

**Montana University System**  
**PROGRAM REVIEW**

Institution: **University of Montana Western**

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Program Years: **2018-2024**

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**List of the programs reviewed:**

A.S. Biology; B.S. Biology; B.S. Ecology; B.S. Biology & Secondary Education

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**Decision(s) concerning the future of the program(s), based on the program review criteria established at the campus:**

The University of Montana Western resolves to continue offering the following degrees: A.S. Biology; B.S. Biology; B.S. Ecology; B.S. Biology & Secondary Education

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**Rationale or justification for the decision based on the program review process established at the campus. Include graduation numbers and student majors for each of the last seven (7) years for every program under review.**

The study of Biology fosters a deep understanding of life, from the human body to ecosystems. It provides background to help the next generation of leaders understand challenges like cancer, climate change and biodiversity. Experimental study of the foundations of life equips students with valuable skills for careers in healthcare, research, and conservation. It also provides students with a personal understanding of their own health and their relationship to the other organisms in the world. The study of Biology thus continues to be an important avenue for education, lifelong growth and career development.

The Biology department and its programs serve a variety of communities at the university. Graduates from the biology program at UM Western are well prepared to meet the employment needs of both Montana and the greater United States. Students in the program are directly trained by PhD-level scientists who maintain active research programs that are incorporated into the undergraduate curriculum. Graduates from the program have been accepted into Dental School, Veterinary School, Medical School, Graduate school and other professional programs. Graduates have also found jobs in conservation and healthcare. In addition, the biology program also offers a number of classes which satisfy the university's natural science general education requirement and contribute to the secondary education program.

External reviewers were impressed with the success of the biology department given its small size and limited support. The reviewers identified several opportunities where focused efforts could benefit the department and position it to better leverage its strengths.

Recruitment of students into the Biology program suffers from a lack of targeted marketing and active efforts to convey the strengths of the program to prospective students. Most students enroll solely based on word-of-mouth recommendations from peers. Improving recruitment would lower the per-student cost of the program, allow for a greater variety of elective classes and improve in-class discussion and collaborative activities. The unique nature of the block schedule, combined with small class sizes and active research programs would make the biology program appealing to potential students interested in biology. Efforts should focus on Pre-Med/Vet and Wildlife Management and the newly renovated Block Hall. Upon completion, it could be used as a

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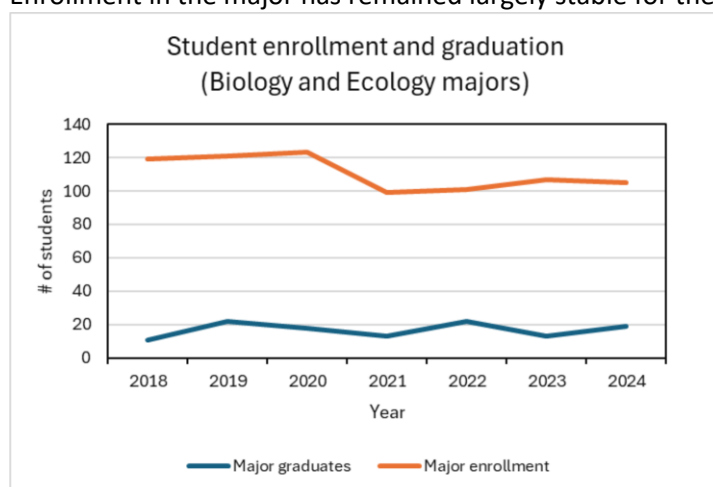
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centerpiece of advertising and recruitment. However, the renovation is currently short of funds to finish the remodel. The Biology department and administration should actively seek funding sources to ensure that the new classrooms and labs are fully outfitted. Ensuring that Block hall is fully equipped would be useful in leveraging the building as a recruitment tool, attracting external grant funding and in creating an exciting learning environment for students moving forward.

The biology department will continue its focus on undergraduate research. We will be hiring a new tenure-track faculty member who will develop an active research program that complements and extends the existing undergraduate opportunities. The Biology department has been successful in securing external research funding despite having a heavy teaching load and should continue to work closely with the office of sponsored programs and the foundation to bring in external funding. The extensive preparatory work that goes into making reagents and setting up laboratories is a task that could be easily outsourced to free up time for faculty research, teaching and grant writing. Investment in support personnel for administrative duties, course preparation and research would allow faculty to take on greater duties with the university and increase their ability to obtain external funding. The university should look into ways to hire a technical assistant to help with these tasks.

To ensure that our program outcomes align with our future 7-year plan and strategic plan, the department should improve its ability to measure graduate outcomes. This might include reference to a framework of structured, higher-level learning goals, such as the transfer and application of knowledge and skills found in Bloom's Taxonomy. The program should ensure that professionally-oriented majors hoping to go into wildlife and conservation management are aware of the standards necessary to be competitive in those jobs.

Enrollment in the major has remained largely stable for the last several years.



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**List of the programs reviewed:**

B.A Visual Arts, B.A. Glass, A.A. Art History, A.A. Digital Media, A.A. Drama, A.A. Integrated Arts, A.A. Music, A.A. Visual Art - 2D, A.A. Visual Arts - Crafts

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**Decision(s) concerning the future of the program(s), based on the program review criteria established at the campus:**

The University of Montana Western resolves to continue offering the following degrees: B.A Visual Arts, B.A. Glass, A.A. Art History, A.A. Digital Media, A.A. Drama, A.A. Integrated Arts, A.A. Music, A.A. Visual Art - 2D, A.A. Visual Arts - Crafts

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**Rationale or justification for the decision based on the program review process established at the campus. Include graduation numbers and student majors for each of the last seven (7) years for every program under review.**

The Fine Arts Department (FAD) courses, programs, and events educate students and the public in professional aesthetic and entertainment practices and career options and engage them in the creative process using hands-on material, aural, physiological, and performative methods. In addition, the FAD fulfills the purpose of Western's immersive block system mission and aligns with Experience One mandate, the taking of one class at a time. From conception to production, students and faculty work together to explore current professional knowledge, purposes, and practices in all areas of arts offered for study. The University of Montana and the FAD connect with the regional community by offering public events and programs such as concerts, drama productions, exhibitions, lectures, and demonstrations that bring together students and professionals together in a collaborative endeavor, to entertain, educate, and provide awareness by demonstrating Western's outreach and support of art, artists, and the concept of building community. In short, FAD presents opportunities for contributing to a public face for Western, and without these opportunities for its character to be layered and diverse, Western would be solely represented by a bulldog.

The Fine Arts Department offers traditional and innovative degrees in Arts Education, Art History, Crafts, Digital Art, Glass, Integrated Arts, Music, Theater, and Visual Arts. The greatest strength of the Fine Arts Department is also perceived as its greatest weakness; it is made up of distinct and technologically different art areas which, in larger institutions, would be their own departments: Music, Theater, and Visual Arts & Glass. These areas all require specific types and scale of spaces and specialized equipment, giving the perception that they are expensive but from the outside, it offers the impression that we are serious about education at a professional level. The realism on the ground proffers evidence regarding where a portion of our students come from, which is rural and regional Montana high schools. The other reality is that these areas primarily support the MUS required General Education offerings for Expressive Arts and Literary and Expressive Arts for this institution. A creative writing course offered by the English Department and a dance course offered by Human Health and Performance are also counted as Expressive Arts. Each area is organized and managed and taught by solo full-time tenured or tenure-track faculty members. Music, Theater and Visual Arts are also supported by additional

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adjuncts to support facilities and curriculum. Theater and Visual Arts are supported by an additional full-time position known as Non-tenure Track Annual Assistant Professor. The full curriculum in glass is taught, multiple shops built and maintained, supplied, and run by one faculty member only.

Despite the challenges, the external reviewer noted the high participation from education majors and high numbers of students enrolled in the department's minors and applauded the effectiveness of the model of using general education and non-major enrollment to sustain the smaller degree and credential programs. Further, enrollments have recovered from the pandemic-era declines, although they are still low overall. Plans for some program restructuring, as well as proposals for new minors in Media Arts, Filmmaking, and Integrated Digital Arts and certificates in Acting for the Camera and Entertainment Management, will allow the department greater flexibility and improve the ability to attract students and bring the arts to Dillon. The community has shown strong support of the Arts at Western through attendance at exhibitions, performances, lectures, demonstrations, and workshops through Outreach, and UMW remains committed to continuing that engagement.

### Recent Graduation Data

| Major                                     | AY 2018  | AY 2019   | AY 2020   | AY 2021  | AY 2022  | AY 2023  | AY 2024  |
|-------------------------------------------|----------|-----------|-----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| Glass, Certificate                        |          | 1         | 1         | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0        |
| Glass, Associate of Arts                  |          | 0         | 0         | 1        | 1        | 0        | 0        |
| Glass, Bachelor of Arts                   |          | 0         | 1         | 1        | 2        | 0        | 1        |
| Visual Art, Bachelor of Arts              | 4        | 6         | 6         | 3        | 5        | 4        | 3        |
| Art Education K-12, Bachelor of Science   | 0        | 2         | 5         | 4        | 0        | 2        | 2        |
| Music Education K-12, Bachelor of Science | 1        | 2         | 0         | 0        | 0        | 1        | 2        |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                              | <b>5</b> | <b>10</b> | <b>13</b> | <b>9</b> | <b>8</b> | <b>7</b> | <b>8</b> |

|                              |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Business Related Arts        | 0 | 2 | 6 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| Illustration Related Area    | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Pre-Art Therapy Related Area | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Studio Art Related Area      | 2 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 3 | 1 |
| Art History Minor-2023 New   |   |   |   |   |   | 0 | 0 |
| Drama Minor                  | 0 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| Glass Minor                  |   | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 |

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|-------------------------|----------|----------|-----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| Music Related Area      | 1        | 0        | 0         | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0        |
| Visual Art Related Area | 1        | 1        | 0         | 3        | 1        | 2        | 1        |
| Art K-12 Minor          | 0        | 0        | 0         | 1        | 1        | 1        | 0        |
| Drama K-12 Minor        | 0        | 1        | 1         | 0        | 0        | 0        | 2        |
| Music K-12 Minor        | 0        | 0        | 0         | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0        |
| <b>TOTAL</b>            | <b>4</b> | <b>9</b> | <b>10</b> | <b>9</b> | <b>9</b> | <b>8</b> | <b>7</b> |