

University of Montana - Missoula

ACADEMIC PRIORITIES AND PLANNING STATEMENT

Academic Year 2021-2022

The Montana University System (MUS) Board of Regents (BOR) has requested additional context to support the decisions they make regarding “Requests to Plan” for new academic programs and research centers/institutes. **Toward that end, we ask that each institution submit a report addressing all questions listed below, not to exceed four pages, no later than 5 p.m. on Friday, May 28, 2021.**

Separately, please fill-in the Forthcoming Academic Proposals spreadsheet describing academic programs or research centers/institutes that you anticipate may proceed to the “Request to Plan” portion of the approval process in the next year. Please include contact information for a campus lead on each anticipated proposal. A proposal need not be listed in this report to proceed to the “Request to Plan” stage. However, listing proposals likely to move forward is an appreciated courtesy intended to encourage early communication and collaboration.

1. Provide a high-level overview of your institution’s current academic priorities (instruction and research), with a focus on how those priorities fit the institutional mission and current strategic plan.

The University of Montana transforms lives by providing a high-quality and accessible education and by generating world-class research and creative scholarship in an exceptional place. We integrate the liberal arts and sciences into undergraduate, graduate, and professional studies to shape global citizens who are creative and agile learners committed to expanding the boundaries of knowledge and to building and sustaining diverse communities.

UM’s mission statement (above) continues to serve as the foundation for our academic priorities in instruction and research. As outlined by the work of our [University Design Team \(UDT\)](#), our vision is that the University of Montana will be a flagship for the future, fostering inclusive prosperity and democracy, and creating new knowledge and ways of learning. The UDT developed six [Design Principles](#) and a number of [Strategic Initiatives](#) for consideration. The Design Principles – Impact, Interdisciplinarity, Inclusivity, Inquiry, Innovation and Internationalization – frame the overarching strategy that guides UM's five [Priorities for Action](#), consistent with the University’s mission. Within the priorities, objectives are set, then strategies and actions are employed to ensure incremental progress in areas such as curriculum design, research emphases, student experience, operations, marketing, and community engagement. Furthermore, UM will embark on Strategic Enrollment Planning that will translate the vision of the UDT and PFAs into tangible, ROI-driven actions that will provide UM with a solid foundation of enrollment and fiscal stability into the future. Institutions of higher education are facing important challenges. In response, UM aims to create value for a more diverse set of learners and demonstrate clearly the return on students’ tuition investments. We intend to sustain the benefits of institutional stability amid the acceleration of societal change.

In our 2020-2021 Academic Planning document, we emphasized that Montana has experienced significant changes in its economy; some industries have receded and the job ecosystem in Montana will follow national trends in becoming more automated and centralized. New industries have emerged and others are challenged by changing technologies, regulations, demographics and societal changes. COVID-19 has accelerated or accentuated most of these shifts. Technology both promises and threatens to drive further change. This

creates new workforce challenges and opportunities for Montana businesses, government, nonprofits and, in turn, for Montanans seeking meaningful employment.

With an understanding of this landscape and as a result of University Design Team's work, UM will continue to emphasize the six areas of interdisciplinary focus at UM known as Communities of Excellence. The Communities of Excellence, developed during the spring of 2018 by the University Planning Committee (UPC) identified represent UM's intersections of strength and opportunity and provide an organizing principle under which our academic priorities fall. We will incentivize interdisciplinary opportunities within and across the communities – environment and sustainability; health and human and development, science and technology, communication and artistic expression, business and entrepreneurship, justice, policy and public service. As emphasized in the 2020-2021 Academic Planning document, UM has deep interdisciplinary capabilities, a proven track-record delivering premium 21st century skills and experiential learning, and engagement that fosters the adaptive, innovative and entrepreneurial mindset that can equip the workforce, employers, and community to succeed in a period of accelerated disruption. This will continue to drive our instructional and research priorities.

2. Provide a brief description of the process used determine these academic priorities.

Beginning in May, 2020, the [University Design Team \(UDT\)](#) included UM students, faculty, and staff. The UDT spent a year exploring how to best position UM for long-term success and impact. Drawing upon the perspectives of our campus community, as well as of external stakeholders – community leaders, business leaders, admitted students and prospective students – the UDT considered the challenges and opportunities faced by institutions of higher education and identified design principles and potential strategies to position UM as a flagship for America's future. The UDT and our wider campus community outlined how UM can best:

- provide an education that prepares our students as both career-ready and tomorrow-proof;
- expand our conception of education to include learners at all stages of life and career; and
- expand the reaches of knowledge through research and graduate programs of national excellence and impact.

In a parallel effort, the Provost and deans engaged in academic planning. The [Academic Planning Group \(APG\)](#) built on their efforts by collecting input from a wide range of campus stakeholders, including the Priority for Action teams, the Graduate School and Graduate Council leaders, academic advisors, Staff Senate, the UM Foundation, the Diversity Advisory Council leadership, ASUM and GPSA leadership, the University Design Team, and others. The APG made recommendations to the Provost based on the input collected. These recommendations, in concert with the work of the University Design Team, aligned with UM's Priorities for Action and Strategic Enrollment Planning, represent the ongoing processes that shape our academic priorities.

3. Provide a description highlighting new academic or research programing that your institution hopes to pursue in the coming year, with a focus on how those new programs will support your academic priorities.

The programs UM plans to pursue this year reflect our academic priorities. They align with the UDT's Design Principles (e.g., Interdisciplinary and Inclusivity), and all six of our Communities of Excellence. As UM implements Strategic Enrollment Planning (SEP) in the ensuing year, these proposals as well as emerging

proposals will be evaluated through the lens of the SEP A description for each is found in column C in the attached file:

- Native American Studies MA
- Business BS (online)
- Environmental Public Health Journalism option in Environmental Science and Natural Resources Journalism MA
- Pre-Dance Therapy option in Dance BA
- Sound Arts and Technology BS, BM, BFA
- Combined Master of Education MEd and Early Childhood Education P-3 Licensure
- Accelerated Master of Education MEd, Secondary Education
- Establish an Institute for Early Childhood Education with a focus on P-3 education.
- Wilderness Medicine 2+2, Wilderness Medicine Minor, Wilderness Medicine Certificate
- Environmental Humanities BA
- Philosophy, Politics, and Economics BA, Philosophy, Politics, and Law option in the Philosophy BA
- Environmental Earth Sciences BS
- Manufacturing Processes CAS
- Biotechnology BS and MS
- Transitional Doctor of Occupational Therapy

4. If/where applicable, provide a high-level overview of areas that will be somewhat less prioritized, including any areas in which your institution will consider disinvestment, moratorium, and/or termination.

UM's academic planning will continue into the fall semester. As we review our budget and student demands for academic programs across campus, we will identify appropriate program moratoria and terminations.

5. Include additional details you find relevant for the BOR to consider as they make decisions about "Requests to Plan."

No additional details at this time.

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[OCHE COMMENTS]

