



**MONTANA UNIVERSITY SYSTEM**  
**Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education**

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## **Commissioner Announces Retirement**

HELENA, December 9–Commissioner Richard Crofts today announced he would retire within the next three months after serving for more than six years, the longest tenure of any Montana University System (MUS) Commissioner. Before his appointment as Commissioner, Crofts also served two years as the MUS Deputy Commissioner for Academic Affairs.

Once the transition to an interim Commissioner is completed, Crofts and his wife June will relocate to Florida so they can be closer to family and where he will pursue other professional opportunities.

During his tenure as Commissioner, Crofts implemented the Regents Strategic Restructuring Plan, resulting in enhanced coordination and unification of Montana’s public universities, considerable savings due to administrative consolidations, and better services for students. Crofts believes this fall’s record resident and overall enrollment demonstrates the success of the restructured MUS.

Crofts is credited by the Regents for his work toward efficiency and accountability. Said Chairman Regent Roehm “ Because of Dr. Crofts’ leadership, Montana’s is the most cost-efficient University System in the region. The Legislature found that we spend \$4000 less to educate a student than Wyoming which has only one campus.” Crofts efficiency accomplishments also include initiating a cycle of program

review in the MUS, resulting in termination of 149 majors, minors and options that failed to meet productivity standards. Roehm also praised Crofts for helping the Regents focus their decision-making process on student success.

Other highlights include the expansion of distance education, from 29 classes Fall Semester 1997 to 129 on-line classes in Fall 2000. Crofts also led planning for and implementation of data-based decision making for the Montana University System, resulting in the transition from six different information systems to one common operating system at all campuses and creation of a system-wide data warehouse.

Crofts successfully fought for funding, gaining matching state funding for the EPSCoR research grant programs and renewal of the six mill levy.

His national standing facilitated MUS access to and participation in important national projects such as WCET Technology Costing Methodology Project and the Pathways to College Project. He also furthered cooperation with K-12 through work on joint grant projects such as WICHE K-16 AP project and GEAR UP with OPI and middle/high schools around the state and the SHEEO K-16 Collaboration Assessment Review Groups for Maryland and California.

Before coming to Montana, Crofts worked in the Minnesota University System where he served as Assistant to the Chancellor and as Vice President for Academic Affairs at Mankato State.

Crofts earned a PhD from Duke in 1969 and began his career as an educator as a history professor at the University of Toledo (UT). He went on to become the Chair of the History Department at UT, then the Associate Dean of the Graduate School and Director of the Office of Research.

In 1984, Crofts took the position as Associate Vice President for Research and Dean of the Graduate School at East Tennessee State University. Under his leadership, graduate enrollment increased 15%; and, graduate assistantships and sponsored program funding doubled.