

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The starting point for the 2010 self-study was an examination of the University's self-study from the April 2000 accreditation visit, along with the Visiting Committee Review and the UM Interim Accreditation Report (March, 2005).

### COMMENDATIONS FROM THE 2000 ACCREDITATION VISIT

The University is proud of the achievements recognized in the reaffirmation of its accreditation in 2000. The current self-study confirms our continuing efforts to succeed in the following areas of commendation given in that review:

- 1. The University of Montana-Missoula is commended for its high quality, intellectually sound General Education Program that fulfills the vision articulated in the mission statement that an education at the UM-M "nurtures in students the capability to think critically, to communicate effectively, and to understand the world as they mature intellectually and emotionally."*
- 2. The University of Montana-Missoula is commended for its emphasis on the importance of artistic activities and the quality of those activities on the campus, including the high level of student work in the arts. The University is also commended for the extensive artistic outreach efforts throughout the state of Montana and for its artistic and cultural leadership in the state.*
- 3. The faculty and staff are to be commended for their high degree of interest in, and concern for, the academic success and general welfare of UM-M students. This interest and concern is apparent at all levels of classroom, laboratory, research and extracurricular interaction as well as in the extensive involvement of students in planning, implementing, and evaluating student support services.*
- 4. The University is to be commended for creating and supporting the unique Native American Studies program which is a degree-granting academic program as well as a program charged with fostering relationships with various Native American communities.*
- 5. Administrative staff support is central to the institution's capacity to maintain essential support functions. Staff responsibilities have increased. Notwithstanding these increasing responsibilities without increasing salaries, the institution has been successful in retaining an experienced and dedicated staff who demonstrated on a daily basis their commitment to the University. The support staff is commended for their dedicated service and loyalty to the students, faculty, and mission of the University.*

6. *The University is to be commended for the concentrated effort in introducing new facilities and renovated space for enhanced student life and developing facilities for teaching and learning environments, particularly for Pharmacy, Business, and the Honors Program, and its commitment to maintaining the character of the UM-M campus.*
7. *The University is commended for achieving rapid growth in its extramural funding for research.*

### RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE 2000 ACCREDITATION VISIT

The Evaluation Committee issued five General Recommendations in its report. The University presented a response to the recommendations in 2001 and again in an Interim Accreditation Report in 2005.

1. *The University of Montana should initiate a conversation and partnership among the commissioner, Regents, and institutions to develop an opportunity with the legislature and executive branch to comprehensively evaluate and address the funding needs and mechanisms necessary to support the essential needs of higher education in service to the state of Montana, its students and citizens.*

In 2005, the University reported that the operating budget of the Missoula campus had increased by 29.5% and the budget of the University of Montana unit had increased by 40%. The University felt that institutional efforts had resulted in a substantially improved financial picture.

2. *The Committee found that the University has made a promising start in instituting plans for program assessment. However, the results to date vary significantly from one department to another. Some departments have long standing assessment plans which have been in use long enough to yield assessment data useful in bringing about process improvements on both the program and the divisional levels. Other departments have yet to accumulate useful data or to use the assessment data in program improvement. The Committee recommends that the University continue and intensify its efforts in this area, so that the requirement for effective assessment plans can be met in all programs.*

In 2005, the University reported that it had developed an Academic Assessment Plan to expand the effort to improve and document assessment within departments.

3. *Although the University has added to the library's collection budget for six consecutive years, it has not adequately increased its operational budget. As a result, the library's ability to maintain facilities, purchase needed equipment, and provide the services required to meet the instructional and technology needs of students and faculty has suffered. Of particular note is*

*the Instructional Media Services Library, which is overcrowded to the point where services to both students and faculty are dramatically diminished.*

*The committee recommends that the University address these deficiencies in the Mansfield Library's budget that are resulting in overcrowding, limited hours, and unacceptable backlogs in the Instructional Media Services library, as well as an increased inability of the Mansfield Library to provide adequate collections to support the teaching and research needs of University's students and faculty.*

In 2005, the University reported budget increases of 20.4% that included staff, holdings, and equipment. Increased support from the state, the University, and outside contributions addressed outstanding operational needs.

- 4. The Committee notes that the University of Montana-Missoula has acknowledged in its goal statements and aspiration statement the importance of preparing educated citizens for meaningful and engaged lives in an increasingly diverse and interdependent world and the importance of promoting diversity and community among students, faculty and staff. In accordance with its stated goals and aspirations, the University is encouraged to take the necessary steps to enhance student understanding, knowledge and appreciation of multicultural perspectives and different cultures through its programmatic and other educational experiences that promote student growth towards these ends. In addition, the University is encouraged to increase its efforts to attract students, faculty, and staff that represent a diversity of backgrounds and cultures.*

In 2005, the University reported an expanded effort to provide its students with knowledge, understanding, and appreciation of multicultural perspectives. There is an increased effort to attract students, faculty, and staff from a variety of backgrounds and cultures.

- 5. The University should update the comprehensive campus master plan and University-wide integrated master plans for all campuses. Specific areas that should be addressed include land use, infrastructure including technology, facility standards, transportation and parking, and guidelines for funding to provide adequate operations and maintenance for new facilities.*

In 2001, the president appointed a Campus Master Plan Committee that produced a comprehensive Master Plan and submitted it to the Commission, which issued a commendation for this effort. Progress in carrying out that plan continues and is part of this report.

## RECENT STEPS

Based on the 2000 accreditation evaluation and the subsequent Interim Report (2005) and the Progress Report (2008), this self-study will highlight the activities that illustrate how we are dealing with the growth of the University, the planning process, student services, and continuing to expand upon the assessment of students and programs.

## The Growth of the University

The University of Montana has continued to grow its enrollment since 2005, with total fiscal year enrollment increasing by 7% (from 11,949 in 2005 to 12,784 FTE in 2009). The fall enrollments have achieved historic levels in four of the last five years. All student categories have grown, with the majority of the growth occurring in resident students – particularly at the associate and baccalaureate levels. This increase is the result of a number of strategic enrollment initiatives in both recruitment and retention. The success of these efforts is evidenced not only in total enrollment, but in marked improvement in three primary factors:

- Improved participation rates, including both continuation of Montana high school graduates and participation of nontraditional students;
- Greater capture rate within the pool of incoming freshmen; and
- Improved retention rates, particularly among resident undergraduate students.

In response to the enrollment growth, as well as to an academic strategic goal of improving student-faculty ratios and class sizes in the General Education core, the University has grown faculty by 7% (from 609 in FY 2005 to 651 in FY 2009) over the same five-year period. At the same time, to ensure student and faculty support, as well as to facilitate success in our enrollment initiatives, we have increased staff by 49 FTE. Over 330,000 square feet of space have been added to campus facilities for academic and research use, an increase of approximately 11% since the last accreditation visit.

## Research

The University's research program has grown rapidly in the past decade, with the indicator of outside funding growing to the level of \$71 million in 2009. Much of that funded research growth has been in the biomedical research area, but the other sciences have contributed as have education, the social sciences, and the many specialized research centers. Other strong indicators of both quality and quantity include thirty papers in the last five years published in the prestigious journals, *Science* and *Nature*. The University has had a total of seven National Science Foundation CAREER awardees, the award which recognizes both stellar research and education. One faculty member, Dr. Steve Running, was a member of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change that was co-awarded the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize. Technology Transfer is an area of emphasis for the campus with the hiring of a new Technology Transfer Director who is bringing tremendous new energy to the area. Graduate programming has expanded in concert with research, with exciting new interdisciplinary programs in Neuroscience and Environmental Toxicology as examples. The University is hosting the National Conference on Undergraduate Research for the second time, and over 2,500 students from around the country will be on campus immediately after the NWCCU visiting committee is here. The University is undergoing strategic planning in the area of research and creative scholarship as of this writing.

## The Planning Process

Acknowledgement of the need for a more formal planning process has grown in the years since the last accreditation visit. Several of the major units and focus areas of the University have been at work developing or updating their respective plans. Sectors that have published new editions of strategic plans include Academic Affairs, Student Affairs, and Information Technology. The UM Foundation has also recently completed an updated strategic plan. These and other strategic planning documents are included on The University of Montana strategic planning website. This website provides a central portal for strategic planning documents, budget documents, and assessment reports, all within the context of the University's commitment to a continuum of objective, transparent, and informed planning, decision-making, and assessment.

In 2008 the Provost convened the Academic Strategic Planning Committee with the charge to develop an ambitious plan that would serve as a decision-making guide for the next five years. This committee conducted an extensive environmental scan to identify internal and external influences on academics at UM. Internally, they looked into student access and affordability, the work force, academic programs, technological capacity, and funding. Externally, they examined demographic issues, technology, trends in K-12 education, economic influences, political and regulatory environments, competitors, natural resources, and international issues. The committee met with many individuals and campus stakeholders to ask what makes UM unique, what surprises they have seen, what they would like to change, and how they hoped UM would be seen in five years. The Committee summarized the aspirations that emerged and the issues that should be addressed. Through a series of town hall meetings, the issues were prioritized and presented as six key initiatives. The completed Academic Strategic Plan was approved by the Faculty Senate in November 2009.

## Student Services

An increased focus on student retention began in 2005 with a Retention Summit. Responding to concerns identified at the summit, the divisions of Student Affairs and Academic Affairs formed a Retention Task Force (RTF) to explore ways to improve students' engagement, retention, and success at The University of Montana. In December 2006, a retention consultant assisted on an institutional plan to develop strategies and activities to improve retention and graduation rates. In fall 2008, the Retention Task Force published the *Partnering for Student Success* plan, a collaborative effort that presents a multifaceted approach to student success, including K-12 preparation, college transitions, integration of the early college curriculum, student engagement, strengthened student support, and an emphasis on faculty and staff development.

## Assessment

In the spirit of providing increased accountability and continued improvement in measurable outcomes, public universities across the nation are focusing intense effort on assessment activities. In no other state is this endeavor more important than in Montana, where efficiency is not only encouraged, it is essential. Faculty, staff, and administrators at The University of Montana are involved in assessment at every level. At the institution

level, activities are organized around seven major assessment categories, including Undergraduate Academic Quality and Student Success, Graduate and Professional Programs Quality, Research and Creative Scholarship, Contributions to the Community (Local/Regional/National), Institutional Efficiency and Effectiveness, Enrollment Management, and Institutional Prominence. These categories reflect areas that respond directly to the mission of the University. Outcome measures for these categories consider retention and graduation rates, assessment of learning outcomes, surveys of student engagement, dollar volume of research grants, research-based contributions to societal issues, lifelong learning opportunities, energy savings, tuition comparisons, and rankings and classifications. Individuals units that provide academic or social support to students also engage in assessment. Educational programs have developed assessment of student learning goals in the General Education curriculum and in their degree programs. These assessment activities continue to be expanded each year.

### CONCLUSIONS

This brief summary of the conclusions of the self-study is intended to focus the reader on specific issues that have been identified:

1. Lower levels of state appropriations, coupled with increases in resident enrollment while keeping tuition costs down, have led to a strain on budget resources. The self-study finds the University facing this issue in almost every sector, but also finds efforts to accommodate and retain offerings to all of the constituencies served. (Standard 1, Standard 7, Standard 8)
2. Assessment has improved in both practice and documentation across the campus. The University continues to grow both in its knowledge about its programs and in communicating the results of assessment studies. Data collection and analysis methods are now better formulated to monitor the success of programs, curriculum decisions, and services. (Standard 1, Standard 2)
3. The Division of Student Affairs lists 34 changes that have occurred in the 10 years since the last accreditation visit. Highlights include financial aid, student housing, student employment, health care, Day of Dialogue, international students, underrepresented students, student success and retention, and the oversight of a Student Affairs Advisory Board. (Standard 2, Standard 3)
4. The University has improved its recruiting and hiring of faculty, especially with policies that help bring talented women and minorities to sectors where they have been underrepresented. The problem that longer-term faculty members tend to lose ground through salary compression and inversion is acknowledged, but it remains difficult to solve. (Standard 4, Standard 6, Standard 9)
5. The Mansfield Library has grown substantially in both scope and service. The library's electronic capacity has experienced extensive growth in the past decade, resulting in increases to both internal and external access. The

implications for staffing and maintenance issues have led to redirection of some budgeting priorities. Tutoring services, offered in several locations including the library, have expanded and play an ever increasing role in ensuring students meet their potential and achieve academic success. (Standard 2, Standard 3, Standard 5)

6. The University administration supports engagement by faculty, staff, and students in governance processes and is responsive to an evaluation process that incorporates employee feedback. This promotes an overall positive feeling about governance and continued engagement by the campus community. (Standard 6, Standard 9)

Supporting documentation for the self-study can be found at [www.umt.edu/self-study2010](http://www.umt.edu/self-study2010). The self-study report references the exhibits using the following prefixes: RD – Required Documents; RE – Required Exhibits; SM – Suggested Materials; and OSM – Other Supporting Materials. Some large documents, including faculty vitae and assessment reports will be made available in the Exhibit Room during the evaluation visit.

**THE UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA  
AT A GLANCE**

Established	1893	New Freshmen, Fall 2009	2,306
		Female	50%
Colleges and Professional Schools	9	Minority	7%
		International	1%
Full-time Employees, Fall 2009	1,956	Top 10% of high school class	16%
Instructional faculty	548	Average high school GPA	3.23
Non-instructional faculty	38	Average ACT score	23
Staff	1,370		
Total Current Funds Revenues, FY 2010			
(in millions of dollars)	319.1	New Graduate Students, Fall 2009	563
State appropriations	53.2	Female	55%
Tuition and fees	88.2	Minority	7%
Financial aid programs	11.1	International	4%
Gifts, grants and contracts	73.9		
Auxiliary enterprises	46.0		
Designated services	45.9		
Miscellaneous	0.8	Degrees Awarded, FY 2009	2,880
		Certificates	150
Research Expenditures, FY 2009		Associate degrees	247
(in millions of dollars)	49.5	Bachelor's degrees	1,759
		Master's degrees	475
Inventory of Land Acreage	33,584	Specialist (post-master's) degrees	14
Mountain campus	156	Doctorates - research/scholarship	95
College of Technology	200	Doctorates - professional practice	140
Experiment stations	32,460		
Other off-campus properties	767		
FTE Enrollment, Fall 2009	12,758	Student Expenses, AY 2009-10 (\$)	
College of Technology	1,339	Tuition and fees, undergraduate	
Undergraduate	9,747	resident (average)	5,534
Graduate	1,672	nonresident (average)	17,460
		Room and board (typical undergrad)	6,486
Headcount Enrollment, Fall 2009	14,921	Estimated total expenses, undergrad	
College of Technology	2,105	resident (average)	12,020
Undergraduate	10,967	nonresident (average)	23,946
Graduate	1,849		