Missoula College-Mountain Campus Task Force
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Introduction

Embedding a two-year college within a university provides an extraordinary opportunity to integrate all levels of post-secondary education. In Montana, City College-Billings, Highlands College-Butte, Gallatin College-Bozeman, and Missoula College are structurally embedded within universities. Missoula College is one of nine academic colleges of the University of Montana, Missoula. As such, it follows the same academic policies as all colleges of UM. Although the structure is challenging, the comprehensive two-year mission of Missoula College can be fulfilled in concert with the broad functions of the University, if its unique two-year needs are acknowledged. For Missoula College students, this means efficient use of student services, access to a broader array of courses, and seamless progression into bachelor’s degree programs. For undergraduate students on the four-year campus, this means access to professional and technical courses, certificates, and degree programs and, for UM doctoral students, additional opportunities to gain teaching experience.

In 1994 Missoula College became a college of the University of Montana, although integration into the fabric of the University of Montana has been slow. As the population of Missoula College has grown and as the Board of Regents has emphasized the development of two-year educational units in Montana, Missoula College has become a more integral part of the University of Montana. However, a lack of communication on both campuses has raised questions about the mission of Missoula College and about its role in preparing students for transfer into baccalaureate programs. The lack of cross-campus conversations among all members of the campus community—particularly students and faculty members—leaves unanswered questions about the function and mission of each campus, including duplication of courses and services and about costs of education. With more conversation between the two campuses, there will be a better understanding of each campus, its mission, and its commitment to students.
Mission of Missoula College

Two-year colleges are designed to maximize access to higher education, to serve as a gateway to four-year programs, and to provide professional and technical training. The mission of Missoula College is embodied in five broad elements:

- Transfer education through the associate’s degree;
- Workforce development, including certificates and associate of applied science degrees;
- Developmental and basic adult education;
- Lifelong learning; and
- Community development.

For each of these areas, there are advantages to a partnership between a two-year and four-year campus. The following are some of the advantages of embedding Missoula College in the University of Montana-Missoula along with and equivalent to the other colleges:

- Educational progression becomes relatively seamless, and courses not offered at Missoula College, but provided within the greater university, can fulfill requirements in the general college education and associate’s degree programs;
- Critical courses for workforce development programs, such as chemistry courses for health program students, become available within the greater university;
- Developmental courses in areas such as math and writing are provided by Missoula College for students in any college of the University;
- Lifelong learning programs of all colleges of the University, including Missoula College, are provided and administered through the School of Extended and Lifelong Learning;
- Community development programs for the University are provided through Missoula College as it develops strong relationships with business and government entities through its workforce development programs.
Questions and Challenges

With the exceptional advantages and opportunities provided by the embedding of a two-year college in a larger university also come unique challenges. Below are some of the common questions and challenges.

1. **Has Missoula College received a disproportionate number of tenure track positions over the past few years?**

Since Fall 2008, there have been no new tenure-track positions authorized for Missoula College. However, three open positions were filled. Over the same time period, the number of tenure-track positions at the Mountain Campus increased by 4.9%. From 2008 to 2012, Missoula College Student FTE grew by 38.6%, while Mountain Campus student FTE grew by 9.7%. Since 2012 the student population on both campuses has declined.

2. **Has the budget of Missoula College grown faster than for the Mountain Campus?**

Over the last four fiscal years there is no evidence, except for one structural budget correction, that Missoula College has been treated more favorably than the other schools and colleges of UM. The one exception is an increase in budget in FY 2012 to correct a structural budget deficit being experienced by Missoula College due to its rapid growth ($600,000). In the same year the College of Arts and Sciences (CHS now) also received a substantial increase in budget to deal with its structural budget deficit ($675,000). For FY 2013 and 2014, while the average changes in budget for UM schools and colleges were +5% and -1%, respectively, the changes for Missoula College were +4% and -1%, respectively.

3. **Can Missoula College students take a large part of their course load on the Mountain Campus but at a lower tuition rate?**

Enrollment data indicate that this was indeed a problem in the past, but new rules, enacted effective March 2012, seem to have resolved this issue. Students at Missoula College can only register for courses on the Mountain Campus in the following specific cases:

**Unrestricted access to required courses not offered at Missoula College:** For many years, students in workforce programs such as certificate and Associate of Applied Science degrees have been able to take required courses not offered at Missoula College through the other colleges of the University. This is and has been their only access to these required courses.
Restricted access to required courses not offered at Missoula College: Since Spring 2012, students in the Associate of Arts program who have established with an advisor a potential major offered on the Mountain campus may register for up to 6 credits each semester for 100- or 200-level courses offered on the Mountain campus that are required for that major. This provision allows these students to make a seamless transition to baccalaureate degree programs offered on the Mountain Campus.

Activity courses: All 100-level activity courses offered by the Department of Health and Human Performance on the Mountain Campus are open to Missoula College students.

The impact of the new rules has been significant: the number of credit hours taken by Missoula College students on the Mountain Campus decreased from 8,576 in Fall 2011 to 2,266 in Fall 2012, a decline of over 70%. (In this context, it is worthwhile to note that in Fall 2012, Mountain Campus students took 3,474 credit hours at Missoula College.)

At present, Missoula College students are unable to complete all MUS and/or UM general education requirements entirely on the Missoula College campus. If more 100 and 200 level courses were offered on the MC campus, this problem could be eliminated; this also would contribute to a more genuine two-year experience for two-year college students. Likewise, more courses need to be offered on the Missoula College campus when Missoula College offers an associate of science degree.

4. Do some Mountain Campus students take courses at Missoula College because they are less expensive?

Mountain Campus students take courses at Missoula College for a variety of reasons, but lower tuition is not one of them. If Mountain Campus students enroll in courses at Missoula College, they pay the tuition of their home college, not the lower Missoula College tuition. To avoid this, a Mountain Campus student would have to apply to and be admitted to Missoula College (essentially transferring from the Mountain Campus to Missoula College). However, with the new rules restricting how many credits Missoula College students can take on the Mountain Campus (see above), this would not seem to be a worthwhile strategy: most Mountain Campus students would have trouble making progress toward their major if they could only take six credits on the Mountain Campus.
5. **Will the Mountain Campus offer lower division courses in the future?**

While it might be conceptually possible for lower division courses to be offered only at Missoula College, it is financially and procedurally impractical and belies the advantage of having Missoula College embedded within the University. To move all of the lower division courses and many of the faculty members offering them into Missoula College would be a major undertaking. Additionally, different faculty unions and salary schedules for the two campuses would make this an impractical move. Also, it would be an unnecessary move because there are provisions for Missoula College students to enroll in selected courses on the four-year campus. However, given the differential tuition between Missoula College and the other colleges of the University, given the demand for students to have the needed courses to fulfill degree requirements, given the desire from students for a two-year college experience, and given the desire to create seamless progression for some students between the various colleges of the University, it is desirable for Missoula College to have a robust offering of lower-division courses. Missoula College and Mountain Campus departments follow the same University policy and procedures for proposing new courses. This process helps avoid unnecessary duplication while meeting the needs of students on Missoula’s multiple campuses. A guiding principle for a college is that a new course should be proposed and approved only if the expected enrollment from students on the home campus justifies the new offering.

6. **Is it appropriate for Missoula College to offer some courses in a small-lecture format when the same courses offered on the Mountain Campus are in a large-lecture format?**

To meet its mission and because of space constraints, Missoula College offers some courses at lower enrollments. Smaller classes address the multiple learning styles of a diverse population of two-year students, many of whom are non-traditional students. Likewise, smaller classes are required for certain professional and technical programs. Also, smaller classes are a response to the college’s mission to support underprepared students and students with provisional status. Further, most Missoula College classrooms do not accommodate larger classes; the average classroom size accommodates 20 students. The average classroom size will increase when Missoula College moves to its new building, although classes smaller than those offered on the Mountain Campus will continue to be the norm.

7. **Is Missoula College doing away with technical/vocational education?**

Workforce development is one of the five elements of the comprehensive two-year mission. The term ‘technical/vocational’ is outdated and has been replaced with ‘professional and technical’ in reference
to degree programs. Missoula College has a broad portfolio of professional and technical degree programs in health care, information technology, alternative energy technology, electronics, carpentry, heavy equipment operation, welding, and business. Over half the students at Missoula College are in these professional and technical programs, and these programs are integral to fulfilling the college’s mission.

8. Are students who progress from Missoula College to other colleges at the University academically prepared?

For those students from Missoula College who progress to one of the other colleges on the Mountain Campus at UM, their success after two semesters on the Mountain Campus (as measured by GPA) matches well to the success of students transferring from any other two-year college affiliated with MSU or UM.

More specifically, in examining performance in writing, Missoula College students seem as successful as students pursuing degrees in the other colleges of the University. Studying the performance of students taking WRIT 101 or 121 and students taking a subsequent writing course, no statistically significant differences were found between Missoula College and the Mountain Campus students. While some members of the task force have heard anecdotal claims of poorer performance by transfer students from Missoula College, no statistically significant conclusions could be drawn from the extensive data studied by the task force, with one exception: students who took M 115 at Missoula College had a 13% lower rate of success in STAT 216 than students who took M 115 on the Mountain Campus. The reasons for this lower success rate are not understood.

At this point, the high performance of the MC work-force programs should be highlighted. For example, nursing students have received a 100% pass rate on their license exams each year for the past several years. Likewise, the energy technology students have a 100% pass rate on their national exam. Students in programs at Missoula College are winning regional and national competitions and awards.

9. Are the qualifications of instructors at Missoula College appropriate to the level of courses being taught?

Missoula College faculty members are hired following the same processes used to hire Mountain Campus faculty and are subject to the same policies. Because MC courses are at the 100 and 200-level,
faculty must meet the minimum degree requirements established per BOR Policy 730. One key difference is that Missoula College instructors are hired for strong pedagogical skills, which is in accordance with the mission of two-year colleges. Because two-year college faculty members face a complex teaching environment involving a diverse student population, there is an intense focus on instruction and on a need for skills beyond subject-matter expertise.

10. Does Missoula College add, without consultation, courses already offered on the Mountain Campus?
Missoula College faculty and Mountain Campus faculty are required to follow the same process for all new course offerings, which includes oversight and approval by ASCRC. One standard provision is that no department can add courses without consulting affected programs.
For courses already offered on one campus, collaborative processes have been established between campuses. For example, principles for collaboration between CHS (formerly CAS) and MC to deliver general education courses were refined in March 2012. Communication between departments can and should be improved to provide for a smoother and more transparent process and to provide all UM students with a variety of courses offerings.

Conclusion
The Task Force found that communication among all of UM’s colleges is important in sharing accurate information about programs. Our task force work suggests that effective communication will facilitate efforts to confront and address key challenges and opportunities for faculty and students at both Missoula College and the Mountain Campus. As the UM community continues to develop a University for the Global Century that offers students opportunities from one-year certificates through doctoral degrees, if we work to make sure we better understand the University’s complexities and opportunities, our students will be well served.
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