



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

2026 Accreditation Report

September 2026

The Northwest Commission on College and Universities (NWCCU) conducted the following evaluations of Montana University System campuses during the 2025-26 academic year.

Mid-Cycle Evaluation

Miles CC (Spring 2026)

Ad-Hoc Report

Helena College (Fall 2025)

Great Falls College (Spring 2026)

Montana Tech (Spring 2026 with Visit)

University of Montana (Spring 2026 with Visit)

Financial Resources Review

Dawson (Fall 2025)

Evaluation of Institutional Effectiveness

MSU Billings (Fall 2025)

UM Western (Spring 2026)

In the 2065-2027 academic year, the following Montana University System campuses will be evaluated as follows:

Ad Hoc Report

Great Falls College (Fall 2026 with Visit)

MSU Billings (Fall 2026)

Financial Resources Review

Dawson (Spring 2027)

Evaluation of Institutional Effectiveness

Flathead Valley (Spring 2027)

Mid-Cycle Review

MSU Northern (Fall 2026)

University of Montana (Fall 2026)

Helena College (Spring 2027)

Montana Tech (Spring 2027)



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Currently, all MUS and CC campuses are accredited by the NWCCU.

MUS Campus	Year of Initial Accreditation	Degrees Permitted
Dawson Community College	1969	A
Flathead Valley Community College	1970	A
Great Falls College Montana State University	1979	A
Helena College University of Montana	1977	A
Miles Community College	1971	A
Montana State University – Billings	1932	A,B,M
Montana State University – Bozeman	1932	A, B, M, D
Montana State University – Northern	1932	A, B, M
Montana Technological University	1932	A, B, M, D
University of Montana – Missoula	1932	A, B, M, D
University of Montana – Western	1932	A, B

Commission Recommendations and Findings AY 25-26 Evaluations

Miles CC (Mid Cycle)

Spring 2026, MCC completed its NWCCU Mid-Cycle Review. The College will use the results of the Mid-Cycle process to strengthen mission fulfillment, student achievement, academic assessment, program review, and evidence-based planning.

The College is preparing for an upcoming Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing (ACEN) site visit scheduled for October 2026.

Additionally, MCC will continue exploring future NACEP accreditation to further strengthen the quality, consistency, and oversight of its dual enrollment offerings.



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Helena College (Ad Hoc)

NWCCU:

In Fall 2025, Helena College submitted an ad hoc report in response to a recommendation regarding Standard 2.A.4 - *Develop, document, and implement structures for decision making that considers feedback from existing governance groups consisting of faculty, staff, administrators, and students.* The processes documented in this ad hoc report were reviewed and approved by the commission at their January 2026 meeting. In February 2026, Helena College received official notification from NWCCU that recommendation was now considered fulfilled and no further action was required.

In Spring 2026, Helena College submitted an additional ad hoc report in response to three recommendations from the Spring 2024 EIE.

1. Implement an institutional-level assessment process that informs operational planning, allowing for effective resource allocation to enhance student learning and achievement (2020 Standard(s) 1.B.1)
2. Expand assessment beyond the course level, to include program and institutional outcomes that evaluate and demonstrate the quality of learning and use the results to inform continuous improvement of student learning outcomes. (2020 Standard(s) 1.C.5;1.C.6;;1.C.7)
3. Widely publish identified disaggregated indicators of student achievement and those of peer institutions and demonstrate the use of the data to inform planning, decision-making and allocation of resources. (2020 Standard(s) 1.D.2;1.D.3)

The ad hoc report was combined with a virtual visit from a team of evaluators, which was reviewed by the commission at the July 2026 meeting. We are currently awaiting a response from NWCCU.

In July, we received notification from NWCCU that our visit schedule is being adjusted to align with the new 8-year cycle which has been recently approved. Our next accreditation activity will be our mid-cycle visit in Spring 2028.

ACEN:

Helena College's Nursing program submitted a substantive change request for a new Program Director, which was approved. An annual report outlining program capacity, structure, design, faculty, curriculum details, and data such as capacity and retention was submitted and received full approval.



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ACOTE:

Helena College's OTA program continues to make progress in initial accreditation through the Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education (ACOTE). The program successfully submitted its Candidacy Application in April 2026 and anticipates a response by August 2026. Upon approval of candidacy, the program will proceed with the next required accreditation steps, including

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implementation of the approved curriculum and preparation for the on-site evaluation. The program remains on track with its planned accreditation timeline and continues to work closely with institutional leadership and community partners to ensure a successful program launch and compliance with all accreditation requirements.

Great Falls College (Ad Hoc)

Institutional Accreditation

Great Falls College submitted an Ad Hoc report to NWCCU in February. In response to the 2025 Mid-Cycle visit, the Commission provided a Letter of Action on August 11, 2025, with updated language for the two recommendations originally made after the April 2022 EIE visit and requesting an ad hoc report to report progress on Recommendation 1:

Recommendation 1: Spring 2025 Mid-Cycle Review – Continue to develop and implement a systematic evaluation and inclusive planning process that informs and refines effectiveness and assigns resources, including the assessment of program and institutional learning outcomes (2020 Standards 1.B.1, 1.C.5, 1.C.6, 1.C.7).

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Significant progress toward fulfilling this recommendation has been made, and no further reports were requested by NWCCU.

Programmatic Accreditation

Over the past year, the Health Science Division has successfully advanced accreditation efforts across multiple programs. The Associate of Science in Nursing (ASN) program received approval for candidacy from the Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing (ACEN), marking a significant step toward full accreditation. The Veterinary Technology program was granted Initial Accreditation by the American Veterinary Medical Association Committee on Veterinary Technician Education and Activities (AVMA/CVTEA). The Dental Hygiene program received institutional approval from NWCCU for the expansion site located on the Montana State University Bozeman campus. Additionally, the



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Surgical Technology program completed its accreditation site visit through the Accreditation Review Council on Education in Surgical Technology and Surgical Assisting (ARC/STSA) and subsequently received renewed accreditation without recommendations.

Looking ahead, several programs have important accreditation activities planned. Both the Dental Hygiene and Respiratory Therapy programs have submitted self-studies in preparation for upcoming site visits. The ASN program is scheduled for its initial ACEN site visit during the spring semester. The Dental Hygiene program will host both the Commission on Dental Accreditation (CODA) and NWCCU Ad Hoc site visits in the fall term. The Respiratory Therapy program anticipates a site visit during the 2026–2027 academic year as part of its accreditation cycle.

Montana Tech (Ad Hoc)

Montana Tech remains institutionally accredited by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU). During 2025-2026, the University prepared and submitted an Ad Hoc Report and hosted an NWCCU peer-evaluator visit in April 2026. The review addressed three recommendations from the Spring 2024 Evaluation of Institutional Effectiveness: implementing a systematic evaluation and planning process to inform effectiveness and resource allocation; implementing an effective system for assessing learning quality in all programs; and making disaggregated student-achievement data available and documenting its use in strategy and resource decisions. This work built on the Spring 2025 Ad Hoc Report addressing mission-fulfillment goals and published-information review.

In 2026-2027, Montana Tech will respond to any Commission guidance arising from the 2026 review and prepare for the Spring 2027 Mid-Cycle Review, which includes continued attention to the use of assessment results to improve student learning. The University will continue implementing its institutional-effectiveness framework, refining strategic-plan indicators and dashboards, documenting resource-allocation decisions, publishing disaggregated student-achievement data, and strengthening assessment of program learning outcomes.

Academic program review will be a major component of this work. Revised program-review processes, templates, training, and Canvas-based resources will support the next review cycle, with program submissions scheduled during Fall 2026. Montana Tech will also continue supporting discipline-specific accreditation and approval activities in engineering, nursing, occupational safety and health, business, and other professionally accredited or regulated programs.

University of Montana (Ad Hoc)

- **UM is currently undergoing its NWCCU mid-cycle review and will have a site-visit in October 2026.**



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- **Occupational Therapy (OTD) and Physician Associate Studies (MPAS) are newer healthcare programs currently in provisional or early accreditation status.**
- **Alexander Blewett III School of Law (JD) holds accreditation from both the American Bar Association (ABA) and the American Association of Law Schools (AALS). Its next site visit is scheduled for Fall 2026.**
- **The Phyllis J. Washington College of Education has submitted a self-study and will have a site visit from the Council for Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) in February 2027.**

Dawson CC (Financial Review)

Recommendations Out of Compliance

The Commission finds that the following Recommendations are areas where Dawson Community College is out of compliance with the NWCCU Standards for Accreditation. According to U.S. Department of Education Regulation 34 CFR 602.20 and Commission Policy, the Commission requires that Dawson Community College take appropriate action to ensure these Recommendations are addressed and resolved within the prescribed three-year period, no later than February 6, 2029.

Recommendation 1: Fall 2025 Financial Resources Review - Provide independent financial audits annually to NWCCU within 15 months of the end of the fiscal year. (2020 Standard(s) ER 20)

Montana State University Billings (Evaluation of Institutional Effectiveness)

Commendations

1. Its exemplary commitment to fostering a culture of care that permeates every level of the institution. Montana State University Billings demonstrates a deep and sustained dedication to student well-being, belonging, and success.
2. Its use of data, in particular disaggregated student success data, to identify potential equity gaps and provide effective support to all students.
3. The outstanding dedication demonstrated by its employees, who consistently convey a deep commitment to the mission and values of the institution. A strong culture of collaboration and mutual respect among colleagues is clearly evident, contributing to a positive and cohesive working environment.

Recommendations Substantially in Compliance but in Need of Improvement

Recommendation 1: Fall 2025 Evaluation of Institutional Effectiveness - Enhance communication and training around financial planning and decision making. (2020 Standard(s) 2.E.3; 1.B.3)



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Recommendation 2: Fall 2025 Evaluation of Institutional Effectiveness - Complete the implementation of its General Education assessment process. (2020 Standard(s) 1.C.6)

Recommendation 3: Fall 2025 Evaluation of Institutional Effectiveness - Widely publish disaggregated indicators of student achievement on the institution's public website. (2020 Standard(s) 1.D.3)

University of Montana Western (Evaluation of Institutional Effectiveness)