

Increased Support for the State and the Board of Regents

State Need:

- The members of the Board of Regents are more active and more inquisitive than in the past, and have expanded their areas of activity, interest and inquiry. There is a greater emphasis on state partnerships and collaboration between the units of the university system. These interests and initiatives often require coordination through the OCHE. The rapid growth in technology has made information much more accessible but has also increased the demand for more data on the university system. The growth and emphasis on information technology and distance education raises new issues requiring time and coordination by OCHE employees.

Market Reality:

- The OCHE has had few options to deal with budget pressures and increased workloads. Most employees have simply taken on the increased work and juggle priorities as best they can. There is concern that workload issues have been a factor in the recent retirement decisions of several key OCHE employees and is a limiting factor in assisting the board and the state.

Current Problem:

- The OCHE has taken on additional functions over the past years without any increase in general fund FTE. Examples include the administration of the data warehouse, the implementation of MAP, self-funded workers' compensation insurance, development and administration of the funding model, and administration of the Montana Family Education Savings Program. Workloads have increased substantially for OCHE staff with the growth in the number of university system students, employees, bargaining units and facilities as well as the increase in the size, number and complexity of budgets and academic programs. There are increasing numbers of state and federal laws, regulations, and accountability and reporting requirements that impact the workload of OCHE employees. The increase in the number of externally funded positions in OCHE has impacted the workloads of a majority of general funded positions in OCHE, most noticeably in the areas of payroll and accounting.

Proposed Solution:

- If resources were available, several new positions should be added to the OCHE. Increased staffing would increase the effectiveness of the Regents and the Commissioner and allow for greater coordination, efficiency, oversight and accountability within the university system.
- Two positions recommended are a Director of State Partnerships and an Administrative Assistant. These new positions would assume responsibilities including but not limited to:
 - Establish partnerships with business, industry, government and MUS representatives
 - Use partnerships to develop and implement strategic plans to advance initiatives in such areas as: a) workforce training and education; b) distance learning; c)

- expanding partnerships between the MUS and Montana businesses; and d) promoting and enhancing access to postsecondary education
- Enhance collaboration between the MUS and other governmental entities and increase MUS involvement in the development of innovative recommendations for addressing policy decisions facing state leaders
 - Serve in a liaison role with partners, stakeholders and constituency groups
 - Initiate or assist in projects that advance the Commissioner's and Regents' agenda through communication and publications
 - Participate as a leader or team member on special task forces, work groups or teams and committees
 - Increase media relations and develop, execute and manage the communications plan for the MUS
 - Develop and utilize an extensive communications network for providing information, analyzing issues, and communicating informed perspectives
 - Administrative support for both the Commissioner and the Associate Commissioner for Fiscal Affairs

Required Investment:

- \$128,000 in FY06 and FY07

Return on Investment:

- This initiative will provide critical resources necessary to forge partnerships between business, industry, government, and the MUS that will benefit Montanans and help grow the Montana economy. The development of partnerships and collaboration throughout the state in areas such as workforce development, distance learning, and commercialization will provide short and long term benefit to the state by assisting citizens and businesses increase direct economic activity. The addition of administrative support will allow OCHE to dedicate existing resources towards the accomplishment of regent's goals and objectives.