

The purpose of the Bureau of Business and Economic Research (BBER) “is to serve the general public, as well as people in business, labor, and government, by providing an understanding of the economic environment in which Montanans live and work.” Its service includes economic analysis (including twice-a-year forecasts of the Montana economy and annual forecasts of Montana’s most populous counties), industry analysis (including health care, child welfare, and forestry), and outreach (including half-day Economic Outlook Seminars held annually in nine communities across the state). It also publishes the Montana Business Quarterly, a magazine devoted to business issues that features a companion website, <http://www.montanabusinessquarterly.com>. The BBER also prepares forecasts twice a year of Montana personal income and its components, and non-farm wage and salary employment.

Comment: The BBER instruction, scholarship, and service appears to have a significant and positive state and regional impacts and as such aligns with the University’s mission. Community outreach efforts include outcomes associated with the Bureau of Business and Economic Research Advisory Board and innovation is evident in their publications and web presence.

The Director of the BBER, Patrick Barkey, reports to the Vice-President for Research and Creative Scholarship

Members of the BBER teach in the College of Business Administration, the College of Forestry and the College of Arts and Sciences. In addition, the BBER funds graduate students in the School of Business administration and the School of Forestry. As such, this Center appears to help facilitate interprofessional education and training efforts – reflective of the University mission.

The BBER employs several people who receive state funding. The director, a tenured professor, is 90% state funded. State funding accounts for half or more of three research positions. In addition, state funding accounts for 50% of a web developer and programmer, 90% of a marketing director, 87% of a communications director, and 100% of an office manager. It is not clear from the report whether the program is revenue neutral although the report notes a growth in external funding that has resulted from specialized expertise associated with the Center.

The BBER fulfills its objectives through the research it conducts, the seminars it sponsors, the reports it issues, and the publication of the Montana Business Quarterly. Moreover, the Bureau appears to be leading the efforts of research and experience when compared to other similar regional centers. It interacts with various state agencies, federal agencies, and private organizations and as such is aligned with the University mission.

ECOS does not consider the Center controversial and recommends continuation.