, the Center will position MUS institutions to participate jointly in federal AI consortia and compete collaboratively for large-scale research and education grants.

The Center will be housed at UM but function as a system-level resource, with governance and programming designed to ensure participation from MSU and affiliate campuses.

5) Describe any significant new financial resources (staff and/or facilities) needed to launch and sustain the center/institute. How do you anticipate supporting this new center/institute/unit

Montana University System

REQUEST TO PLAN FORM – ACADEMIC, ADMINISTRATIVE OR RESEARCH UNIT

The Center will launch using existing resources, drawing on UM's current faculty expertise, administrative capacity, and digital infrastructure. Faculty affiliates across disciplines will contribute through joint appointments and research collaborations, while existing classrooms, labs, and IT resources will provide the foundation for teaching and research initiatives.

Over time, the Center will coordinate with MUS partners to identify shared infrastructure needs and pursue external support to enhance capacity. Competitive federal grants, philanthropic support, and industry partnerships will be pursued to grow the Center's impact and ensure long-term sustainability.

By relying on existing resources at the outset and scaling responsibly through collaboration and external funding, the Center will be both financially prudent and strategically positioned to maximize impact statewide.

Addendum: Supporting Sources

National & Global Context

- **National Science Foundation (NSF)**. *National AI Research Institutes Program Solicitation*. 2023.
  Highlights the national priority of expanding AI research and education infrastructure to strengthen U.S. competitiveness and workforce development.
- **EDUCAUSE**. *2024 Horizon Report: Teaching and Learning Edition*. EDUCAUSE, 2024.
  Identifies artificial intelligence as the leading force reshaping pedagogy, assessment, and faculty development in higher education.
- **World Economic Forum (WEF)**. *Future of Jobs Report 2023*. Geneva: WEF, 2023.
  Projects that AI and digital skills are among the fastest-growing competencies demanded by employers across industries.

Montana Context

- **University of Montana**. *The Future Project*. Accessed October 2025. https://umontana.ai/future
  UM's university-wide initiative launched in 2023, guiding deliberative exploration of AI's role in teaching, learning, and Montana's workforce.
- **University of Montana**. *AI Commitment*. Accessed October 2025. https://umontana.ai/commitment
  Outlines UM's principles for responsible AI adoption, emphasizing human flourishing, equitable access, and academic integrity.

Montana University System

REQUEST TO PLAN FORM – ACADEMIC, ADMINISTRATIVE OR RESEARCH UNIT

Signature/Date
Chief Research Officer: Scott Whittenburg, BOR Approved as 221-1007-R1125, November 2025 **Flagship Provost*: Adrea Lawrence, BOR Approved as 221-1007-R1125**, November 2025 **Flagship President*: Seth Bodnar, BOR Approved as 221-1007-R1125**, November 2025
*Not applicable to the Community Colleges.