



Montana University System

Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education

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

To: Board of Regents
From: Joe Thiel, Interim Deputy Commissioner of Academic, Research, and Student Affairs
Date: September 3, 2026
RE: State Authorization Policy Revisions

In July 2026, OCHE staff submitted proposed revisions to the Board's state authorization policy. The proposed revisions were drafted to strengthen consumer protection and make Montana's requirements more closely align with current best practices and regulatory requirements. During and following the July meeting, OCHE received comments on the proposed revisions from Montana campuses and other stakeholders. OCHE staff reviewed the comments and adjusted the proposed revisions as appropriate. The updated version now includes longstanding Montana institutions that have maintained continuous accreditation as automatically authorized institutions and provides a pathway to authorization for an unaccredited institution that is new entity seeking to operate in Montana. Other non-substantive edits were made to further clarify the policy language. The remainder of the revisions presented to the Board in July are unchanged.