

**MONTANA BOARD OF REGENTS OF HIGHER EDUCATION**  
**Policy and Procedures Manual**

SUBJECT: GOVERNANCE AND ORGANIZATION

Policy 220 – Higher Education Centers

**Effective: March 24, 2000; Issued: May 9, 2000**

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**I. Introduction:**

Montana's community colleges, independent colleges, tribal colleges and units of the university system share the responsibility to maximize the availability of educational opportunities for the state's citizens in a manner which will enhance quality while avoiding unnecessary duplication of programs. Concurrently, these same institutions must insure that the state's resources are used in a prudent and responsible manner. To these ends, this policy will govern the offering of off-campus instructional programs at higher education centers by units of the Montana university system.

**II. Board policy:**

A. The presidents and chancellors of the Montana university system are authorized to plan higher education centers to provide additional educational services to the people of the state of Montana.

B. Credit courses shall be offered at locations remote from the main campus through continuing education, an approved higher education center, or via distributed learning technologies in accord with the provisions of regents' policy 303.7. The Montana board of regents is committed to using state resources in a responsible manner and to providing broad access to educational opportunity. Units of the Montana university system will not offer degree programs that unnecessarily duplicate existing programs offered by a tribal, community or independent college in its immediate community.

C. Prior to proposing a new program at a center, the MUS campus will consult with the local campus, provide it a written copy of the proposed new program and request input. If the community or independent college wishes, it may provide written comment to be submitted by the proposing institution with the proposal to the board of regents. If an institution chooses not to respond to the proposal, it will be offered 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. The board of regents may authorize the establishment of a higher education center upon the recommendation of the commissioner of higher education, according to the following guidelines.

**III. Procedures:**

A. Any program offered at a higher education center must be within the approved mission and authorized programs of the institution.

B. Before a request is made to the commissioner of higher education for approval to establish a higher education center or to revise an existing authorization, the president shall document that the provisions of regents' policy 303.7, *Distributed Learning*, Standards and Conditions, items 1-3 have been met. In addition, the president shall designate a local coordinator who will be available in the community in which the center is located to handle administrative arrangements and to act as a contact person.

C. Program proposal. The university president shall provide a proposal to establish a new site or to modify existing programs at an existing center to the commissioner and all institutions of higher education in the state for their information and comment at least 60 days before action on the proposal is requested. The proposal shall address the following:

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1. The specific program area or levels of instruction for which authorization is requested.
2. Documentation of the need for the program and data on the student population to be served, the course offerings projected, the proposed program schedule, and the number of regular, resident and adjunct faculty who will be utilized.
3. Sources of funding, including reallocations effected to fund the program.
4. Facilities to be used for the center and an assessment of their adequacy for the delivery of the program(s) in question.
5. The center or program's possible significant adverse impact on other Montana postsecondary educational institutions.

D. Fiscal practices. Programs of study offered through higher education centers are subject to the fiscal practices set forth in the regents' distributed learning policy 303.7 under fiscal practices, items 1-3.

E. Reporting requirements. Student credit hours generated in degree programs at higher education centers shall be subject to the same reporting requirements as regular instructional programs at the home institution.

1. Separate reports shall be prepared for each center and for each campus serving that center.
2. The Montana University System *Registrars' Manual for Reporting Enrollment Data* shall be followed with submissions made according to the reporting schedule.

F. Memoranda of understanding. Units of the Montana university system and the community colleges may serve as education centers for the delivery of programs from other institutions

1. Memoranda of understanding shall govern such arrangements and shall be executed between the respective presidents and the commissioner before the center is activated.
2. These memoranda shall be in effect for no more than three years, but may be renewed with the approval of the commissioner.

G. Evaluation. The commissioner of higher education in conjunction with the presidents shall provide for the evaluation of each higher education center after the third year of operation and periodically thereafter. If the center is not meeting its original or modified objectives, the commissioner may recommend to the regents that it be discontinued.

**IV. Guidelines:**

A. A higher education center shall offer a structured, coherent educational program leading to a degree. It shall not be merely the physical location for occasional course offerings

B. Inter-institutional relations.

1. When more than one institution conducts programs through a higher education center in the same community, the commissioner of higher education shall establish policies and procedures to insure necessary program coordination.
2. If concerns arise about potential competition between an independent, tribal or community college and units of the Montana university system in the development of higher education centers, the commissioner of higher education may incorporate measures for addressing the problems.

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3. Montana university system institutions are encouraged to establish cooperative programs with independent, tribal and community colleges as appropriate.

C. Montana university system higher education center. If a single system-wide higher education center is deemed more appropriate than separate institutional centers, the commissioner of higher education shall establish policies to provide for necessary coordination, equitable distribution of student credit hours generated, allocation of fee revenues and any other matters. If it becomes desirable to change from existing separate higher education center operations to a system-wide program, the board of regents may make such changes.

D. Program quality. It shall be the responsibility of the commissioner of higher education and the president(s) involved to insure that the quality of the programs offered at a higher education center shall meet the same criteria by which the quality of programs is assessed at the home institution. Programs which cannot meet such criteria may not be offered.

E. Nomenclature. A higher education center shall be named as follows: (Name of Institution) Center at (Location) or Montana University System Center at (Location).

History:

Item 27-001-RO480, Higher Education Centers, Montana University System, April 21, 1980 as revised September 15, 1992, November 18, 1999 (Item 104-103-R0999), and March 24, 2000.