

Royce C. Engstrom
Application Letter for President of The University of Montana

May 3, 2010

Presidential Search Advisory Committee
The University of Montana

Dear Search Advisory Committee,

I am honored to have been nominated for the position of President of The University of Montana. It is exciting to consider the leadership position of these four distinctive institutions. I have examined carefully the Presidential Search Prospectus and related materials. My experience these past three years as Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs at the Missoula campus has given me a solid understanding of the promise of the University, the areas which need improvement, and the issues facing higher education in the state and nation. Please accept this letter with the accompanying vitae and list of references as my application for the position.

Several critical national and state public policy issues form the context for the next phase of leadership at The University of Montana. Chief among these is the need for a more highly educated citizenry so that we have the intellectual capacity in our state and nation to confront the problems and opportunities before us. Greater degree production is needed at the two-year, baccalaureate, and graduate levels. Beyond simply the number of degrees, though, is the nature and quality of the education our students receive along the way. Does their education equip them to function as productive citizens and leaders in today's world? A further issue is that university research and scholarship is expected to contribute to economic and social development in more demonstrable ways, creating new jobs and ideas that find their way to the marketplace. Finally, higher education is expected to operate with ever-greater cost-effectiveness and accountability as states and individuals are pressed harder for competing demands on resources.

The four campuses of The University of Montana are collectively well-positioned to address these public policy issues. Together they cover the entire degree spectrum and have an innovative faculty equipped with a wide range of pedagogical expertise. Some of the campuses have broad capabilities in research and creative scholarship, and the University already operates among the most efficient in the country. Each campus has the potential for leadership in its "class," and the resources of the entire University position it to be a critical engine for Montana's development. A principal challenge will be to achieve the optimal balance between individual campus character and the efficiency that comes with the sharing of resources.

The Missoula campus is clearly the one I know best. It has the promise to become a model for today's research universities through the integration of its research, education, and service missions. The campus has attracted a stellar faculty of teacher-scholars that has built an array of intriguing and relevant academic programs. The size combines the best of critical mass and community spirit. The campus definitely has its own distinctive "personality" and is among the most attractive in the nation. Its foundation of accomplishment, if honed through a deliberate effort to focus resources, can propel it to a position of leadership among research universities.

In articulating a vision for The University of Montana as a whole, I will focus on four areas. Each campus presents both contributions and challenges in each area, but each has a strong base upon which to build. The University of Montana must strive to be a family of universities that achieves leadership in the following areas.

Opportunity- I firmly believe that the core function of universities is to maximize opportunities for the people who study and work in them. At the undergraduate level, a healthy range of challenging programs must be in place to permit students to pursue their dreams, develop their talents, and open their eyes to possibilities that they didn't otherwise see. We must work with our K-12 colleagues to articulate clearly the preparation needed to ensure student success and to make such preparation available to all Montana students. We must provide the academic, financial, and social support such that students can keep their attention on achieving their goals. Distinctive opportunities for undergraduates abound within UM, including Experience One on the Western campus, the broad range of liberal arts and professional programs on the Missoula campus, the focused technology programs in Helena, and the science and engineering emphasis at Montana Tech. However, opportunity isn't limited to our undergraduate students. Strategically focused graduate programs should provide the opportunity for advanced study alongside engaged scholars in a research-intensive environment. The faculty, staff, and administrators also need to be continually challenged and provided with the support needed to grow professionally. In other words, the entire university should be focused upon continual learning of all of its members.

Impact- It is crucial that the work we do at The University of Montana has the highest possible impact on people's lives and on the communities we serve. That impact might be measured in the number and quality of our graduates who enter the workforce. It might also be expressed in the depth of understanding of the most abstract intellectual matters or in the way a creative work moves those who experience it. Our students need to understand their own impact by having the chance to put their education to work through internships, civic engagement, research and creative activity. Our faculty must focus on research questions of high significance and the results should be disseminated in the best venues. We must bring our collective knowledge to bear upon key problems through technology transfer, service and outreach. The campuses should consider their impact on a scale from their immediate surrounding communities to the world.

Responsibility- The University of Montana has a special set of responsibilities to our state and nation. First and foremost, the institutions must be places that foster freedom of thought and expression. It is our responsibility to promote constructive dialogue on forefront issues so that our students, employees, and community members can arrive at informed conclusions. It is our responsibility to be centers for diversity in all forms, embracing and providing a safe environment for responsible people of all backgrounds. We have a special responsibility to honor our Native American heritage and it is gratifying to see our progress in that regard. Our campuses must assume leadership toward a sustainable future, and our natural setting reminds us on a daily basis of the importance of our environment. We have a responsibility to help our students realize the connections between their daily actions and the rest of the world.

Vitality- Underpinning any successful university is a sense of excitement and energy. The people that come to the University, whether on a daily basis to study or work, as visitors to the array of cultural, athletic or academic events, or as participants in outreach efforts, must feel immersed in a "charged" atmosphere. They should feel surrounded by colleagues who are committed, enthusiastic and among the best in their respective roles. An ambitious

program of special events should provide abundant opportunities for the campus and community. Campuses must bring in provocative thinkers from “outside” to continually challenge us. At the time of hire, we must ask about each applicant, “Is this a person who will raise our expectations and help infuse our campus with creative energy?”

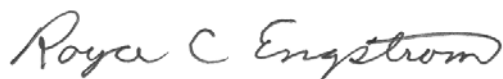
There are many practical operational areas to which we must attend in order to realize the ideals above. In recent months we have received helpful feedback and direction through NWCCU accreditation visits, strategic planning, and extensive assessment. That feedback tells us that we need to focus additional energy on communication within and across our campuses and with our various constituencies. We need to improve the connection between strategic thinking and our budgeting processes, and we must strengthen our assessment protocols. In some cases, lines of responsibility need to be clarified and the roles of our cherished shared governance bodies defined more clearly. There is room for improvement in our IT, libraries, and supporting infrastructure to provide for greater responsiveness.

If given the opportunity to serve as President, I will approach the position with approximately a ten-year timeframe in mind. The first two years will focus on solidifying strategic direction through active conversation, optimizing organizational structures and practices, building the relationships that will carry the University forward, and undertaking a resource-focusing exercise. Years three through seven will emphasize transformative resource generation from all sources. In those years, we will focus on building one of the most effective learning environments available in public education and on the maturation of the Missoula campus as a highly competitive research institution. The final years will be used to complete implementation, with the last year dedicated to an effective transition to the next President.

In the three years that I have had the privilege to serve The University of Montana, I have become ever more convinced that it is a set of institutions with distinctive promise for educating tomorrow’s citizens. The dedication of the people associated with the University, the range of approaches of the four campuses, and the desire to do excellent work position the institutions to excel at achieving their respective missions. After reviewing the desired qualifications and characteristics as outlined in the Prospectus, I believe that my background and my approach present an excellent match to the needs of the University at this time. My thirty years in higher education as a faculty member and administrator have given me a broad perspective and set of experiences that will serve The University of Montana well.

I look forward to the opportunity to serve as President. Please let me know if I can provide any further information regarding my candidacy. Thank you for your hard work and your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Royce C. Engstrom".

Royce C. Engstrom
Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs
The University of Montana