

November 16-17, 2000

ITEM 109-2801-R1100 **Approval of Proposal to Offer the Bachelor of Science in Education Degree in Elementary Education (K – 8) and Reading Minor (K –12) in Great Falls, Montana; Montana State University-Northern**

THAT: The Board of Regents of Higher Education authorizes Montana State University-Northern to offer the Bachelor of Science in Education Degree in Elementary Education (K – 8) and Reading Minor (K –12) in Great Falls, Montana, to any student who completes the four-year curriculum in elementary education and reading approved by the Board.

EXPLANATION: Montana State University-Northern and its College of Education have played a significant role in preparing teachers for the State's grade schools and high schools (P-12), particularly in rural, north central Montana. That mission has included the Great Falls market specifically. MSU-Northern's counselor education program has been available in Great Falls for several decades, beginning with coursework at Malmstrom Air Force Base. In 1989, Northern was authorized to take its 32-credit professional education core to Great Falls. Its newest graduate degree in education, Learning Development, has been delivered to Great Falls, via the NorthNet telecommunications systems, for at least three (3) years. This fall, a cohort group was established in Great Falls for the Learning Development degree, and 31 students enrolled in the program. Several students were turned away. General education coursework, and especially general education coursework appropriate to teacher training, has been offered in Great Falls by both MSU-Northern and its partner institution, the College of Technology, for several years. This proposal would permit MSU-Northern to offer another, specific education degree in Great Falls.

**Request for Authorization to Offer
The Bachelor of Science in Education Degree
In Elementary Education (K-8) and Reading Minor (K-12)
In Great Falls, Montana**

Montana State University-Northern seeks authorization to offer the Bachelor of Science in Education Degree in elementary education (K-8) and the reading minor (K-12) in Great Falls, Montana.

Background

Montana State University-Northern and its College of Education have played a significant role in preparing teachers for the State's grade schools and high schools (P-12), particularly in rural, north central Montana. That mission has included the Great Falls market specifically. MSU-Northern's counselor education program has been available in Great Falls for several decades, beginning with coursework at Malmstrom Air Force Base. In 1989, Northern was authorized to take its 32-credit professional education core to Great Falls. Its newest graduate degree in education, Learning Development, has been delivered to Great Falls, via the NorthNet telecommunications system, for at least three (3) years. This fall, a cohort group was established in Great Falls for the Learning Development degree, and 31 students enrolled in the program. General education coursework, and especially general education coursework appropriate to teaching training, has been offered in Great Falls by both MSU-Northern and its partner institution, the College of Technology for several years.

This proposal would permit MSU-Northern to offer another, specific education degree in Great Falls.

Interest in elementary or secondary education as a career choice is strong in Great Falls. Elementary education has been the second most frequently declared major for Northern in Great Falls. Since 1989, the average number of students enrolling in MSU-Northern education courses in that city who listed education as their major is 32. Even though the institution could not offer the complete degree to Great Falls students, 25 went on to earn their degrees at the Havre campus. Countless others completed the necessary coursework for a degree in elementary or secondary education at other institutions.

MSU-Northern began offering the "professional education core" of classes for the bachelor's degree in education to Great Falls in 1993. Within the first year of offering the core, the interest for elementary education as a major for students attending MSUN-Great Falls became immediately apparent. There is an established market trend for MSU-N students in Great Falls that supports efforts to gain approval to offer an elementary education degree. There is sufficient demand from students who choose to attend MSU-Northern at Great Falls. Figure 1 presents the academic year average of elementary education majors declared by students attending MSU-Northern in Great Falls since 1994. The marked decline in majors at 1998 is explained by the change in policy that gave COT the lower division courses and Northern upper division courses.

Figure 1. Elementary Education Majors at MSUN-Great Falls

The demand for teachers in the Great Falls school system is good, at least for the immediate future. In 1997, the school district in that city hired 12 elementary education teachers; 32 elementary education teachers were hired in 1998; and 53 were hired last year. Final numbers for this year were not available at the time of this submission. The problem is exacerbated by the number of long-term teachers in the Great Falls system who are approaching retirement age. Several issues of the Great Falls Tribune, earlier this year, were filled with articles about the number of vacancies and retirements inundating that system. Those articles continued into the late summer. While MSU-Northern was not able to collect specific information about hiring needs in the school districts surrounding Great Falls, some of these same problems may well exist.

Anecdotal evidence also supports the need for such a teacher preparation program in Great Falls (see Exhibit A.) During the 1998 – 1999 academic year, 370 telephone or walk-in contacts were recorded at MSU-Northern's Great Falls' office. Frequency counts indicate the most often requested frequently requested undergraduate programs were education, business, nursing and computer-related instruction. These data further support the interest in a bachelor's degree in education.

Montana State University-Northern's role and mission in Great Falls has always been to serve students and needs that are not met by other higher educational institutions in that city. The teacher education coursework, like almost all of MSU-Northern's Great Falls programs, was offered at night and on weekends, so adult, nontraditional, place-bound, and working students could participate in the degree program and hopefully realize their career goals. To complete the teacher education degree, however, students eventually had to 1) leave their jobs, homes and families to attend the Havre campus, 2) transfer to another educational program (with the same consequences already listed), or 3) pay significantly more for their education in Great Falls. This request would eliminate those educational barriers, at least for students who are interested in an elementary education career or a reading endorsement.

Supportive Data

Data were collected during October 2000 to gather pertinent information regarding the demand and support for a program of study leading to a Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education degree in Great Falls from a public institution. Surveys were developed (September, 2000) to provide information to the Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education about the interest for this degree (see Exhibit B). The authors determined that there were two populations of interest who could provide the necessary information required to make an informed decision about the feasibility of MSU-Northern's submission's request. Thus, responses were solicited from (1) students currently enrolled (fall, 2000) in pre-teacher education courses offered by the MSU-College of Technology and in teacher education courses offered by MSU-Northern in Great Falls; and (2) alumnae with earned education degrees from MSU-Northern who reside in Great Falls.

Data from the surveys were analyzed using content-analytic methodology described by Lecompte, Preissle, and Tesch (1993) and Holsti (1969) in which the process of analysis is carried out on the basis of explicitly formulated rules and procedures.

Student Surveys. Student surveys were collected during the week of October 2 from students enrolled in education courses at MSU-COT and MSU Northern in Great Falls. Screening controlled for any duplication of student surveys. Forty-one students surveys were collected.

In response to ***Question A, Part 1, "Are you interested in attending a public institution in Great Falls to earn a Bachelor's degree in Elementary Education?"*** thirty-nine (95%) of the respondents indicated "Yes." Only two (5%) indicated they were not interested in earning a bachelor's degree in Great Falls.

Figure 2. Students' Interest in Public Institution in Great Falls for Elementary Education

With **Question A, Part 2**, “*If yes, list the reasons you would like to have a public institution (for example, MSU-Northern) offer a bachelor’s degree in elementary degree in Great Falls,*” the following themes emerged. Thirty-four percent of the responses indicated the concern for less costly alternatives in earning a bachelor’s degree (affordability). Twenty-three percent identified that work and family commitments prevent them from leaving the Great Falls area to earn a degree from a public institution. Alternative scheduling—weekend and evening classes was the reason for 17% of the responses. Quality of instruction was noted in 9% of the responses as a reason to have a public institution offer this degree. The ability to choose between a private and public institution was listed for 9% of the total responses. Taxpayer issues made up 8% of the responses. Figure 3 represents the themes that emerged from their comments. (Refer to Exhibit C for Students Comments’ Journal.)

Figure 3. Student Reasons for a Bachelor’s Degree in Elementary Education from a Public Institution

Thirty-six students (88%) responded “yes” to **Question B**, “*Are you currently taking classes in Great Falls to earn your bachelor’s degree in elementary education?*” Five students (12%) indicated they were not pursuing a bachelor’s degree.

Thirty-two (78%) students reported that they needed alternative delivery in order for them to attend classes (Question C). Only nine students (22%) indicated alternative delivery was not a concern.

Thematic responses that emerged from **Question D**, “*Is there anything else you want us to know about access to public higher education in Great Falls?*” are represented in Figure 4 below. Thirty-five percent of the responses indicated concern about having the right to choose between a private and a public higher education institution. Thirty percent of the responses cited convenience and location as a factor in wanting to have access to public higher education in Great Falls. Twenty-five percent of the responses focused on access to an affordable education that is provided by public institutions. Ten percent discussed the need for non-traditional students to have access to an institution that recognizes their life responsibilities.

Figure 4. Student Concerns About Access to Public Higher Education in Great Falls

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Summary of Student Surveys

Students’ responses indicate a high level of commitment and interest in earning their degree in elementary education from a public institution of higher education. Emerging from the data were themes that can be addressed by MSU-Northern’s presence in Great Falls and permission to offer a Bachelor of Science degree in Elementary Education. Since MSU-N is a publicly supported institution, we can provide higher education degrees at a more affordable cost to students who cannot afford attending a private institution. Northern has established a long tradition at Great Falls of course delivery on evenings and weekends. This history has established our reputation for meeting the needs expressed by non-traditional students. However, the results clearly indicate that students are interested in earning a degree through alternative scheduling—not just accumulating credits.

Many respondents raised the issue of “choice” and “access.” The findings indicated that students want access to public higher education in Great Falls and stated that they should have a choice between private and public institutions. These data must be viewed from

within the contexts of access and fairness. Undoubtedly, affordability, alternative scheduling, and choice are intricately related to these larger issues.

Respondents who granted us permission to include their names in this report are listed in Exhibit D.

Alumnae Surveys

Alumni surveys were mailed October 9, with return requested by October 16. Twenty-two alumni surveys were returned.

In response to **Question A, Part 1, “Would you have attended a public institution in Great Falls to earn a Bachelor’s degree in Elementary Education?”** 82% of the alumni indicated “Yes.” Eighteen percent indicated they would not have been interested in earning a bachelor’s degree in Great Falls.

Question A, Part 2 asked, **“If yes, list the reasons you would like to have a public institution (for example, MSU-Northern) offer a bachelor’s degree in elementary degree in Great Falls.”** Work and family commitments of place-bound students were listed as reasons that prevented them from leaving the Great Falls area to earn a degree in 50% of the responses. Affordability in earning a bachelor’s degree was a concern for 33%. Preference for alternative scheduling was listed as a reason by 7% of those who responded “yes” to this item. Taxpayer issues were listed by 7% of the respondents. Three percent identified “quality of instruction” as a reason to have a public institution offer the degree. Figure 5 represents the themes that emerged from their comments. (See Exhibit E for Alumnae Comments’ Journal.)

Figure 5. Alumnae Reasons for a Bachelor’s Degree in Elementary Education from a Public Institution

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Question B, “In order for you to have attended classes in Great Falls, would you have preferred an alternative delivery schedule—evenings and weekends?” reported “Yes” from 74% of the respondents. Twenty-six percent indicated alternative delivery was not a concern.

Thematic responses that emerged from **Question C, “Is there anything else that you want us to know about access to public higher education in Great Falls?”** are represented in Figure 6 below. Family and work responsibilities which left them place-bound were listed 49% by the alumnae. Affordability comprised 27% of concerns regarding access to public higher education in Great Falls. Twelve percent of the respondents indicated alternative scheduling as necessary. Taxpayer issues were identified by 8% of the alumnae. Four percent of the respondents cited state incentives as a factor.

Figure 6. Alumnae Concerns About Access to Public Higher Education in Great Falls

Summary of Alumnae Surveys

The themes that emerged from the alumnae surveys closely aligned with the students’ survey findings. Emphases were placed upon affordability, work and family commitments, and choice. Alternative scheduling was similarly ranked as important among both students

and alumnae. If public higher education had been available to our alumnae, many would have chosen to earn their degrees in Great Falls.

Those respondents who granted us permission to include their names in this report are listed in Exhibit F.

Program Delivery

Responsiveness to non-traditional students' needs requires a focus on a program delivery strategy that incorporates timeliness--both in alternative scheduling of coursework and with program completion. Thus, we have developed a schedule to address the expressed needs of the Great Falls students that will provide evening and weekend classes; offer 12-14 credits each academic semester, and 6-9 credits during summer sessions; and allow for the education course requirements to be completed within 4 academic semesters and 2 summers. Table 1 illustrates the course schedule for Spring 2001. See Exhibit G for the two-year schedule of courses for completion of the degree in elementary education.

Table 1. Elementary Education Schedule, Spring 2001

Course	Description	Time	Cr	Instructor
EDUC307	Methods of Teaching Elem Integrated Math/Sci	Mon 5:15-7:45 pm	4	New Faculty
EDUC 350/550	Ed & Psy Exceptional Child	Wed 5:15-7:45 pm	3	Hedrick
EDUC380	Classroom Environment and Management	Tue 5:15-7:45 pm	3	New Faculty
EDPY390	Designing a Learning Environment	Thur 5:15-7:45 pm	3	New Faculty
EDPY425/525	Learning Disabilities	Wed 8-10:30 pm		Hedrick
EDUC400/450/475	Teaching Practicum and Seminar	Arr	12	McCroskey/ New Faculty

Implementation Plan

This proposal will add nine (9) new courses to the educational offerings already available in Great Falls. Those nine courses are the specific educational content applicable to an elementary education degree. Other courses required for the degree are available as follows:

- 32 credits come from the professional education core; as already noted, that education core has been delivered in Great Falls since 1989.
- 50 credits come from general education courses, teacher education program pre-requisites and other student electives.
- 28 credits come from the reading minor, with is also proposed

as part of the Great Falls offerings in this Level I submission. Elementary education majors must complete a K-12 endorsable minor in order to earn their degree. While several such minors are available on the Havre campus, the logical one to take off-campus is the reading minor.

The MSU College of Technology in Great Falls has proposed a two-year, associate of science degree, with a teacher education emphasis, which will articulate into MSU-Northern's elementary education program. The articulation agreement is attached as Exhibit A. That "2 + 2" relationship was developed by the two institutions, as part of its partnership in Great Falls. Students completing that two-year degree at the COT will have satisfied much of the general education and teacher education prerequisites essential for full admission to Northern's teacher education program.

Students transferring into Northern's elementary education program, from other institutions, could also take advantage of the coursework available at the Great Falls COT to prepare themselves for the four-year elementary education degree.

In the past, the coursework for the professional education core has been delivered by Havre faculty, who used the NorthNet telecommunications system or who traveled to Great Falls in person to complete the instruction. That practice will continue. MSU-Northern has also used adjunct faculty members, and those professional educators from the Great Falls community will continue to be utilized. The Great Fall COT and MSU-Northern are also seriously discussing joint appointments for education faculty members who will be hired to implement each institution's education program.

MSU-Northern will hire one elementary education faculty member, initially, to deliver the nine (9) additional courses required for this proposed degree in Great Falls. That faculty member's efforts will obviously be supplemented by the instructional personnel described in the preceding paragraph. As the program grows, additional education faculty may well have to be placed in Great Falls. For the first two or three years of the program, the reading minor will only be offered through the NorthNet system and/or with the expertise of adjunct faculty. Eventually, that minor may require its own faculty specialist.

The one significant change for students in the program is the need, eventually, to take some of their coursework during the day, on a Monday through Friday schedule. The fieldwork, clinical and student teaching portions of the curriculum must be completed when elementary and secondary schools are in session. That portion of the curriculum, one full semester of student teaching, and significant hours of classroom observation and participation in two other courses, will require working adults and students with family obligations to make accommodations in their non-student life. That requirement has always been clearly explained to all Great Falls students, however, since the teacher education core was brought to that city in 1993.

The quality of MSU-Northern's education programs is a significant concern to the institution. The implementation and delivery of additional coursework in elementary education at a distant site will not be permitted to affect that quality. The Office of Public Instruction reviewed all education programs at Montana State University-Northern this year, and gave them full, 5-year approval. The institution is also applying for accreditation

by the National Council of Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE). That visit is expected to take place in the spring of 2002.

Implementation Resources

Since MSU-Northern and its education faculty already have significant experience with distant students in Great Falls, the impact on resources and student support activities will be minimal (see Exhibit H).

- One additional faculty member, in elementary education, will be hired for the Great Falls program. The money for that position, approximately \$50,000, has already been earmarked in this year's budget.
- That faculty member will be housed in the College of Technology in Great Falls, which has become the center for all MSU academic programs in that city. MSU-Northern will have to purchase office equipment and a computer for this new faculty member. Those costs are estimated at \$3,000. Travel to the Havre campus, and additional supplies will add another \$1900.
- The existing personnel support, currently available in Great Falls for all Northern students, will obviously be available for elementary education majors. That support includes a director of Great Falls programs, and an administrative support person.
- Support services for elementary education students will be provided, using the same model that has been in place since 1989 for all education students in that city. The resident faculty member, described above, will be the principal advisor and mentor for students. Faculty on the Havre campus will be available through NorthNet classes, by e-mail or telephone, or in person.
- Services like admissions, financial aid, and business office activities will be handled by on-site personnel, in coordination with the appropriate offices on the Havre campus. Most of those functions are completed electronically. Administrators at MSU-Northern and the Great Falls College of Technology are also discussing a management relationship that would permit the COT to provide many of these support services for the Havre campus.
- Great Falls students have access to the Van Bogart Library, and other MSU-system libraries, through on-line, electronic sources and inter-library loan. (See Exhibit I for information on remote access resources available to off-campus students.)

Board of Regents' Policy 220

The University of Great Falls has an elementary education degree, and a reading minor.

Montana State University-Northern has had several conversations with that University about possible collaboration on education programs. In the past year, those conversations have focused on the elementary education program itself. In addition, MSU-Northern has also included its elementary education proposal on the agenda of several meetings of the Great Falls Higher Education Center. All of those conversations and meetings have been unproductive. A short summary of those contacts is attached as Exhibit J. The articulation agreement between the Great Falls College of Technology and Montana State University-Northern is attached as Exhibit K.

On May 12, 2000, Richard Fisher, former director of Great Falls programs, mailed a letter and supporting materials, to Al Johnson, dean at the University of Great Falls. That letter was intended to comply with Policy 220, under the provisions entitled Board Policy, Section 3. That letter is included as Exhibit L. At the time this proposal was initially transmitted to the Board of Regents, the University of Great Falls had not responded to the content of the proposal. Roger Barber, provost at MSU-Northern, sent another letter to newly-appointed Provost Dennis Olson at the University of Great Falls, informing him of additional opportunities to respond to this proposal. That letter was sent to insure compliance with the 30-day "notice and response" requirement set out in the above-described policy and section. Provost Barber's letter is attached as Exhibit M. Since those notices, Dr. Frederick Gilliard, president of the University of Great Falls, has submitted a formal objection to the request.

All procedural and notification requirements have been met.

This request for authorization is presented by the Interim Chair/Dean of the College of Education at Montana State University-Northern. Appropriate paperwork will also be filed with the Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges.

Darlene Sellers
Interim Chair/Dean
College of Education

Exhibit A: Letters Supporting Approval of Degree

Exhibit B: Sample Surveys

Bachelor's of Science Degree in Elementary Education Interest Survey September, 2000

The purpose of this survey is for us to provide information to the State of Montana's Office of Higher Education about the interest for a public higher education institution to offer a Bachelor's of Science in Elementary Education at Great Falls.

Part I. About Degree

- A. Are you interested in attending a public institution in Great Falls to earn a bachelor's degree in elementary education? No ___ Yes _____

If yes, list the reason(s) you want to have a public institution (for example, Montana State University Northern) offer a bachelor's degree in elementary education in Great Falls?

- B. Are you currently taking classes in Great Falls to earn your bachelor's degree in elementary education?

No _____ Yes _____ If yes, name of institution _____

- C. In order for you to attend classes, do you need an alternative delivery schedule—evenings and weekends? No _____ Yes _____
- D. Is there any thing else that you want us to know about access to public higher education in Great Falls?

Part II. About Others

- A. Do you know of others who may be interested in earning a bachelor’s degree in elementary education in Great Falls? If yes, please provide us with their names and as much information as you know below (e.g., place where they work, telephone numbers, etc.) so that we may contact them.

Part III. About You

- A. Previous degree earned? No ___/Yes___ If yes, please all that apply:
 Associates___ Bachelor’s___ Master’s___ When?_____ Institution?
- B. Name _____ Phone(s) _____(day) _____(evening)
 Address:_____

We would like to add your name to a list of individuals who are interested in earning their bachelor’s degree in elementary education from a public institution. Please indicate your permission for us to list your name in our reports to the State of Montana Office of Higher Education .

I give my permission for Montana State University Northern to use my name in the survey findings’ report submitted to the Office of Higher Education.

Signature: _____ Date _____

Signature of Witness: _____ Date _____

**Bachelor’s of Science Degree in Elementary Education Interest Survey for Alumni
 September, 2000**

The purpose of this survey is for us to provide information to the State of Montana’s Office of Higher Education about the interest for a public higher education institution to offer a Bachelor’s of Science in Elementary Education at Great Falls.

Part I. About Degree

- E. Would you have attended a public institution in Great Falls to earn a bachelor’s degree in elementary education? No _____ Yes _____

If yes, list the reason(s) you would like to have a public institution (for example, Montana State University Northern) offer a bachelor’s degree in elementary education in Great Falls?

- F. In order for you to have attended classes in Great Falls, would you have preferred an alternative delivery schedule—evenings and weekends? No _____ Yes _____

- G. Is there any thing else that you want us to know about access to public higher education in Great Falls?

Part II. About Others

- B. Do you know of others who may be interested in earning a bachelor's degree in elementary education in Great Falls? If yes, please provide us with their names and as much information as you know below (e.g., place where they work, telephone numbers, etc.) so that we may contact them.

Part III. About You

- A. Date degree(s) earned _____ Check all that apply:
 Bachelor's _____ Master's _____ Doctorate _____
- B. Name _____ Phone(s) _____ (day) _____ (evening)
 Address: _____

We would like to add your name to a list of individuals who are supportive of access to earning a bachelor's degree in elementary education from a public institution in Great Falls. Please indicate your permission for us to list your name in our reports to the State of Montana Office of Higher Education.

I give my permission for Montana State University Northern to use my name in the survey findings' report submitted to the Office of Higher Education.

Signature: _____ Date _____

Exhibit C: Students' Comments Journal

Exhibit D: List of Students Surveyed (with permission)

Exhibit E: Alumnae Comments Journal

Exhibit F: List of Alumnae Responding to Survey (with permission)

Exhibit G: Two-Year Program Schedule

Exhibit H: Budget

Proposed Budget for Elementary Education Degree Program in Great Falls

Description	Expenditures
Salary for 1FTE position*	\$40,000
Benefits (24% of gross)*	9,600
Travel from Great Falls to Havre (3000 miles)	1,000
Instructional materials/supplies (start-up)	900
Computer and office equipment	3,000

Total projected budget	\$54,500
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Exhibit I: Library Remote Services
Exhibit J: Summary of Contacts

Exhibit K: Articulation Agreement
Exhibit L: Letter from Richard Fisher
Exhibit M: Letter from Roger Barber

August 15, 2000

Dr. Dennis Olson
Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs
University of Great Falls
1301 20th Street South
Great Falls, Montana 59405

Dear Dr. Olson,

In mid-May, Dr. Al Johnson at your institution received a letter from Richard Fisher, along with several supporting documents, concerning Montana State University-Northern's intent to offer the Bachelor of Science degree in elementary education and the reading minor in Great Falls. At that time, the University of Great Falls was invited to comment on the proposal, and those comments would be included in any documentation submitted to the Montana Board of Regents.

To the best of my knowledge, the University of Great Falls has not provided such comment.

This letter is intended to serve as Montana State University-Northern's offer of "...a further and final opportunity to provide written comment to the Commissioner of Higher Education at least 30 days before the proposal is to appear on the Board of Regents' agenda" as required by Regent Policy 220.

The proposal will be formally submitted to the Board of Regents at either its September, 2000, or November, 2000, meeting. I will let you know when that decision is made. Regardless of which meeting is chosen, this letter is meant to comply with the final notice requirements of the above-cited policy.

You have my best wishes as you approach another school year.

Sincerely,

Roger A. Barber

Cc: David Dooley