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Montana Safe Schools Center 

Summary of Five Year Center Review Report

Montana Safe Schools Center (MSSC) is focused on increasing awareness about the impact of trauma and delivering evidence-based trainings in trauma-informed interventions to a variety of professionals and para-professionals who interface with students in Montana’s school systems. In addition, MSSC is active in interdisciplinary research, and maintains a presence in the national dialog about trauma and children. The Center has collaborative relationships with various units across campus.

Summary of External Review

Mr. Paul Fennewalk served as an external reviewer of the MSSC. He utilized staff interviews and review of written work to provide an assessment of the MSSC. He is generally supportive of the work being done by the MSSC, although he shared three recommendations. First, he recommends MSSC form an Advisory Committee in order to expand the stakeholder community. Second, Mr. Fennewalk recommends the Director assume a more active role in school safety efforts at the state level. Finally, he recommends that the MSSC develop a Strategic Plan in order to purposively grow the Center and ensure resources are utilized wisely.

Purpose

The purpose of the Montana Safe Schools Center is “to serve as a training and technical assistance center for schools and communities seeking to improve school culture and climate, reduce bullying and suicide, enhance emergency preparedness, and promote trauma-informed interventions and supports.”

Objectives

MSSC objectives have not changed in the past five years, and are identified in the Center’s Five Year Center Review Report (October 2016) as the following:

1. Provide training in trauma awareness and evidence-based treatment to: educators, school counselors and psychologists, behavioral health providers, school resource officers, and related service provider in order to equip schools to provide trauma-focused interventions and trauma-informed services.
2. Contribute to the national understanding of trauma-informed interventions through original interdisciplinary research that generates resources for the University of Montana and for the MSSC’s partners.
3. Participate in the National Child Traumatic Stress Network Schools Committee, Justice Consortium, and Community Violence Committee, Domestic Violence Collaborative Work Group, Terrorism and Disaster Committee, along with other pertinent NCTSN work groups.

Review in terms of the University’s mission.

* Comments:

In the Five Year Report, MSSC identifies how their work aligns with the University of Montana’s Strategic Plan, and particularly in the areas of **Partnering for Student Success, Education for the Global Century, and Discovery and Creativity to Serve Montana and the World.**

* Does ECOS/Faculty Senate consider this center controversial? No.
* Is the relationship with academic units beneficial? Yes.
* Is the program revenue neutral or does it consume more resources than it generates? If so, is the use of University resources justified? The program appears to be revenue neutral, with a record of external funding and strong connections to National Native Children’s Trauma Center, which does have an excellent record of external funding.
* Is the entity making progress toward objectives? Yes, although the Director identifies the need to disseminate their work more widely, and the external reviewer underscored the importance of Center involvement at the state level.

Recommendation: Continue

Justification: The MSSC is providing particularly important services to the state of Montana in the areas of suicide prevention and trauma-informed care. Further, the Center is both developing and maintaining successful collaborations that benefit the university, the state, and schools across Montana. The Director, relatively new in her role, has realistic plans to further the Center’s reach and impact. Finally, the interdisciplinary work of the Center benefits faculty and students at the University of Montana, supports school personnel in their efforts to educate Montana’s young people, and helps to reduce risk to elementary and high school students across the state.