

## REQUEST TO PLAN MEMORANDUM

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**DATE:** April 17, 2026

**TO:** Chief Academic Officers, Montana University System

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

**RE:** May 2026 Request to Plan Proposals

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The campuses of the Montana University System have proposed new academic programs or changes under the Request to Plan process authorized by the Montana Board of Regents. The proposals are being sent to you for your review and approval. If you have concerns about a particular proposal, you should share those concerns with your colleagues at that institution and try to come to some understanding. If you cannot resolve your concerns, raise them at the Chief Academic Officer's conference call on Wednesday, April 22<sup>nd</sup>. Issues not resolved at that meeting should be submitted in writing to OCHE by noon on Friday, May 1, 2026. If no concerns are received, OCHE will assume that the proposals have your approval.

### **Requests to Plan**

#### **University of Montana:**

- Request to plan Instrumental and Choral Concentrations in the Bachelor of Music Education  
[Item #224-1001-R0526](#)

#### **Montana State University Northern:**

- Request for authorization to establish an AS in Integrated Health Sciences  
[Item #224-\\*2810-R0526](#)

**Montana University System**  
**REQUEST TO PLAN FORM – ACADEMIC PROGRAM**

ITEM XXX-1001-R0526

May 2026

**Request to Plan Instrumental and Choral Concentrations in the Bachelor of Music Education**

Program Title:	<b>Bachelor of Music Education (BME): Concentrations in Instrumental and Choral</b>	Planned 6-digit CIP code: <b>13.1312</b>
Campus, School/Department:	<b>University of Montana – Missoula, School of Music</b>	Expected Final Submission Date: <b>December 2026</b>
Contact Name/Info:	<b>Stevie Hirner / <a href="mailto:stevie.hirner@mso.umt.edu">stevie.hirner@mso.umt.edu</a></b>	

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 exceed 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 brief description of the new program.**

To align with best practices from similar programs within the United States, along with the accrediting body, the National Association of Schools of Music (NASM), we wish to update the Bachelor of Music Education (BME) to offer two concentrations: Instrumental and Choral. These concentrations will allow for deeper study of concepts and techniques in area-specific courses, thus better serving the needs of our students, the strengths of our faculty, and the state of Montana.

**1.a. How many total credits will be required for the degree? How many credits in the major/minor?**

For both proposed concentrations, 72 credits within School of Music; 120 overall.

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

Our current curriculum model emphasizes a broad base of courses to cover a variety of topics. This has been beneficial to allow students to gain a foundation of skills in multiple areas. However, the current needs of the field of music education necessitate the inclusion of opportunities for students to gain depth of study in their specific focus area (e.g., instrumental or choral music education). This includes newly created courses that will allow for specialized studies in each focus area. With these additions, the students will achieve a much deeper understanding and proficiency, thus better preparing them for success in their chosen field after graduation.

**3) Describe how the program 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. <https://www.mus.edu/che/arsa/AcademicPlanningAndPriorities/academic-priorities.html>).**

The design of new concentrations with the BME fully aligns with UM's Priorities for Action, adapting our offerings in music to fit contemporary student needs and to simplify advising in service of student success and retention.

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More specifically, this redesign serves UM's Objectives 1-4 in tangible and strategic ways. We hope that clearer and more specific degree pathways will result in a more discernable brand identity for our program, which also serves strategic marketing and recruitment. In our collaborative approach, which draws upon the strengths of our current music faculty, as well the strengths of faculty across our college, we hope to enhance student experience, increase retention and persistence, and better prepare our graduates for success in the field.

**4) Review the MUS academic degree program inventory for similar, adjacent, and/or preparatory programs (<https://www.mus.edu/findaprogram/>).**

**a. Describe any opportunities for collaboration you have identified or initiated either within the institution or between MUS institutions (i.e. articulation, course-sharing academic programs and creating pathways between degrees). Include potential contacts and their institutional affiliation.**

The BME degree already lends itself to collaboration across musical disciplines and the other art forms, but we are hoping to enhance those collaborations through the creation of concentrations and new course offerings within the degree. Examples include the following:

- The inclusion of existing ensembles from the jazz and musical theatre areas as eligible ensembles for degree credit.
- The addition of existing techniques courses from jazz and musical theatre areas
- Potential existing co-curricular courses in music and movement from our colleagues in Theatre & Dance.
- Due to the likelihood of fewer shared students across the ensembles because of concentrations, collaborative performances will be more accessible.

**b. What are current enrollment numbers in similar programs for the last three academic years?**

The duplicated fall headcounts for both undergraduate music education programs in the system are:

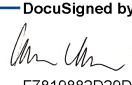
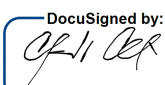
UM Missoula: Fall 2023: 41 | Fall 2024: 84 | Fall 2025: 84

MSU Bozeman: Fall 2023: 64 | Fall 2024: 55 | Fall 2025: 47

**c. Describe any significant new financial resources (faculty, staff, facilities, and/or curricula) needed to launch and sustain the program.**

Our new concentrations and additional courses will be delivered by current faculty using a rotating schedule of offerings to avoid the need of hiring additional faculty or of additional financial resources. Any new courses will comfortably fall within the skill set of our current faculty, thus reducing the need for remediation or additional study to instruct the students sufficiently.

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<b>Signature/Date</b>	
<b>Flagship Provost*:</b>  <small>DocuSigned by: F7819882D29D40B...</small>	4/1/2026
<b>Flagship President*:</b>  <small>DocuSigned by: 1983C1374D8D402...</small>	3/31/2026

\*Not applicable to the Community Colleges.

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**ITEM 224-2810-R0526**

**Meeting Date May 2026**

**Item Name: Request for authorization to establish an A.S. in Integrated Health Sciences**

Program Title: *Integrated Health* **Integrated Health**

Planned 6-digit CIP code: 51.00

Campus, School/Department: **Havre, MSUN, Integrated Health Sciences**

Expected Final Submission Date: **May 2027**

Contact Name/Info: **Chad Spangler PhD, Professor Integrated Health Sciences**

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 exceed 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 brief description of the new program.**

The new program is an Associates of Science in Integrated Health Sciences providing an opportunity for primarily local students to achieve any of the following goals:

- Complete prerequisites for non-local 2-year allied health programs (i.e., radiology tech, dental hygiene)
- Complete general education requirements and lower-level health science courses in preparation to transfer to a related bachelor's program
- Complete foundational courses and related certification in preparation to secure an entry-level job in a health-related field

**1.a. How many total credits will be required for the degree? How many credits in the major/minor?**

The proposed associate's degree will require 60 credits, that all count toward the related Bachelors of Science in Integrated Health Science (120 credits).

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

The proposed program addresses three identified needs among students and regional stakeholders.

First, as the result of the passage of Montana HB 252, the "Student and Teacher Advancement for Results and Success (STARS) Act", high schools will soon be incentivized to place their students into dual enrollment programs that provide early certifications and 2-year degrees. This program provides a robust pathway for dual enrollment students interested in pursuing either entry-level positions in healthcare and/or additional education in the field. It also provides new educational opportunities for dual enrollment students in more isolated regions surrounding Havre as it fills an existing gap in the type of early coursework that is available to the expanding, local dual enrollment population.

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Second, the proposed program addresses the ever-increasing need, across the state and locally, for healthcare workers by including embedded entry-level certifications like Medical Assistant (MA) and Certified Nurse's Aide (CNA). According to administrators at Northern Montana Health Care, potential employees with foundational skills and certifications in healthcare, such as those embedded in this program, offer tremendous benefit to their units as they work to fill important roles in critical access hospitals. Further specialized skills that are needed for these roles are typically developed through on-the-job training, but the presence of foundational skills positions the employee for both early and long-term success. This program is being developed in close partnership with rural healthcare providers to ensure the employability of students completing the program.

Finally, the proposed program includes coursework that acts as an onramp for regional students wanting to apply to competitive, 2-year allied health programs across the state like physical therapy assistant or dental hygiene.

- 3) Describe how the program 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. <https://www.mus.edu/che/arsa/AcademicPlanningAndPriorities/academic-priorities.html>).**

In review of academic planning and priorities from across the MUS, MSUN's recent plan to increase opportunities for students to develop skills in this area is in alignment with state-wide efforts to address rural healthcare needs. As MSU-Northern serves some of the most rural communities in the state, the institution's work to address gaps in rural workforce readiness is positioned to make an especially impactful difference for the state's rural population. This directly supports the mission of the university and its strategic goals to offer quality curriculum that meets the needs of industry across the region.

- 4) Review the MUS academic degree program inventory for similar, adjacent, and/or preparatory programs (<https://www.mus.edu/findaprogram/>). MCC – A.S. Allied Health, UM-Western A.S. Health & Wellness**

- a. Describe any opportunities for collaboration you have identified or initiated either within the institution or between MUS institutions (i.e. articulation, course-sharing academic programs and creating pathways between degrees). Include potential contacts and their institutional affiliation.**

With this program, the opportunities for collaboration include:

- Working the regional high schools to enhance dual credit and early certification options in health and healthcare
- Working with MSUN's existing Bachelor's in Integrated Health Science and Associate's in Nursing to ensure seamless transitions, when desired.
- Working with MUS schools that offer 2-year allied health degrees to ensure articulation with prerequisite coursework. For example, we would want to create agreements in which students with our A.S. degree would be eligible for application to programs like the Dental Hygiene at College of Great Falls and the Physical Therapy Assistant program at Flathead Valley Community College.
- Working with the local health care system to integrate co-operative education credits with clinical apprenticeship hours.

- b. What are current enrollment numbers in similar programs for the last three academic years?**

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Miles City Community College offers an A.S. in Allied Health, which is similar to what we are proposing. Enrollment in this program is minimal.

UM-Western also offers an AAS in Human Performance with three-year enrollment in the program as follows: 4 students (2025), 0 students (2024), and 1 student (2023). The university also has an A.S. in Health and Wellness that has had no enrollment over the last three years.

Conversations with Miles City Community College and UM Western have taken place, and will be ongoing, in order to identify any questions, concerns, or opportunities for collaboration. Given Northern's active industry partnerships along the Hi-Line and current, robust enrollment trends in the university's long-standing BS in Integrated Health Sciences, it is believed that there is greater opportunity to attract students into the proposed program than might have been seen at other institutions. Continued collaboration with local high schools and Northern's healthcare partners across the Hi-Line will aid in the careful development of this program to both attract sustainable enrollment and ensure the employability of students successfully completing the program.

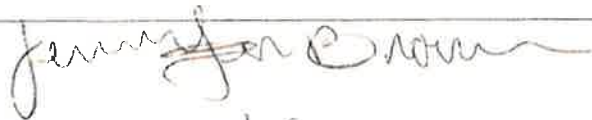
**c. Describe any significant new financial resources (faculty, staff, facilities, and/or curricula) needed to launch and sustain the program.**

In order to launch and sustain this program, we will need to hire adjunct faculty to assist with healthcare related certification courses like the EMT and CNA courses. We anticipate a need to cover a maximum of 12 credits per year with adjunct faculty at a cost of \$750 per credit.

We do not anticipate a need for new equipment at this time.

**Signature/Date**

Chief Academic Officer:



Chief Executive Officer:



Flagship Provost\*:



Flagship President\*:



\*Not applicable to the Community Colleges.

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