

Montana University System New Academic Program Proposal Summary

Campus: Montana State University-Billings	Item Number: 124-2701-R0704
Program Title: Medical Assistant A.A.S.	Date: July 8-9, 2004

1. How does this program advance the campus' academic mission and fit priorities?

In January of 2002, the Board of Regents approved a Level I request by Montana State University-Billings College of Technology (MSU-B COT) to begin an AAS in Medical Assistant. After two successful years of running the Medical Assistant Program, the University is now requesting the program be considered for Level II approval.

The mission of the Montana University System is to serve students through the delivery of high quality, accessible postsecondary educational opportunities, while actively participating in the preservation and advancement of Montana's economy and society.

The mission of MSU-B COT is to be the College of first choice, dedicated to the development of workforce capacity by providing top quality learning opportunities and services to meet a variety of career choices and customer needs by being responsive, flexible, and market-driven.

Due to changes in the delivery of health care, such as the expansion of outpatient services and clinics, the need for Medical Assistants has created a growing opportunity for employment in the medical field. New modes of patient care delivery and personnel are part of the solution in keeping pace with these changes. MSU-B COT responded quickly to a request by the local healthcare industry to help develop and provide a well-trained and diverse workforce. The College will provide students with practical hands-on training in a career with job opportunities in the State of Montana which address the stated needs of the healthcare industry leaders in our community.

The Medical Assistant curriculum is based on educational standards and guidelines for Accredited Educational Programs for the Medical Assistant. There are entry level competencies and a required student externship established by the American Association of Medical Assistants Curriculum Review Board (AAMA-CRB). They ensure a basic level of educational quality for medical assisting programs at the postsecondary level based on national standards established by the profession. The CRB assesses the quality of the program and recommends an accreditation action to the Commission on Accreditation for Allied Health Education Programs (CAAHEP) for final action.

MSU-B COT Medical Assistant Program will seek program accreditation through CAAHEP in fiscal year 2005. The program is set for a self-study to be submitted by July, 2004 and a site review scheduled for November, 2004. The Medical Assistant degree program prepares students for the opportunity to apply and test for certification.

2. How does this program fit the Board of Regents' goals and objectives?

Responsiveness and service to the community are central to the mission of the College of Technology. This program meets the goal "to be responsive to market, employment, and economic development needs of the State." MSU-B COT was approached by the greater Billings medical community including Deaconess Billings Clinic, Saint Vincent Healthcare and Yellowstone County Health Department (i.e., Deering Clinic) to develop and offer this program. The program requires a minimum of 160 contact hours in an ambulatory health care setting

which further solidifies our relationship with our community.

Medical assistants perform routine administrative and clinical tasks to keep the offices and clinics of physicians and podiatrists running smoothly.

3. How does this program support or advance Montana's needs and interests?

The U.S. Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics projects Medical Assistants to be one of the fastest growing occupations in the United States through the year 2010. Job prospects should be best for medical assistants with formal training and/or experience. In fact, there is current proposal for adoption of NEW RULE I by the Board of Medical Examiners that states, "A medical assistant must be a graduate of an accredited medical assisting program or possess experience training or education sufficient, in the supervising physician's, podiatrist's or physician assistant-certified's opinion, to perform delegated duties responsibly, safely and conscientiously." In Montana, the employment of medical assistants is projected to grow much faster than the statewide average for all occupations through 2010.

Listed as number twelve of the top twenty-five fastest growing occupations in Montana, the Montana Department of Labor and Industry reported 800 Medical Assistants in the workforce in 2000 and projects a need for an additional 400 trained individuals by the year 2010, an increase of 52%. The average annual job openings due to growth and net replacement are estimated at 60 openings per year.

(Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Occupational Employment Statistics Survey: Montana Department of Labor and Industry Workforce Services Division, Research and Analysis Bureau)

4. How will this program contribute to the economic development in Montana?

The healthcare industry in Montana is one of the largest economic segments of the State of Montana. The industry is in a crisis mode with shrinking revenues from payers and an increasing uninsured population with concomitant pressure to lower expenses while filling key positions, which require skilled workers. The major healthcare organizations in Yellowstone County who draw patients from Montana and Wyoming requested the development of this program in order to address the organizational need to fill personnel shortages with trained individuals in one of the fastest growing professions in the field - the Medical Assistant.

Once established, the Medical Assisting program will have the potential to graduate 15-20 students per year for the healthcare industry at a salary range of \$21,700 to \$30,400 per year. This could decrease the expenses for this industry by having the flexibility to fill positions with less expensive, yet skilled personnel trained to perform a wide variety of duties.

Employment growth will be driven by the increase in the number of group practices, clinics, and other healthcare facilities that need a high proportion of support personnel, particularly the flexible medical assistant who can handle both administrative and clinical duties. Medical assistants primarily work in outpatient settings, where much faster than average growth is expected.

(Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Occupational Employment Statistics Survey: Montana Department of Labor and Industry Workforce Services Division, Research and Analysis Bureau)

5. What is the program's planned capacity?

Break-even point	Approximately 8.0 FTE
Enrollments/year	20-25
Graduates/year	15-20 (ratio of student to instructor for clinical labs should not be more than 10:1)
Montana jobs/year:	The average annual job openings due to growth and net replacement are estimated at 60 openings per year.

6. Resource allocation:

Please refer to Appendix A for complete details regarding budgeting information.

Montana Board of Regents of Higher Education Policy 303.1

a. Specify the objectives to be reached by the addition of this program.

The MSU-B COT Medical Assistant AAS program is designed to train the student with a high school diploma or G.E.D. to function effectively as an integral member of the physician's health care team. MSU-Billings graduates will possess entry level competencies.

b. Specify in detail present faculty, facilities and equipment, and library holdings in support of this program, and compare them to known or anticipated minimum standards for accreditation.

Faculty Credentials:

Ms. Susan Floyd, Program Director, (B.S.N. Health Occupations)

Ms. Deanna Rieke, Medical Assistant Instructor, (M.S. Medical Assistant)

Mr. Loren Schrag, Anatomy and Physiology Instructor, (M.S. Health Occupations)

Dr. Audrey ConnerRosberg, Director of Nursing, (Ph.D. Clinical Psychology)

Randy Schmitz, Business Instructor, (M.Ed. Business & Information)

Janet Mullaney, Business Instructor, (B.A. Business & Information)

Teri Denowh, Business/Medical Instructor, (Diploma, Adjunct. Teaches Medical Coding & Medical Office Procedures)

Jackie Grewell, Medical Law & Ethics Instructor, (J.D., Adjunct)

According to the Standards and Guidelines, faculty must be knowledgeable in course content, qualified through work experience, effective in directing and evaluating student learning and laboratory practices, and prepared in educational methods.

Facilities and Equipment:

MSU-B COT has a dedicated clinical lab for the medical assistant program. The lab is intended as a mock physician's clinic with two exam "rooms" with exam tables, equipment, and necessary supplies for obtaining vital signs and record keeping; laboratory space for performing and processing diagnostic tests, such as Urinalysis and Hematology specimens with a centrifuge, autoclave, and microscope; there is relevant biohazardous waste receptacles, an eye wash station and EKG equipment. These items provide the environment for meeting the entry-level competencies required by the AAMA medical assistant programs for accreditation.

This lab will require additional equipment and supplies as the enrollment increase to our projected 20 students as the Standards and Guidelines state "Classrooms and laboratories should be of such size and design to permit all students, assigned at any given time period to observe and perform all competencies. Storage space should be adequate for equipment and supplies."

Library Holdings in Support of Program:

The MSU-B COT Library works to provide resources and services to all faculty, students and staff in all the colleges and programs, including the medical assistant program. The library provides online access and assistance to remote users of the library. These services include the OMNI MSU Shared Library Catalog, online databases, electronic journals, interlibrary loan services, electronic reserves, online research guides, virtual reference, and netLibrary ebooks. We currently have references on the history of medicine and other background material, including dictionaries and periodicals as well as anatomical models and visual aids and videos from other medically related programs. We recently added multiple medical assisting textbooks to our holdings.

We should plan to obtain additional periodicals, publications and resources pertinent to medical assisting. Computer hardware and software have also been requested. There are standards related to library holdings, and we have included \$500 per year in the budget to help us accomplish a plan we have put into place to meet those standards.

c. Additional faculty requirements should be detailed as to qualifications, salary, and recruitment.

Additional faculty should include individuals with medical assisting experience and certification who could function as adjunct faculty for clinical oversight and theory. Their salary would be in the appropriate range (see Appendix A).

The standards and Guidelines for accreditation state that the program must have leadership and management which allow the program director's teaching assignment, if any, must allow time for administrative responsibilities.

d. Increased costs will be submitted in detail for the first year, for the biennium, and an estimate of the continuing costs of the program over a five-year period. These costs should reflect new faculty, increased library costs, space requirements, equipment, other facilities' needs, and identify sources of funding:

Please refer to Appendix A for complete details regarding budgeting information.

- e. New program will be carefully scrutinized as to the effect on enrollment, numbers of students (both graduate and undergraduate) with lower and upper division course breakdowns, the number expected to graduate over a ten-year period).

**Medical Assistant Program
10 Year Projected Enrollment**

Student Enrollment	Enrollment by Fiscal Years									
	Actual		Projected							
	2003	2004*	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
New	8	23	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25
Shifting	0	3	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20
Total Enrollment	8	26	45							

* Year-to-Date figures

- f. List new courses this program will add to the curriculum and specify the course requirements for the degree.

New courses recently added to the program include the following:

MEDA 124 Medical Assisting Clinical Procedures I	4 credits
MEDA 125 Medical Assisting Clinical Procedures Lab I	1 credit
MEDA 224 Medical Assisting Clinical Procedures II	3 credits
MEDA 225 Medical Assisting Clinical Procedures Lab II	2 credits
MEDA 296 Externship	3 credits

The rest of the courses that make up the program were already in place as part of other programs. This required the hiring of a 0.5 time person as a medical assistant instructor (Deanna Rieke).

Therefore, with the addition of the new courses listed above, the course requirements for the Medical Assistant Program include the following courses:

<u>Required Courses</u>	<u>Credits</u>
BIOL 113 Anatomy & Physiology I	3
BIOL 114 Anatomy & Physiology I Lab*	1
BIOL 116 Anatomy & Physiology II	3
BIOL 117 Anatomy & Physiology II Lab*	1
CMP 105 Introduction to Microcomputers	3
CMP 118 Word.....	3
CTBU 101 Accounting Procedures I	4
CTBU 112 Keyboarding Applications.....	3
CTBU 114 Ten-Key Procedures	1
CTBU 131 Records Management	3
CTBU 153 Medical Transcription	3
CTBU 251 Medical Office Procedures	3
CTBU 252 Medical Coding.....	3
CTBU 255 Medical Law and Ethics.....	3
CTCM 130 Introduction to Public Speaking	3
CTCM 203 Technical Communication	3
CTHO 103 Basic Psychology	3
CTMA 161 Math Computations for Health Occupations	3
MEDA 124 Medical Assisting Clinical Procedures I	4
MEDA 125 Medical Assisting Clinical Procedures Lab I	1
HLTH 150 Health Occupations Terminology I.....	3
HLTH 250 Health Occupations Terminology II.....	3
MEDA 224 Medical Assisting Clinical Procedures II	3
MEDA 225 Medical Assisting Clinical Procedures Lab II	2
MEDA 296 Externship	3
NURS 102 Pharmacology	2
Total Minimum credits required for degree	70

(* - These courses may be offered on the MSU-Billings senior campus)

The program is in its second year. In association with the Level I proposal, we will have our first group of graduates this semester.

g. Indicate the inter-departmental implications of additions to this program or supporting courses in departments which contribute to the new program of studies.

The medical assistant program is part of Nursing, Health and Safety Occupations Centers of Excellence. The Director of the program is a full-time instructor in the practical nursing program. The students take classes with students from other programs. The Anatomy and Physiology I and II and Health

Occupations Terminology I classes have students from paramedic, nursing, and medical assistant. They take accounting, keyboarding, records management, medical office procedures, and medical coding with medical administrative assistant students. They take pharmacology I with the nursing students.

The role of the medical assistant does not require a degree and there is not a recognized 4 year program for them to articulate to. If the students wish to become a manager then an appropriate program for them to articulate would be Health Administration. We will be working with Carl Hanson, Interim Dean, College of Allied Health, for articulation options.

h. Explain how the recommendation to submit this proposal to the Board of Regents was made: Include information about process followed, faculty involvement, employer or community input, market demand for graduates, employment prospects and starting salaries, as well as other justifications.

In 1987 a needs assessment was done with the community to determine if a program was needed. It was determined that the interest was high, but that most facilities were not using Medical Assistants.

In 2001, MSU-B COT was contacted by Saint Vincent Healthcare to offer a program. They had started posting Medical Assistants in their offices, but there were not qualified people to hire. A committee of community members was organized (we do not know who was on that original committee) and concluded that as the nursing shortage increases, LPN's will be eliminated from clinic positions and MA's will be hired. The medical assistant has a wider scope of practice as they not only are clinicians working with the MD, they can also do administrative duties like medical coding and insurance billings.

An MSU-B COT curriculum development person contacted the American Association of Medical Assistants and CAAHEP (Commission on Accreditation for Allied Health Education Programs) to determine education requirements. She did an internet search of other programs and then put together the AAS program. She also submitted the Level I proposal. The curriculum revisions for MSU-B COT follow the standard Montana State University-Billings review process as outlined below.

Curriculum Revision Process

Revisions to curriculum begin at the faculty level (internal) and generally involve input from advisory committees (external) and/or accreditation agencies (external). After the need for revision has been identified, the faculty revises the appropriate material and submits it to their Program Curriculum Committee if one exists. The proposal is then reviewed by the Department Chair (or Team Leader), passed on to the College Curriculum Committee, the Dean of the College, the MSU-Billings Undergraduate Curriculum Committee, The Faculty Senate, and the Provost, finally arriving in the office of the Chancellor. If the proposal is of significance, it is then submitted to the Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education until it is finally approved by the Board of Regents.

New Curriculum Proposal Process

Proposals for new curriculum begin at the faculty level (internal) and involve input from advisory committees (external) and/or accreditation agencies (external). In instances where full-time faculty are not in place at the time of proposal to create required documentation, the Dean collaborates with the existing faculty, staff, departments and programs to create the initial submission.

Documentation is then submitted to the appropriate Program Curriculum Committee for final review. The proposal is then reviewed by the appropriate Department Chair (or Team Leader),

passed on to the College Curriculum Committee, the Dean of the College, the MSU-Billings Undergraduate Curriculum Committee, The Faculty Senate, and the Provost, finally arriving in the office of the Chancellor. If the proposal is of sufficient significant, it is then submitted to the Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education until it is finally approved by the Board of Regents.

The MSU-B COT created a Medical Assistant Advisory Board following the Level I approval. The program advisory committee has played a major role in evaluating the program curriculum and providing the program director with advice. The advisory board members have directly set up clinical and lab sites and given suggestions on the MA role and their needs for medical assistants. The advisory board includes the following members:

- **Bob Giusti, RN, FNP, Medical Assistant Medical Advisor, FNP Yellowstone City County Health Department (Deering Clinic)**
- **Stephanie Majerus, RN, Director of Practice Administration, St. Vincent's Hospital Medical Practices Division**
- **Peggy Wharton, RN, MS, Director, Orthopedics, Neuroscience, PM & R, and Wound Care Deaconess Billings Clinic**
- **Louanne Sonsteng, RT, CMA, Montana Orthopedics and Sports Medicine**
- **Nancy Taylor, Director of Ambulatory Care, Yellowstone City County Health Department (Deering Clinic)**
- **Julie Pierce, Medical Assistant student, College of Technology**
- **Diana Hudak, Medical Assistant student, College of Technology**
- **Ms. Susan Floyd, Program Director, (B.S.N. Health Occupations)**
- **Ms. Deanna Rieke, Medical Assistant Instructor, (M.S. Medical Assistant)**

The members of the Medical Assistant Advisory Board have clearly stated that they feel a Medical Assistant Program is needed in the greater Billings region to serve the occupational needs of medical assistants in regional hospitals, nursing homes, and offices of health practitioners. Letters in support of the Medical Assistant Program received from medical professionals are presented in Appendix B.

Describe Community and Market Demand:

Medical assistants held about 329,000 jobs in 2000. Sixty percent were in physicians' offices, and about 15 percent were in hospitals, including inpatient and outpatient facilities. The rest were in nursing homes, offices of other health practitioners, and other health care facilities. *(Source U.S. Bureau of Labor and Statistics)*

Employment of medical assistants is expected to grow much faster than the average for all occupations through the year 2010 as the health services industry expands because of technological advances in medicine, and a growing and aging population. It is one of the fastest growing occupations.

Employment growth will be driven by the increase in the number of group practices, clinics, and other healthcare facilities that need a high proportion of support personnel, particularly the flexible medical assistant who can handle both administrative and clinical duties. Medical assistants primarily work in outpatient settings, where much faster than average growth is expected.

According to available lists of CMAs from the local chapter of the American Association of Medical Assistants, there are 33 Certified Medical Assistants registered with their association in

Yellowstone County. This does not include personnel who are not certified and called medical assistants. The local organizations in our market indicate they have approximately 63 CMA/MAs as employees with 3-5 positions open that could be filled with an appropriately trained and educated individual.

Given this information, it is clear our community has recognized the usefulness of the medical assistant. Our Medical Assistant advisory board has indicated their organizations are anxious to have the educated and skilled people to fill roles in their facilities so they no longer feel forced into hiring people they must train themselves. The advisory board states it has historically been very difficult to find adequately trained people to fill these positions.

(Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Occupational Employment Statistics Survey: Montana Department of Labor and Industry Workforce Services Division, Research and Analysis Bureau)

The earnings of medical assistants vary, depending on experience, skill level, and location. Median annual earnings of medical assistants were \$23,000 in 2000. The middle 50 percent earned between \$19,460 and \$27,460 a year. The lowest 10 percent earned less than \$16,700, and the highest 10 percent earned more than \$32,850 a year. Median annual earnings in the industries employing the largest number of medical assistants in 2000 were as follows:

Offices and clinics of medical doctors	\$ 23,610
Hospitals	22,950
Health and allied services, not elsewhere classified	22,860
Offices of osteopathic physicians	21,420
Offices of other health practitioners	20,860

(Source U.S. Bureau of Labor and Statistics)

Appendix A: Fiscal Impact & Budget Information

Medical Assistant Program										
MSU-Billings College of Technology										
Fiscal Impact and Budget Information										
	FY2003		FY2004		FY2005		FY 2006		FY 2007	
	Actual		Actual (to date)		Planned		Planned		Planned	
I. Planned Student Enrollment										
A. New	8		23		25		25		25	
B. Shifting	0		3		20		20		20	
Total Enrollment	8		26		45		45		45	
	First Year		Second Year		Third Year		Fourth Year		Fifth Year	
	FTE	Cost	FTE	Cost	FTE	Cost	FTE	Cost	FTE	Cost
II. Expenditures										
A. Personnel Cost										
1. Faculty	0.50	18,254	0.67	24,290	0.67	24,290	1.00	36,438	1.00	36,438
2. Administrators										
3. Adjunct Faculty					0.75	16,200	0.50	10,800	0.50	10,800
4. Support Personnel										
5. Fringe Benefits (25%)		4,564		6,072		10,122		11,810		11,810
6. Other										
Total Personnel FTE/Cost	0.50	22,818	0.67	30,362	1.42	50,612	1.50	59,048	1.50	59,048
B. Operating Expenditures										
1. Travel		771		1,000		2,500		1,000		1,000
2. Professional Services		200		1,000		1,000		1,000		1,000
3. Other Services				800						
4. Communications		171		630		780		780		780
5. Utilities										
6. Materials & Supplies		3,790		1,000		2,000		2,000		2,000
7. Rentals										
8. Repairs & Maintenance										
9. Materials & Goods for Resale										
10. Miscellaneous		600		600		600		600		600
Total Operating Expenses	-	5,532	-	5,030	-	6,880	-	5,380	-	5,380
C. Capital Outlay										
1. Library Resources				500		500		500		500
2. Equipment				13,745		18,500				
Total Capital Outlay	-	-	-	14,245	-	19,000	-	500	-	500
D. Physical Facilities										
E. Indirect Costs										
Grand Total Expenditures	0.50	28,350	0.67	49,637	1.42	76,492	1.50	64,928	1.50	64,928
III Revenues (based on FY 04 Revenue figures)										
A. Source of Funds										
1. Appropriated-Reallocation State Support per Marginal FTE (\$1,888/student FTE)		15,104		49,088		84,960		84,960		84,960
2. Appropriated-New ***										
3. Federal Funds										
4. Other (Grants)										
5. Fees (Tuition) \$3074/student FTE w/o surcharge)		24,592		79,924		138,330		138,330		138,330
6. Other										
Total Source of Funds	-	39,696	-	129,012	-	223,290	-	223,290	-	223,290

**Medical Assistant Program
Projected Equipment Budget**

Equipment	FY 04	FY 05	TOTALS
	-	-	
Auto Clave	1,965		1,965
Speedclave	6,000		6,000
2 Blood Drawing Chairs	680		680
Centrafuge	1,500		1,500
Blood Collection Videos	400		400
2 Exam Tables	2,200		2,200
2 Blood Draw Arms	1,000		1,000
Facility Remodel for larger classroom/lab		7,000	7,000
Experiental Reception Desk		1,500	1,500
Experiental Lab Computers & Workstations		10,000	10,000
Totals	13,745	18,500	32,245

APPENDIX B: Letters of Support



January 12, 2004

John Cech
MSU School of Technology-Billings
3803 Central Avenue
Billings, Montana 59102

RE: State of Montana Board of Regents

Dear Mr. Cech:

Deaconess Billings Clinic (DBC) is submitting this letter of recommendation for the Montana State University School of Technology Medical Assistant Program. A Medical Assistant program in the community will assist the health care institutes and independent practitioners in acquiring Medical Assistants with the appropriate skill level to assist in running a physician's office practice. Medical Assistants fill a necessary void in the health care arena. Through their education, they are provided the knowledge and skills necessary to meet the everyday demands of an office setting. In the broad picture, this type of practitioner can help with the nursing shortage by keeping the skilled RNs and LPNs in the acute care setting.

DBC is a strong proponent for this curriculum. As an integrated health care organization, we have seen the demands in the acute care setting and the office practice. The ability to have a Medical Assistant program in our community that allows graduates to become certified, helps to raise the minimal expectations for this position as well as decrease orientation time for the organization.

DBC has been actively involved since the inception of this program. The classroom structure and the clinical curriculum is reviewed on a routine basis.

If the Board of Regents has any questions regarding any of the points stated in this letter, please let us know.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Alice Gordon".

Alice Gordon, Vice President
Clinical Operations

Kathy A. Weller
1530 Alkali Creek Rd.
Billings, Mt 59105

To whom it concerns,

I am in complete support of a Medical Assisting program in Billings. This is the medical center for all of Eastern Montana and this profession has a real need here. I have been a Medical Assistant for 12 years and received my training in Denver, CO; which was a two -year course.

When I moved to Billings, I was surprised to see how many offices here had no idea what to do with an M.A. It is slowly getting better here as the profession grows nation wide. The Medical Assisting profession will be one of the top growing professions in the nation by the year 2010. It is already the fastest growing profession in California. I think this shows a real wave for the future. I am excited that there will be a quality M.A. program here in Billings, It's about time.

Now, we need to educate the physicians as to what we are capable of doing. Many offices are still under the impression that they need to hire R.N's and LPN's, it is interesting that I myself have had to train these people as to how to work in a medical office. This is not their specific training, but it is ours.

Sincerely,

Kathy A. Weller, RMA
Kathy A. Weller, R.M.A.

.....
January 14, 2004
.....

I am the Clinical Supervisor at Montana Orthopedics and Sports Medicine and a practicing Certified Medical Assistant for the last 17 years. I have seen the profession of medical assisting grow exponentially as the need for qualified medical personnel has increased due to the complexity of the profession, clinically as well as administratively. It is no longer possible or advisable from a medical legal aspect, to hire unqualified personnel in all aspects of the health care industry delivery system. I have found it to be increasingly difficult to find qualified candidates. It is extremely important that we have a means of training for adequate staffing of the various areas that require the skills and knowledge medical assistants receive in Accredited Programs.

There are currently only 2 other programs in the state which will undoubtedly create a serious lack of qualified personnel in the near future if we do not open more schools. The U.S. Dept of Labor Statistics states that medical assisting far exceeds all other professions as the fastest growing career. Our practice of 8 physicians and 2 Physician's assistants hires Registered or Certified Medical Assistants as clinical assistants exclusively. We have no nurses on staff.

I enthusiastically and unreservedly support the Program.

Sincerely,


La Fawn Kleinsasser, ARRT-R, CMA

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01/15/2004

John Kech
MSU School of Technology
3803 Central Avenue
Billings, MT 59102

Dear Mr. Kech:

I am writing this letter in support of your medical assistance program at the MSU School of Technology. I am an orthopedic surgeon with Deaconess Billings Clinic and have worked with medical assistants in the office for the past four and a half years. I find their skills and knowledge base to be a valuable asset to our practice. The medical assistants here often function in the full capacity of an office nurse. They triage patient phone calls, answer questions regarding medications and surgical procedures. They prepare injections for us and are also adept at helping us with the clerical side of things including scheduling surgeries, arranging follow up visits, and diagnostic studies.

In summary, I find the medical assistants to be a very valuable asset and support your medical assistant program. Please feel free to contact me with any questions. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,


Steven R. Fischer, M.D.
ORTHOPEDICS

cam
01/15/2004
01/15/2004 3:10 P



Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth Health System

John Cech
Dean, College of Technology
Montana State University, Billings
3803 Central Avenue
Billings, MT 59102

January 12, 2004

Dear Mr. Cech,

As a Director of Practice Administration for the Medical Practices Division, St. Vincent Healthcare, I approached the College of Technology a couple of years ago to inquire about development of a CMA training program in Billings.

The environment in healthcare continues to challenge each of us with declining reimbursement, an aging workforce, consumer demand for quality and customer service and a limited supply of trained healthcare applicants.

Over the past couple of years, various clinics throughout the Medical Practices Division have undertaken work redesign and adjusted staffing models to incorporate non-licensed personnel into staffing plans. Unfortunately, we have struggled to fill those positions with qualified applicants. I am thrilled that our community now has a formal program to train these individuals.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for listening to the needs of the community and specifically the needs of St. Vincent Healthcare. As a division we wholeheartedly support your efforts and look forward to working with the program for many years to come.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Majerus
Director, Practice Administration
Medical Practices Division
St. Vincent Healthcare

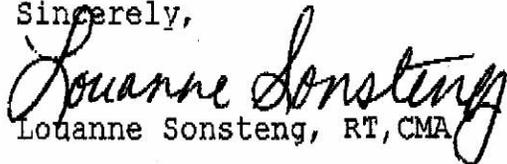
January 22, 2004

To Whom I May Concern,

I am writing in support of the Medical Assisting Program at Montana State University Billings- College of Technology. This Program is so needed in the Billings Community as well as Montana. There has always been a high level of interest and participation in the Medical Assisting Career in Billings and am sure the Program will be well attended. Medical Assistants can provide such a wide scope of duties and care depending upon their position-clinical or administrative. This program is going to enhance the quality of education for those seeking a Medical Assistant career and enable more medical offices to hire properly trained and certified employees in the Medical Field.

Medical Assisting is projected to be one of the fastest growing careers in the next 6 years, so what an opportune time to continue this very beneficial course of study.

Sincerely,


Louanne Sonsteng, RT, CMA

January 21, 2004

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to express my support of the Medical Assisting program at Montana State University Billings Technical Center. I feel this will prove to be an invaluable asset to the community of Billings, as well as the state of Montana. Medical assisting is expected to be one of the fastest growing occupations through the year 2010. Medical assistants are trained to do clinical and administrative procedures. In smaller offices, they may serve in both capacities, while in larger practices, they may specialize in one area. Medical assistants fill a need where skilled caregivers are necessary, but advanced nursing skills are not.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Rosemary Quinley". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned to the right of the word "Sincerely,".

Rosemary Quinley, RT,CMA