

ACADEMIC PRIORITIES AND PLANNING STATEMENTS

DATE: August 18, 2021

TO: Montana Board of Regents

CC: Commissioner of Higher Education
Chief Academic Officers

FROM: Brock Tessman, Deputy Commissioner for Academic, Research, and Student Affairs

RE: 2021/22 Academic Priorities and Planning Statements

Contained in this memorandum are the 2021/22 Academic Priority and Planning Statement submissions from Montana University System campuses and Montana's community colleges. These statements are meant to inform the Montana Board of Regents regarding institutions' academic directions, internal academic prioritization processes, and upcoming academic proposals.

- **Flathead Valley Community College**
- **Miles Community College**
- **Montana State University Billings**
- **Montana State University Bozeman**
- **Great Falls College Montana State University**
- **Montana State University Northern**
- **The University of Montana Missoula**
- **Montana Technological University**
- **The University of Montana-Western**
- **Helena College University of Montana**

Flathead Valley Community College

ACADEMIC PRIORITIES AND PLANNING STATEMENT

Academic Year 2021-2022

The Montana University System (MUS) Board of Regents (BOR) has requested additional context to support the decisions they make regarding “Requests to Plan” for new academic programs and research centers/institutes. **Toward that end, we ask that each institution submit a report addressing all questions listed below, not to exceed four pages, no later than 5 p.m. on Friday, May 28, 2021.**

Separately, please fill-in the Forthcoming Academic Proposals spreadsheet describing academic programs or research centers/institutes that you anticipate may proceed to the “Request to Plan” portion of the approval process in the next year. Please include contact information for a campus lead on each anticipated proposal. A proposal need not be listed in this report to proceed to the “Request to Plan” stage. However, listing proposals likely to move forward is an appreciated courtesy intended to encourage early communication and collaboration.

1. Provide a high-level overview of your institution’s current academic priorities (instruction and research), with a focus on how those priorities fit the institutional mission and current strategic plan.

We will focus on adding short term (1 semester or 1 year) certificates targeted on addressing community needs. We will also put effort into developing more apprenticeships in conjunction with local employers. And, we will explore developing clearer pathways that lead from non-credit classes to enrollment in credit programs. Each of these have been written into our strategic plan and are directly tied to our mission of meeting community needs.

2. Provide a brief description of the process used determine these academic priorities.

We are in our first year of the new 7-year accreditation cycle so we worked with groups across campus (Faculty Senate, Achieving the Dream Steering Committee, Strategic Planning and Accreditation Council, Executive Staff) to update our strategic plan. We were sure to incorporate new program development and student success strategies into the plan. We also looked carefully at feedback from advisory committees, our apprenticeship coordinator, the Chamber of Commerce, our local Job Service office, and our Business Outreach Committee to establish areas where new program development is warranted.

3. Provide a description highlighting new academic or research programing that your institution hopes to pursue in the coming year, with a focus on how those new programs will support your academic priorities.

Our priorities are to provide more opportunities for quick training/re-training especially in areas requested by local industry. These include:

CTS in software security, CTS in stone masonry, CTS in cloud computing, Certificate in General Studies

4. If/where applicable, provide a high-level overview of areas that will be somewhat less prioritized, including any areas in which your institution will consider disinvestment, moratorium, and/or termination.

We have no plans at this time

5. Include additional details you find relevant for the BOR to consider as they make decisions about “Requests to Plan.”

The CTS in stone masonry is part of an apprenticeship we are developing in conjunction with local employers and the Job Service.

The certificate in general studies is planned to help students earn a credential before transferring if they are not able to complete an AA or AS degree.

Miles Community College

ACADEMIC PRIORITIES AND PLANNING STATEMENT

Academic Year 2021-2022

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1. **Provide a high-level overview of your institution’s current academic priorities (instruction and research), with a focus on how those priorities fit the institutional mission and current strategic plan.**

Miles Community College

The academic 2021/22 year at Miles Community College (MCC) is focused on academic priorities that align with our community college mission to prepare students for success and provides opportunities for lifelong learning through quality programs, community outreach, workforce training and partnerships.

Currently, for the 2021/22 academic year MCC is seeking to start the following academic certificates/programs:

- Partnerships with Montana University System campus and/or community colleges to grow program access such as partnership with Montana Tech with MCC’s Pre-Engineering Associate of Science to allow students to have a 2 + 2 Pathway to Montana Tech to pursue various engineering bachelor programs. Some entry level engineering courses will be offered via shared distance courses so students at MCC can take their entry engineering course(s) while at MCC.
- MCC Phlebotomy certificate and Bismarck State College Medical Lab Tech all from the MCC campus partnership has grown over the last couple of years and is now working via National Science Foundation grant to expand and offer sonography.

MCC will be entering its fifth year after completing the Program Prioritization Review in 2017. While 2020-21 was the planned year for a review of our Program Prioritization, this was delayed to 2021/22 due to the additional work faculty and staff undertook to address COVID needs. Therefore, our program reviews and program prioritization process will begin another cycle during 2021/22 academic year. This will certainly result in some program changes that include: program redesign,

modifications, reduction in credit/course load for programs, and programs to be considered for disinvesting or put on moratorium.

MCC is focusing on expanding our “Start Here Go Anywhere” ideology to partner with industry and other higher education institutions to provide a full array of curriculum, programs and pathways to pursue education and training for the citizens of Miles City, eastern Montana to start and achieve their educational and career aspirations!

2. Provide a brief description of the process used determine these academic priorities.

The process MCC utilizes to determine academic programs includes input from faculty, staff, advisory boards, local community and regional industry feedback. This is most recently illustrated with MCC’s actions to respond to local, regional and statewide demand for meat processing program and trainings. These efforts were brought forth from local meat processors, local residents and statewide organizations such as Montana Meat Processing Association, Farmers’ Bureau, Farmers’ Union to mention only a few. MCC is currently seeking with the support of many organizations, like those mentioned above, for grant funds to assist with offering a professional certificate program in Meat Processing that utilizes online and apprenticeship model from the Department of Agriculture and Perkins. Other examples of MCC’s process to offer academic programs includes: review of programs and program prioritization process on a three to four-year cycle (which includes our new general education core program started in 2019/20) and exploration of new or modifications of existing programs as dialog with faculty, staff, local organizations and/or industry demands illustrate opportunities for-credit or non-credit programs and/or workforce training.

3. Provide a description highlighting new academic or research programing that your institution hopes to pursue in the coming year, with a focus on how those new programs will support your academic priorities.

MCC is pursuing the growth of our enrollment in Meat Processing Professional Certificate and partnerships with Montana Meat Processing Association as we go into the 2nd year of this program to help meet the needs of local meat processing and consumer demand.

MCC is also looking to expand enrollment with current partnerships with four-year institutions such as University of Montana with the 2 + 2 in Social Work; Dickinson State University with 2 + 2 pathway in Education; Montana State University Bozeman in 2 + 2 in Agriculture; Montana State University Billings in 2 + 2 in Environmental Studies; Montana Tech 2 + 2 in Pre-Engineering/Stem for their engineering programs, and Bismarck State College with sonography to compliment the partnership we already have with them on phlebotomy and medical lab technology.

These program pursuits compliment our MCC mission and priorities to educate and train students to meet the local industries needs and provide higher education to our eastern Montana area.

4. **If/where applicable, provide a high-level overview of areas that will be somewhat less prioritized, including any areas in which your institution will consider disinvestment, moratorium, and/or termination.**

All programs will undergo a review in 2021-22 as we assess our status on programs from our review of Program Prioritization Review Process in 2019/20. Otherwise no areas are currently considered for less prioritization.

5. **Include additional details you find relevant for the BOR to consider as they make decisions about “Requests to Plan.”**

As a rural community college, we are always seeking to meet local business, community and industry demands. Thus, we seek to respond to those demands in as timely manner as possible. These demands change periodically and without much notice, so there is often a short turn-around timeline.

Montana State University Billings

ACADEMIC PRIORITIES AND PLANNING STATEMENT

Academic Year 2021-2022

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Separately, please fill-in the Forthcoming Academic Proposals spreadsheet describing academic programs or research centers/institutes that you anticipate may proceed to the “Request to Plan” portion of the approval process in the next year. Please include contact information for a campus lead on each anticipated proposal. A proposal need not be listed in this report to proceed to the “Request to Plan” stage. However, listing proposals likely to move forward is an appreciated courtesy intended to encourage early communication and collaboration.

- 1. Provide a high-level overview of your institution’s current academic priorities (instruction and research), with a focus on how those priorities fit the institutional mission and current strategic plan.**

Overview of MSU Billings Current Academic Priorities

To meet the MSU Billings institutional mission of delivering a transformative education that empowers students from diverse backgrounds to succeed, MSU Billings will focus academic priorities on programs that serve our region and existing strengths, including Business and Health Professions.

Restructuring efforts will include revising curriculum, administrative organization, and procedures to address issues illuminated by the recent MSU Billings strategic program alignment process. In addition to the programs identified for moratorium, most programs will continue with a curricular review and likely revisions over the next year. We have begun a robust academic review process that is timed to coincide with the Board’s Program Review cycle. This review process includes a self-evaluation by program faculty, a peer review from an outside evaluator, review by the Dean, and a meeting between the faculty, dean and provost that culminates with an action plan. The action plans produced will enable MSU Billings to determine its academic priorities moving forward.

The outcomes of the academic review process include strengthening synergies that exist between academic departments and student success divisions, reviewing and revising general-education curriculum with a focus on common themes and assessment, and re-envisioning advising through a collaborative assessment of student success models, revision of course-maps, and expanding student access to various course modalities. In February 2021, the Advising 360 task force was established to holistically evaluate advising throughout the institution. These restructuring efforts directly support the MSU Billings mission and strategic plan with a particular focus on objectives 1.3 Elevate programmatic offerings to be responsive to student and community needs, 1.4 Review and strengthen general education to enhance student learning, and 2.2 Improve student retention and graduation rates.

Online teaching and learning efforts will include sharing innovation in teaching that resulted from the faculty response to COVID-19. While MSU Billings is already a leader in online education, these changes, have extended the reach of online learning and MSU Billings sees great opportunity to promote the use of

synchronous learning tools and expanded instructional strategies and universal design. MSU Billings has invested in classrooms that are designed to encourage Hyflex teaching; including improving visual and audio recording and live Webex delivery of on campus classes. Adapting best practices for disciplines such as those in scientific and health care fields has great potential to further support students and the region. Additional efforts include development of online student success resources, information, and academic support services. MSU Billings will be submitting a Request to Plan for a Center for Teaching and Learning (to be considered at the September Board meeting). The new Center for Teaching and Learning will integrate the existing e-Learning department with a faculty led center that will promote innovation and excellence in teaching and learning. MSU Billings sees great potential for continued priorities in online teaching and learning to support students who work in our community and care for family members as well as addressing the needs of Eastern and Central Montana. These online teaching and learning efforts directly support the MSU Billings mission and strategic plan with a particular focus on objectives 1.1 Develop and implement best practice teaching techniques, 1.2 Enhance development opportunities to empower faculty as educators and scholars, 1.3 Elevate programmatic offerings to be responsive to student and community needs, 1.4 Review and strengthen general education to enhance student learning, and 2.2 Improve student retention and graduation rates.

Applied programs and research efforts will focus on interdisciplinary collaborations that support workforce development and strengthen Montana. One focus of these efforts will include enhancing and developing interdisciplinary programming and partnerships, as well as ways to foster and support research collaboration. Collaborative research initiatives are being led at the college level with a focus on leveraging faculty scholarship and community efforts. With the college and department level reorganization that is ongoing at MSU Billings, there is a great opportunity for examining intersections and common interests.

2. Provide a brief description of the process used determine these academic priorities.

MSU Billings requested input from academic divisions including college deans and academic directors, and used documents generated by the recent strategic program alignment process. The Academic Program Review (APR) process was developed by a faculty, staff, and administrators to promote academic excellence, currency, and accountability. The APR process is data driven; Institutional Research and the Vice Chancellor for Administration and Finance provide resources for all reviewers to use to evaluate programs.

3. Provide a description highlighting new academic or research programing that your institution hopes to pursue in the coming year, with a focus on how those new programs will support your academic priorities.

New academic and research programming is being led at the college level with collaborative projects and initiatives that support applied programs and online teaching and learning. The MSU Billings Center for Teaching and Learning will enter the program planning process with a request to plan in Fall 2021. A taskforce, including faculty, staff and student stakeholders recommended a faculty led center that will serve as an umbrella for all faculty development programming. The MSU Billings Center for Teaching and Learning will support academic priorities including collaboration for restructuring curriculum and programs and online teaching and learning. Discussions are beginning on developing computer science programs that bridge our 2-year City College degrees with the College of Business. Our advisory committees have continually stressed the need for more IT management professionals. These programs would focus

primarily on management. The Industrial Maintenance Certificate of Applied Science prepares students for a career path in repairing and construction support to manufacturing and other industries. By 2024, the Montana Department of Labor and Industry (Montana Job Projections 2014-2024) projects that an additional 200 Industrial Machinery Mechanics will need to be added to the current number of jobs to meet growth demands. This program will complement and enhance the current program array at City College at Montana State University Billings. The request to plan will be submitted for the September 2021 Board meeting. The Automotive and Diesel Technology programs are evaluating the benefits of combining the first-year classes to make a “transportation certificate.” This would be 36 credit certificate, 9 general education credits and 27 technical credits. The current degrees each offer a Certificate and AAS for the students, this would eliminate the Auto and Diesel Certs, and replace them with one Transportation Certification. The development of an Interdisciplinary Minor will support academic priorities to focus on restructuring and online teaching and learning. It will be led by the College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences as a collaboration among colleges and will include participation from International Studies and the Honors Program. The Masters of Arts in Art Therapy and Counseling supports the academic priorities of applied programs within the MSU Billings graduate-level scholarship areas of focus in mental and behavioral health as well as online teaching and learning

4. If/where applicable, provide a high-level overview of areas that will be somewhat less prioritized, including any areas in which your institution will consider disinvestment, moratorium, and/or termination.

Areas that will be somewhat less prioritized include outcomes from the MSU Billings Strategic Program Alignment process which after intensive review, identified a number of programs to be phased out or revitalized. Programs were identified for intensive review based on trends in enrollment, retention and completions. In this process, concentrations, options, emphases and non-degree plans of study were included as distinct units of analysis. This means that while the outcomes include more than 80 programs identified to be phased out, almost half of these will be processed as internal changes to continuing degree programs. We are also in the process of evaluating our college structure to determine if we can increase efficiencies without compromising program quality.

5. Include additional details you find relevant for the BOR to consider as they make decisions about “Requests to Plan.”

MSU Billings has undergone an extensive review of programs that has resulted in a significant culling of our offerings. Future priorities are expected to include more balanced, but strategic, growth initiatives. The strategic program alignment process undertaken by MSU Billings from 2018-2020 provided the institution with a strong platform to make decisions in choosing areas to develop new programs. In this process, the Strategic Program Alignment committee generated a framework to guide the classification of programs as maintain, integrate/invigorate, or phase out; programs were further assessed systematically and flagged for intensive review based on enrollment, retention and completion trends. These processes culminated in identification of programs that will be maintained or phased out, as well as identification of needed revisions. The outcomes of this process include completing the termination/moratorium process and revising programmatic offerings to be responsive to student and community needs. Additionally, our new building, Yellowstone Hall, has already generated conversations between faculty, administrators and the community about creating programs that will serve the medical and biotechnology communities of Billings and Eastern Montana.

MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY

ACADEMIC PRIORITIES AND PLANNING STATEMENT

Academic Year 2021-2022

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1. **Provide a high-level overview of your institution’s current academic priorities (instruction and research), with a focus on how those priorities fit the institutional mission and current strategic plan.**

The academic priorities for Montana State University align with the university’s strategic plan, *Choosing Promise*. The plan consists of three areas of Intentional Focus, each supported by several goals, objectives and metrics.

Choosing Promise: Montana State University’s Strategic Plan

INTENTIONAL FOCUS 1: Drive Transformational Learning Experiences Creating Outstanding Educational Outcomes for All Students

Montana State University students are challenged and changed by their active participation in high quality, innovative experiences at both the undergraduate and graduate level, becoming learned professionals and global citizens.

GOAL 1.1: Broaden access for underrepresented populations and increase academic success for all students through excellence in undergraduate education.

As the state’s land-grant university, Montana State invites participation in exceptional higher education, widens participation of under-represented student populations, and improves student success outcomes overall.

GOAL 1.2: Expand high-quality graduate education

Montana State University will enroll and graduate more degree-seeking students at the graduate level and enhance the quality of graduate degree programs.

GOAL 1.3: Implement evidence-based high quality, high impact teaching and learning practices for every student

Montana State University improves the curricular and co-curricular experience with demonstrated educational practices integrated with discovery and engagement that enhance learning and develop engaged global citizens and informed professionals.

INTENTIONAL FOCUS 2: Improve Lives and Society through Research, Creativity, and Scholarship

Montana State University faculty, staff, and students are known nationally and internationally for discovering, applying, testing, and sharing knowledge and creative works that expand understanding and positively impact lives and society.

GOAL 2.1: Enhance the significance and impact of scholarship

Montana State University research and creative activity demonstrates impact on the state's and the world's pressing challenges through application of our discoveries in communities, industry, and organizations, as well as through academic indicators of the expansion of knowledge.

GOAL 2.2: Expand interdisciplinary scholarship

Montana State University's interdisciplinary expertise as the University of the Yellowstone™ carries unique possibilities for inference, translation, and impact. Our research and creative activity throughout the university increasingly spans traditional disciplinary boundaries to solve the world's pressing challenges.

GOAL 2.3: Strengthen institutional reputation in scholarship

Montana State University's success in scholarship results in increased state, national, and international prominence.

GOAL 2.4: Elevate expectations for scholarship

Montana State University faculty, staff, and students hold themselves to the highest standards of research and creative outcomes.

INTENTIONAL FOCUS 3: Expand Mutually Beneficial and Responsive Engagement for the Advancement of Montana

Montana State University students, faculty and staff work together and with partners across the state and around the world to enhance the well-being of individuals, organizations, and communities.

GOAL 3.1: Increase mutually beneficial collaborations with Tribal nations and partners

Montana State University works cooperatively with Tribal governments, colleges, community groups, and Indigenous students to develop and achieve beneficial outcomes.

GOAL 3.2: Grow mutually beneficial partnerships across Montana

Montana State University and its partners attain collaboratively defined outcomes that improve the lives and livelihoods of Montanans.

GOAL 3.3: Foster a culture of collaboration, continuous improvement, and individual growth

Montana State University and its students, faculty, and staff engage in a reciprocal relationship that values each member and improves the university environment.

The focus areas during both FY21 and FY22 are Goals 1.1, 2.1, 2.2, 3.1, and 3.3.

2. Provide a brief description of the process used determine these academic priorities.

Montana State’s strategic plan [Choosing Promise](#) was developed over 12 months with widespread participation across the campus and local community. A ten-member Strategic Planning Committee, comprising faculty, staff, administrators, and a student, met regularly to design, receive feedback, and rewrite. Hundreds of stakeholders on and off campus drafted and commented on language through an ongoing anonymous web forum, multiple public charrettes, one-on-one meetings, departmental, affinity, employee and student governance group meetings, and email submissions. The final plan adopted by University Council in November, 2018, features a mission statement, vision, core values, three areas of intentional focus, and attendant goals, metrics, and actions.

Choosing Promise specifies university-level direction, outcomes, and actions, and leaves room for more local and specific goal-setting and action in alignment with the university’s goals. Since 2019, colleges and other units across campus have developed and implemented their own alignment documents with input from their stakeholders. Strategic investment proposals must include evidence of alignment with the plan as well as assessment strategies. The university-level direction lends scope to academic programming, student activities, student, faculty, and staff services and administrative support. Hence, it serves as the academic plan to guide and align new developments in academic planning across colleges.

3. Provide a description highlighting new academic or research programing that your institution hopes to pursue in the coming year, with a focus on how those new programs will support your academic priorities.

Montana State University’s anticipated new academic programs and research centers/institutes are described in the AY21-22 Forthcoming Academic Proposals spreadsheet. The planned programs have either proceeded through MSU’s internal review processes or are planned to be introduced during AY 21-22. During this review, all are asked to align with and are evaluated against the strategic plan priorities outlined in *Choosing Promise*.

4. If/where applicable, provide a high-level overview of areas that will be somewhat less prioritized, including any areas in which your institution will consider disinvestment, moratorium, and/or termination.

No moratoriums, terminations, or disinvestments are currently planned.

5. **Include additional details you find relevant for the BOR to consider as they make decisions about “Requests to Plan.”**

Montana State’s proposals for new degrees and options include interdisciplinary degrees, expansion of options within established and successful programs, and modalities beyond traditional face-to-face instruction.

Great Falls College Montana State University

ACADEMIC PRIORITIES AND PLANNING STATEMENT

Academic Year 2021-2022

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1. Provide a high-level overview of your institution’s current academic priorities (instruction and research), with a focus on how those priorities fit the institutional mission and current strategic plan.

Great Falls College Montana State University (GFC MSU) focuses on providing quality education to improve students’ lives and fill the workforce needs of the local community, region and state. In order to provide quality instruction, the campus has been focused on implementing High Impact Practices and strengthening its student learning assessment process. To help students be successful, GFC MSU has implemented the 8-Week Advantage, offering classes in 8-week blocks to enable students to focus on fewer classes at one time, take more credits in a semester, keep more earned credits when a life event happens, and complete a college-level math or writing course in the first 30 credits. All of these efforts are part of the college’s strategic plan, as is the goal to work with students to establish a “purpose, plan and path ~~and plan~~” to complete a credential.

Part of identifying a purpose is selecting a degree or program of study to complete, as opposed to remaining “undecided” and thus delaying completion of a credential. In order to help students choose a degree and start on their “path,” the college has created eight (8) “areas of interest” or “metamajors”: Business & Accounting; Computer Technology; Education; Fine Arts & Humanities; Health Professions; Science, Math & Engineering; Social Sciences; and Trades. All GFC MSU offerings fall into one of these categories.

To continue to attract students and meet workforce needs, the college has examined its areas of interest and identified fields and occupations in which to expand. Care has been taken to select programs that are in demand, pay a livable wage, and enhance current college offerings. The following have been identified as academic priorities:

- Short-term, industry-recognized credentials in the Trades area
- Short-term, industry-recognized credentials in Healthcare
- Programs and articulations in Behavioral Science fields
- Appropriate two-year Business offerings
- Emerging Computer Technology programs
- Additional programs through the OneMSU Network, a collaboration of Great Falls College, Gallatin College and City College to reach more students through remote instruction

GFC MSU is also working on implementing procedures to convert more non-credit offerings through Lifelong Learning into credit-bearing FTEs.

2. Provide a brief description of the process used determine these academic priorities.

The college uses a variety of data sources to determine which programs to close and which to open. GFC MSU uses enrollment figures, program costs, graduate salaries, and Montana Department of Labor and Industry job openings and regional projections to prioritize programs in an annual review process. To identify potential programs to open, the college gathers data from Emsi, industry advisory boards, national trend publications, the DLI, community groups, and college Admissions staff. Proposed programs are then vetted through the campus Curriculum Committee as well as the College Planning, Budget and Analysis Committee. Proposals include a financial analysis and projected budget. The college's Executive Team provides final campus approval before Request to Plan documents are submitted to OCHE.

3. Provide a description highlighting new academic or research programing that your institution hopes to pursue in the coming year, with a focus on how those new programs will support your academic priorities.

- To fill local workforce needs, the college is exploring short-term, industry-recognized credentials in the Trades area. Currently, ideas include revamping the AAS in Renewable Energy to include solar power, HVAC, or electrical-mechanical certificates.
- Creating a short-term certificate in Medical Assisting also fulfills local workforce needs in the Healthcare field.
- In the Behavioral Sciences, the college is exploring creating an AAS in Addiction Counseling which would include certification. The program fills a regional workforce need.
- Two-year Business credentials will help improve students' lives by providing a better working environment and more career opportunities than currently exist for some sections of the local workforce.
- A credential in Data Science augments existing Computer Technology programs and prepares students for emerging workforce opportunities in the state and region.

4. If/where applicable, provide a high-level overview of areas that will be somewhat less prioritized, including any areas in which your institution will consider disinvestment, moratorium, and/or termination.

The AAS in Renewable Energy was put into moratorium this year in order to create an opportunity to revamp the program into shorter-term, industry-recognized credentials. This next year the college will decide to bring the program out of moratorium or to terminate it. The program was put into moratorium due to a history of low enrollments.

The Computer Technology programs will be examined to determine if any of the credentials are outdated with the goal of reallocating resources to more high-demand fields such as Cybersecurity and possibly Data Science.

5. Include additional details you find relevant for the BOR to consider as they make decisions about “Requests to Plan.”

GFC MSU has strong industry advisory boards and is an active participant in community economic development efforts. The college also has a robust internal program review process and a history of being financially responsible. As is true with many two-year colleges, GFC MSU’s students tend to be older and more placebound by families and jobs than traditional four-year university students. Thus, they need educational opportunities in their community or distance education.

In recognition of the Board of Regents’ concern about duplication of programs, GFC MSU collaborates with other two-year and four-year institutions. The college is currently exploring several opportunities for course sharing.

The college also recognizes the importance of non-credit, customized training as part of its mission to meet community workforce needs. Such courses do not, however, generate FTE, upon which the current funding structure is built. Therefore, the college is creating ways to convert such trainings to credit-bearing courses when possible and looking to non-credit courses as gateways to credit-bearing programs. One such example is the current Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) program offered through Lifelong Learning. Students in the program have stated their intent to enroll in pre-Health Science credit courses at the college in the future. However, the current funding model does not provide support for non-credit students, such as those in the CNA training.

Montana University System
ACADEMIC PRIORITIES AND PLANNING STATEMENT

Montana State University Northern
ACADEMIC PRIORITIES AND PLANNING STATEMENT
Academic Year 2021-22

The Montana University System (MUS) Board of Regents (BOR) has requested additional context to support the decisions they make regarding “Requests to Plan” for new academic programs and research centers/institutes (<https://mus.edu/borpol/bor300/303-1.pdf>). Toward that end, we ask that each year institutions submit a report, of no more than three pages, eight weeks prior to the July BOR Meeting. This report should include:

- A high-level overview of your institution’s current academic priorities (instruction and research), with a focus on how those priorities fit the institutional mission and current strategic plan.
- A brief description of the process used determine these academic priorities.
- A description highlighting new academic or research programming that your institution hopes to pursue in the coming year, with a focus on how those new programs will support your academic priorities.
- If/where applicable, a high-level overview of areas that will be somewhat less prioritized, including any areas in which your institution will consider disinvestment, moratorium, and/or termination.
- Additional details you find relevant for the BOR to consider as they make decisions about “Requests to Plan.”

Separately, please fill-in the [Forthcoming Academic Proposals](#) spreadsheet describing academic programs or research centers/institutes that you anticipate may proceed to the “Request to Plan” portion of the approval process in the next year. Please include contact information for a campus lead on each anticipated proposal. A proposal need not be listed in this report to proceed to the “Request to Plan” stage. However, listing proposals likely to move forward is an appreciated courtesy intended to encourage early communication and collaboration.

MSUN Mission Statement

MSU-Northern provides higher education to students for professional and technical careers through an institution dedicated to teaching and the pursuit of knowledge.

Approved by the Board of Regents on May 2016.

MSUN Core Themes

1. Provide liberal arts, professional and technical programs that serve a diverse student population.
2. Promote student centered and culturally enriched environment which fosters student success.
3. Partner with external entities to enhance and expand learning experiences.

MSUN’s strategic plan builds on our Mission and includes a priority goal of reaching 1500 students to ensure institutional stability and sustainability. To build our capacity and serve the largest geographic region in the state, MSUN has and continues to provide relevant, quality academic programs that address the needs of the region and the state. Our history of providing education, technical, and regionally relevant high-quality programming drives our academic priorities and planning. Our Strategic plan notes that “MSUN is proud to be ranked the #1 school in Montana for economic mobility, and #15 in the nation. A significant number of MSUN’s graduates start college in the bottom 20 percent of income distribution, and go on to reach the top 20 percent. MSU-Northern graduates also have better workforce outcomes right out of college than graduates from other four-year colleges in the state. Northern provides an Education that Works.”

MSUN's academic priorities are driven by the four goals in MSUN's strategic Plan; 1. Stability; 2. Quality and Efficiency; 3. Engagement; 4. Collaboration. The academic priorities are developed through the campus strategic planning process that outlines opportunities existing programmatic expansion and growth and to identify potential programmatic opportunities through our collaborative efforts with industry partners. Strategically, we are moving to having 100% of our academic programs have advisory boards that meet at least twice a year and include input on industry needs.

Academic program proposals are largely based on the input from our industry partners through the active input from our Advisory Boards. These priorities are also vetted through the College faculty, Academic Senate and other relevant committees on campus (e.g., Graduate Committee, Marketing Committee, etc.). The Student Senate also is involved in the development of our academic priorities.

MSUN has identified three particular areas of academic priority for the next academic year based on the goals and strategies of our strategic plan. These programmatic areas are clustered around rebuilding our education and related programs, workforce development, and expanding program areas that meet local and state level industry needs.

Education and related programs have historically been a strength at MSUN and is evidenced by the number and scope of teachers and counselors within our region that have received their training from MSUN. The Education program had suffered decline over the past 10 years due to a variety of factors. After forming an Education Advisory Board and working with the Rural Superintends group within the region, MSUN set a priority to expand our Education program to address a critical shortage of teachers and counselors. To date, we have increased the number of education students enrolled in our education programs by 400%. These efforts have been successful through collaboratively working with Great Falls College to initiate a 2+2 cohort in Great Falls, collaborating with two tribal colleges to initiate a 2+2 grant funded program, and collaborating with the regional school districts. There are several Education related program priorities that we are proposing for this academic year that address the specific needs of the region and in which we have faculty expertise to develop.

Another area of strategic academic growth that we are proposing is the add a minor in Graphics Design. We are rebuilding our capacity in this area and students and industry have identified the need to provide expertise in graphics design as an adjunct to other majors offered on campus – e.g., business and marketing, integrated health sciences, criminal justice, and community leadership.

And finally, we have strong academic programming in the agricultural sciences and agricultural mechanics that connect closely with our agriculture industry in the region. In this area we identifying strategic opportunities in precision agriculture, meat processing, equine studies. These academic priorities have been strongly supported by our local and state industries and economic development partners.

University of Montana - Missoula

ACADEMIC PRIORITIES AND PLANNING STATEMENT

Academic Year 2021-2022

The Montana University System (MUS) Board of Regents (BOR) has requested additional context to support the decisions they make regarding “Requests to Plan” for new academic programs and research centers/institutes. **Toward that end, we ask that each institution submit a report addressing all questions listed below, not to exceed four pages, no later than 5 p.m. on Friday, May 28, 2021.**

Separately, please fill-in the Forthcoming Academic Proposals spreadsheet describing academic programs or research centers/institutes that you anticipate may proceed to the “Request to Plan” portion of the approval process in the next year. Please include contact information for a campus lead on each anticipated proposal. A proposal need not be listed in this report to proceed to the “Request to Plan” stage. However, listing proposals likely to move forward is an appreciated courtesy intended to encourage early communication and collaboration.

1. Provide a high-level overview of your institution’s current academic priorities (instruction and research), with a focus on how those priorities fit the institutional mission and current strategic plan.

The University of Montana transforms lives by providing a high-quality and accessible education and by generating world-class research and creative scholarship in an exceptional place. We integrate the liberal arts and sciences into undergraduate, graduate, and professional studies to shape global citizens who are creative and agile learners committed to expanding the boundaries of knowledge and to building and sustaining diverse communities.

UM’s mission statement (above) continues to serve as the foundation for our academic priorities in instruction and research. As outlined by the work of our [University Design Team \(UDT\)](#), our vision is that the University of Montana will be a flagship for the future, fostering inclusive prosperity and democracy, and creating new knowledge and ways of learning. The UDT developed six [Design Principles](#) and a number of [Strategic Initiatives](#) for consideration. The Design Principles – Impact, Interdisciplinarity, Inclusivity, Inquiry, Innovation and Internationalization – frame the overarching strategy that guides UM's five [Priorities for Action](#), consistent with the University’s mission. Within the priorities, objectives are set, then strategies and actions are employed to ensure incremental progress in areas such as curriculum design, research emphases, student experience, operations, marketing, and community engagement. Furthermore, UM will embark on Strategic Enrollment Planning that will translate the vision of the UDT and PFAs into tangible, ROI-driven actions that will provide UM with a solid foundation of enrollment and fiscal stability into the future. Institutions of higher education are facing important challenges. In response, UM aims to create value for a more diverse set of learners and demonstrate clearly the return on students’ tuition investments. We intend to sustain the benefits of institutional stability amid the acceleration of societal change.

In our 2020-2021 Academic Planning document, we emphasized that Montana has experienced significant changes in its economy; some industries have receded and the job ecosystem in Montana will follow national trends in becoming more automated and centralized. New industries have emerged and others are challenged by changing technologies, regulations, demographics and societal changes. COVID-19 has accelerated or accentuated most of these shifts. Technology both promises and threatens to drive further change. This

creates new workforce challenges and opportunities for Montana businesses, government, nonprofits and, in turn, for Montanans seeking meaningful employment.

With an understanding of this landscape and as a result of University Design Team's work, UM will continue to emphasize the six areas of interdisciplinary focus at UM known as Communities of Excellence. The Communities of Excellence, developed during the spring of 2018 by the University Planning Committee (UPC) identified represent UM's intersections of strength and opportunity and provide an organizing principle under which our academic priorities fall. We will incentivize interdisciplinary opportunities within and across the communities – environment and sustainability; health and human and development, science and technology, communication and artistic expression, business and entrepreneurship, justice, policy and public service. As emphasized in the 2020-2021 Academic Planning document, UM has deep interdisciplinary capabilities, a proven track-record delivering premium 21st century skills and experiential learning, and engagement that fosters the adaptive, innovative and entrepreneurial mindset that can equip the workforce, employers, and community to succeed in a period of accelerated disruption. This will continue to drive our instructional and research priorities.

2. Provide a brief description of the process used determine these academic priorities.

Beginning in May, 2020, the [University Design Team \(UDT\)](#) included UM students, faculty, and staff. The UDT spent a year exploring how to best position UM for long-term success and impact. Drawing upon the perspectives of our campus community, as well as of external stakeholders – community leaders, business leaders, admitted students and prospective students – the UDT considered the challenges and opportunities faced by institutions of higher education and identified design principles and potential strategies to position UM as a flagship for America's future. The UDT and our wider campus community outlined how UM can best:

- provide an education that prepares our students as both career-ready and tomorrow-proof;
- expand our conception of education to include learners at all stages of life and career; and
- expand the reaches of knowledge through research and graduate programs of national excellence and impact.

In a parallel effort, the Provost and deans engaged in academic planning. The [Academic Planning Group \(APG\)](#) built on their efforts by collecting input from a wide range of campus stakeholders, including the Priority for Action teams, the Graduate School and Graduate Council leaders, academic advisors, Staff Senate, the UM Foundation, the Diversity Advisory Council leadership, ASUM and GPSA leadership, the University Design Team, and others. The APG made recommendations to the Provost based on the input collected. These recommendations, in concert with the work of the University Design Team, aligned with UM's Priorities for Action and Strategic Enrollment Planning, represent the ongoing processes that shape our academic priorities.

3. Provide a description highlighting new academic or research programing that your institution hopes to pursue in the coming year, with a focus on how those new programs will support your academic priorities.

The programs UM plans to pursue this year reflect our academic priorities. They align with the UDT's Design Principles (e.g., Interdisciplinary and Inclusivity), and all six of our Communities of Excellence. As UM implements Strategic Enrollment Planning (SEP) in the ensuing year, these proposals as well as emerging

proposals will be evaluated through the lens of the SEP A description for each is found in column C in the attached file:

- Native American Studies MA
- Business BS (online)
- Environmental Public Health Journalism option in Environmental Science and Natural Resources Journalism MA
- Pre-Dance Therapy option in Dance BA
- Sound Arts and Technology BS, BM, BFA
- Combined Master of Education MEd and Early Childhood Education P-3 Licensure
- Accelerated Master of Education MEd, Secondary Education
- Establish an Institute for Early Childhood Education with a focus on P-3 education.
- Wilderness Medicine 2+2, Wilderness Medicine Minor, Wilderness Medicine Certificate
- Environmental Humanities BA
- Philosophy, Politics, and Economics BA, Philosophy, Politics, and Law option in the Philosophy BA
- Environmental Earth Sciences BS
- Manufacturing Processes CAS
- Biotechnology BS and MS
- Transitional Doctor of Occupational Therapy

4. If/where applicable, provide a high-level overview of areas that will be somewhat less prioritized, including any areas in which your institution will consider disinvestment, moratorium, and/or termination.

UM's academic planning will continue into the fall semester. As we review our budget and student demands for academic programs across campus, we will identify appropriate program moratoria and terminations.

5. Include additional details you find relevant for the BOR to consider as they make decisions about "Requests to Plan."

No additional details at this time.

Montana Technological University

ACADEMIC PRIORITIES AND PLANNING STATEMENT

Academic Year 2021-2022

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Separately, please fill-in the Forthcoming Academic Proposals spreadsheet describing academic programs or research centers/institutes that you anticipate may proceed to the “Request to Plan” portion of the approval process in the next year. Please include contact information for a campus lead on each anticipated proposal. A proposal need not be listed in this report to proceed to the “Request to Plan” stage. However, listing proposals likely to move forward is an appreciated courtesy intended to encourage early communication and collaboration.

1. Provide a high-level overview of your institution’s current academic priorities (instruction and research), with a focus on how those priorities fit the institutional mission and current strategic plan.

This past year was spent developing the framework of a new strategic plan. A significant part of the discussion while developing this plan was to define what the “Special Focus” designation means for Montana Tech. Our conclusion is that we are going to pursue excellence in learning, teaching, and research in a select number of programs. As such, we do not expect to bring forward a raft of new programs, but continue focus of evaluating opportunities for existing programs.

The most significant changes to our academic programming will be occurring at Highlands College. Over the past several years it has become apparent that most students attend Highlands to obtain Associate degrees in the trades. Associate degrees in areas outside of the trades, with the exception of Radiologic Technology, have suffered decreases in student interest and enrollment. This interest in the trades in combination with new partnerships with local and regional business and industries is causing a shift for Highlands College to focus primarily on trades, technical programs, and workforce development. With this change, we will expand our certificate and non-degree workforce development programming.

With Highlands College now emphasizing trades and technical programming, we will continue to support those students in other programs who want the option of a two-year degree. This will be accommodated by structuring our four-year curriculum in with an exit pathway (Associate Degree) after completion of the first two years of the program. We also look to expand our BAS offerings to allow for a seamless transition for students with an AAS to complete a four-year degree.

2. Provide a brief description of the process used to determine these academic priorities.

The strategic planning process has allowed us the opportunity to clearly define where we should focus our efforts and resources to be successful in educating students and fulfilling our mission as

the institution of opportunity and innovation. Over the past several years, we have been eliminating and consolidating departments and programs. This includes reductions in force. The result of this work is that we have a suite of academic programs that are appropriate to our size and scope. We now need to continue our investment in these programs to ensure quality and continued strong enrollments.

We do not anticipate having to make significant programmatic or staffing changes in the upcoming year. However, we will continue our process of using metrics to monitor the performance of academic programs (enrollment, faculty-to-student ratios, etc.).

3. Provide a description highlighting new academic or research programming that your institution hopes to pursue in the coming year, with a focus on how those new programs will support your academic priorities.

We are engaged in a number of discussions with local and regional industry to create credentialing, certificate, and possibly CAS/AAS degrees. For example, we anticipate a partnership with a mining firm (Black Butte Mining) to create CAS/AAS degrees in Mining Technology.

Our nursing program continues to have growing interest and demand. We are planning to create an accelerated BSN program that will allow students with a bachelor's degree to obtain a BSN at an accelerated rate.

Last year, we completed the process to convert the BS in General Engineering to BS degrees in Mechanical Engineering and Civil Engineering. We now need to convert the MS General Engineering to an MSME and MSCE. Since we no longer have the BSGE, this is a significant issue. Essentially without an ABET accredited BS, the MS is basically "unaccredited". We have several students in this program. But, if one comes in without a BS in engineering to start with (such as a BS in math or physics), they cannot become a licensed engineer after getting the MS.

4. If/where applicable, provide a high-level overview of areas that will be somewhat less prioritized, including any areas in which your institution will consider disinvestment, moratorium, and/or termination.

We anticipate that enrollment next year will be flat or slightly higher than this year; we do not project significant enrollment declines for the 2021-2022 academic year. Student demand for our existing programs is sustainable. In some areas, we anticipate increased demand that may require additional instructional capacity. As noted earlier, the focus of Highlands College will be trades and technical; however, we have already made the appropriate programmatic changes in anticipation of this shift in emphasis. Therefore, we do not expect to have to make any major divestments in academic programming.

5. **Include additional details you find relevant for the BOR to consider as they make decisions about “Requests to Plan.”**

The majority of proposals coming from Montana Tech this year will not be expanding into new academic disciplines or domains. The focus will be to strengthen and enhance those areas where we have demonstrated expertise and experience that will meet student, workforce, and market demand.

The University of Montana Western

ACADEMIC PRIORITIES AND PLANNING STATEMENT

Academic Year 2021-2022

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1. Provide a high-level overview of your institution’s current academic priorities (instruction and research), with a focus on how those priorities fit the institutional mission and current strategic plan.

This year The University of Montana Western finalized its 6-year strategic plan, “Building on the Promise of Experience One (X1)”. The plan is designed to enable the university to accomplish its vision to be recognized as the leader in innovative experiential learning. As the only public university offering experiential learning one course at a time, Montana Western is unique in its delivery of the curriculum.

Part of the strategic plan calls for an assessment of X1 that evaluates strengths, weaknesses, and needs. This assessment was begun this academic year with an inventory of high impact practices (HIPs). The assessment will continue in the coming academic year, with a focus on quality of the individual and programmatic experiences as well as an investigation of equity and inclusion in participation.

The upcoming renovation of Block Hall, Montana Western’s math and science building, will allow the space to better utilized to meet the current teaching and research needs of the faculty. In particular, it is anticipated that this will expand the research facilities and thus increase the ability to provide research experiences for undergraduates.

2. Provide a brief description of the process used to determine these academic priorities.

The 2020 strategic plan was accomplished with input from many sectors. A strategic planning committee met during the 19-20 academic year and made recommendations, which were the basis of the final plan. The strategic planning committee included representation from across campus as well as from the community. The draft plan was published for comments and the final version was endorsed by the cabinet, faculty senate, and ASUMW. Once the plan was adopted, four strategic workgroups were developed to lead the implementation efforts. Moving forward, these groups will consult with other individuals on campus as needed and report to the leadership group once a semester on progress, both quantitative and qualitative. The strategic plan includes the academic priority of strengthening Experience One.

3. Provide a description highlighting new academic or research programing that your institution hopes to pursue in the coming year, with a focus on how those new programs will support your academic priorities.

The University of Montana Western offers the only Bachelor's Degree in Natural Horsemanship in the U.S., with options in equine management, psychology, science, business and instruction. In partnership with the Montana Center for Horsemanship, the Equine Studies Department combines real-world experience and the knowledge of working with a horse's mind with skills to succeed in the equine industry. Each year the program attracts students from around the nation; admission into the program is competitive. Additionally, the Natural Horsemanship program has international recognition. Building on the success of this program and to meet the needs of the industry, Montana Western hopes to offer a Master's degree in Instructional Horsemanship Education. The goal of the program is to provide students with an education in horsemanship methodology and industry pedagogy skills with the practical skills to become a "trained professional" in the real-world equine industry.

The University of Montana Western offers the only on-line bachelor's degrees in Early Childhood Education (ECE) in the state of Montana. It also offers several online post-baccalaureate certificate programs, which lead to education licensure. Additionally, Montana Western partners with Montana Tech and several tribal colleges to offer satellite programs for communities ranging from Butte to Browning. These programs are successful in recruiting a diverse range of students. The Division of Education at Montana Western meets students' needs in a variety of ways. It provides high-quality educational experiences for all its students, including those who might otherwise be unable to attain post-secondary degrees. During the coming year, the Education Division will identify ways to expand on its successes and offer additional online programs to help meet the demand for more qualified teachers in Montana.

In addition to the programs mentioned above, Montana Western seeks to build on the success of the (NSF-funded) pilot project and introduce a system of badges more broadly across the curriculum to document the engagement of students in a variety of activities. Additionally, Montana Western also seeks to use the knowledge and experience from the past year to expand access to courses and programs through a variety of delivery modalities.

4. If/where applicable, provide a high-level overview of areas that will be somewhat less prioritized, including any areas in which your institution will consider disinvestment, moratorium, and/or termination.

Several niche certificate programs (Farrier Science and Small Animal Grooming) are in the process of being put into moratorium due to lack of interest of students and lack of experience of the existing faculty.

5. Include additional details you find relevant for the BOR to consider as they make decisions about "Requests to Plan."

As we develop our requests to plan, we will collaborate with other MUS institutions as appropriate.

Helena College

ACADEMIC PRIORITIES AND PLANNING STATEMENT

Academic Year 2021-2022

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1. **Provide a high-level overview of your institution’s current academic priorities (instruction and research), with a focus on how those priorities fit the institutional mission and current strategic plan.**

- Network Administration AAS: Currently on moratorium to determine the best direction for the degree. Industry partners have indicated that the degree needs an increased focus in cybersecurity and an integration of work-based-learning experiences throughout the degree. We plan to hire a full-time faculty using Perkins’s grant funding for AY 2021-2022 for the curriculum design and the creation of work-based-learning experiences with industry partners so that the degree can be removed from moratorium and begin accepting students in fall 2022. The degree will be officially renamed to include cybersecurity in the title in fall 2021.
- Guided Pathways: The creation of new academic pathways will continue in AY 2021-2022. New transfer pathways for students transferring within the MUS will be explored, in addition to pathways specific to our dual enrollment partners.
- Articulations: The creation of transfer pathways may result in additional articulation agreements in AY 2021-2022. There are several transfer pathways that can be further strengthened by articulation agreements between Helena College and the transfer institution.
- Criminal Justice: Helena College worked with the Montana Department of Corrections in AY 2020-2021 to assess how to best meet their needs for trained employees. The Department of Corrections would like a named Associate of Science degree in Pre-Criminal Justice, leading to a four-year baccalaureate option, with internship opportunities integrated into all four years. Helena College will submit a request to plan for an Associate of Science in Pre-Criminal Justice and a Level II request in fall 2021.
- Cosmetology: Helena College will submit a request to plan for a new AAS in Cosmetology. The next year will be spent consulting with industry and the community, conducting research on the best options for a degree in cosmetology.

- **Banking Certificate:** The Helena College Community Education Center will partner with Opportunity Bank to design and create a non-credit certificate in banking. The certificate is based on industry needs and will be used to train employees and to provide new employees the foundational knowledge needed for the field. The College will explore options for possible PLA for students who have completed the certificate and are interested in continuing their education in the Accounting & Business program.
- **Machining:** After surveying current students, past students, and the Computer Aided Manufacturing Advisory Board, a recommendation has been made to faculty and administration to change the name of the program to more precisely define the mission and purpose of the program. This proposal will be made for the fall of 2021.
- **Automotive:** The Automotive Program received grant funding this year and created an online/hybrid Automotive Hybrid Training Program that will be offered to current field technicians through continuing education this summer. Helena College will propose a CTS in order to provide Helena College students with either a credit or non-credit option for this program.
- **Diesel and Automotive Degree:** The diesel and automotive faculty are currently exploring the possibility of a combination automotive diesel degree that would incorporate automotive, light-duty diesel, and heavy-duty diesel. This would result in a two-year AAS combination auto/diesel degree.
- **Bitterroot LPN Collaboration:** Using GEER funds, Helena College partnered with Bitterroot College in the 2020-2021 academic year to develop an LPN program that can be delivered by Helena College in the Hamilton area using a combination of online and remote synchronous delivery for didactic courses and in-person, hands-on lab and clinical experiences in Hamilton. The first cohort of students will enroll in LPN courses in Spring 2022. This expansion of the LPN program will allow us to assess and improve the model with the goal of expanding to other critical care hospitals in the region.
- **Avionics:** Helena College has applied for a Federal Grant to support the addition of an avionics CTS or CAS. This has been recommended by the current Aviation Program Advisory Board but would be a fairly expensive addition to the current program so will not be possible without the grant funding to support the startup of the program.

2. Provide a brief description of the process used determine these academic priorities.

The College determined the academic priorities for AY 2021-2022 through multiple industry partnerships and program assessment methods. All priorities are connected to at least one industry and/or educational partner and are designed to help students meet their educational and career goals.

3. Provide a description highlighting new academic or research programing that your institution hopes to pursue in the coming year, with a focus on how those new programs will support your academic priorities.

- 4. If/where applicable, provide a high-level overview of areas that will be somewhat less prioritized, including any areas in which your institution will consider disinvestment, moratorium, and/or termination.**

The Administrative Support and Management program is currently on moratorium and will be fully terminated in AY 2021-2022 as it has not shown to be meeting the needs of students or employers.

- 5. Include additional details you find relevant for the BOR to consider as they make decisions about "Requests to Plan."**