



**MONTANA UNIVERSITY SYSTEM
OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER OF HIGHER EDUCATION**

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Needs Statement: Timely and easy access to relevant and accurate system-wide data is inadequate. Campuses have functional expertise in information technology and institutional research to support their decision-making processes. The Board of Regents and Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education have no comparable capabilities.

Data and other information is typically available to the Board, OCHE, and Legislature in one of three ways:

1. Limited and sometimes unreliable information may be accessed through the student data warehouse;
2. Manual, time-intensive, inefficient methods are used to gather and evaluate data; or
3. Individual campuses provide separate data to OCHE staff, requiring an integration of information that is usually not maintained by campuses in the same format, for the same purposes, or with the same definitions and assumptions.

As a result, the Board's and OCHE utilization of data is unreliable and sometimes ineffective.

Course of Action: OCHE staff will take the following initial steps in an attempt to resolve the problem:

Step 1: Gather Information

Completion: April 15, 2005

- ❑ Through a SHEEHO query, determine how other system offices have engaged and resolved similar problems;
- ❑ Query "experts" from external entities such as state government to further assess scope of problem and possible solutions;
- ❑ Discuss with campus representatives;
- ❑ Retain advisory consultant to provide assistance, if appropriate and necessary.

Step 2: Develop Possible Solutions

Completion: June 1, 2005

- ❑ Create small working group to assess information and develop plan for addressing the problem;
- ❑ Determine funding requirements and estimated timelines (e.g., new position, IT system modifications, etc.);
- ❑ Present recommendations to Board Staff and Compensation Committee.

Step 3: Proposal to Board

Completion: September 2005

Upon Board approval, implementation should begin no later than September 2005.