

University of Montana-Missoula

ACADEMIC PRIORITIES AND PLANNING STATEMENT

Academic Year 2020/21

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.

A University of Montana education intersects across disciplines to prepare every graduate to excel in the areas of problem-solving, adaptability, communication, critical thinking, collaboration, creativity, and ethical reasoning. These 21st Century skills will best prepare future learners, regardless of major or credential, to be flexible leaders in a rapidly changing world. UM is committed to fostering and developing a learning environment and research community focused on challenges and opportunities that are of importance to Montana (partnering with place) and the wider world (internationalization and global impacts). Because such challenges and opportunities will certainly change over time, UM will engage in key areas that are complex and/or systemic in nature while emphasizing the 21st Century skills necessary in facing these challenges and opportunities. Leveraging the strengths of our faculty, staff, students and wider community, we remain optimistically committed to our long-standing tradition of excellence, to inclusive prosperity, to economic viability, and to strengths in the sciences, social sciences, humanities, arts, and professional areas.

All of our academic and research priorities will be tracked and reviewed through an operating rhythm that emphasizes our [5 Priorities for Action](#). As the implementation vehicle of our Strategic Planning and Assessment Cycle, these 5 Priorities for Action remain foundational in our strategic planning and accreditation efforts.

Montana has experienced significant changes in its economy in recent years. 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 discussions (described below), UM will continue to emphasize six interdisciplinary Communities of Excellence (also described below). 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.

Key Principles and Practices

Running through all six of these Communities of Excellence will be the following key principles and practices, which we see as vital components in an education that prepares students for a changing landscape:

- **Impact:** We will identify, measure, and improve the impact of our work. This encompasses student success, research, and community and civic engagement.

- **Interdisciplinarity:** We recognize that delivering impact in our Communities of Excellence requires interdisciplinary collaboration and the **inclusion** of diverse perspectives. Our foundational knowledge and research in the humanities and sciences in combination with our professional disciplines provide powerful opportunities to deepen our understanding and appreciation of as well as our **impact** on the world around us.
- **Inclusivity and Inclusion:** We will **innovate** in our learning, research, student life, and operating practices to ensure that *all* students, faculty, staff, and community members can fully participate. In particular and drawing upon Montana’s rich history and place, we will seek to **advancing Montana’s Indigenous Communities** in collaboration and consultation with tribal communities. UM is committed to providing a better understanding of and support for the First Peoples of Montana.
- **Inquiry:** We will foster a culture of inquiry, curiosity, and creativity in all our work.
- **Innovation:** Innovation hinges on our ability to make connections and navigate ambiguity by deploying 21st century skills towards an **impactful** and meaningful end.

Communities of Excellence

In the spring of 2018, the University Planning Committee (UPC) identified six areas of interdisciplinary focus at UM as Communities of Excellence. The Communities of Excellence represent UM’s intersections of strength and opportunity and provide an organizing principle under which our academic priorities fall:

- **Environment & Sustainability**
We promote good stewardship by fostering knowledge of and respect for the integrity and beauty of the ecological systems in Montana and around the world. UM sits in the heart of the Rocky Mountains surrounded by vast areas of public lands and protected wilderness. Montana really is the “Last Best Place,” and this setting uniquely positions UM for excellence in a breadth of basic and applied natural sciences related to understanding: how animals and plants adapt to the alpine and grassland habitats of the Rocky Mountains; how to conserve and manage wildlife populations and the environments they live in; and how these fragile habitats and the organisms they contain are affected by climate change. UM will continue to provide world class scientific research and transformative student experiences in these fields, fostering interdisciplinary approaches that encourage environmental and sustainability learning, research and collaboration across disciplines. A wide range of nationally recognized programs are joined by exciting new programming, events and curricula from across the UM landscape to engage our rich sense of place and its Rocky mountain heritage. By extension, UM will adopt sustainable practices in business, government, and the community.
- **Health & Human Development**
We enhance the physical, mental, and emotional health and intelligence of our communities, working with regional and international partners to serve diverse populations. The University of Montana will continue to serve as the region’s premier destination for students interested in pursuing health careers, including undergraduate pre-medical sciences, six two-year degree programs, and nearly ten undergraduate and post-graduate accredited degree programs. UM engages in world class clinical and basic research in the health and biomedical sciences. Given its setting, UM is the home to the Family Medicine Residency of Western Montana, the Area Health Education Center, and UM Health & Medicine, to facilitate clinical and hospital partnerships while being uniquely positioned to tackle problems related to rural health, enhancing the quality of healthcare provided to Montanans and beyond into the Pacific Northwest.

- **Communication & Artistic Expression**

We cultivate the production, analysis, and appreciation of diverse forms of human expression essential to developing citizens, leaders, artists, advocates, and creators. UM supports learning, skills, research, and creative scholarship that are fundamental components of a well-rounded, creative, and adaptive workforce. Doctors must practice with empathy. Business executives must think imaginatively. Civic leaders must serve with ethical integrity. These skills are fundamental outcomes of the cross-disciplinary mindset fostered by our community. If the business executive, the doctor, and the civil servant are enriched by their experiences in the arts and media, students in the arts and media need exposure to the wealth of knowledge available across campus. Classical musicians must explore commercial music. Contemporary dancers must apply human physiology. Legislative reporters must comprehend political theory. This includes untapped potential in technical and workforce-related credentials in the arts, media, and communication.

- **Business & Entrepreneurship**

We prepare students to seize economic opportunities in entrepreneurial and business focused endeavors. In addition to preparing students, we connect them with members of our learning community, and economic development in the state of Montana. We help students and the greater state of Montana by promoting entrepreneurship, innovation, creativity, initiative, and partnerships. Additionally, we aid the creation and growth of business and economic development by recognizing workforce demands and preparing students for these unmet needs.

- **Justice, Policy & Public Service**

We develop citizens who serve their communities and participate in democratic governance through advocacy, dialogue, dissent, and ethical decision making. UM is committed to furthering social and racial justice at the University and in Montana. We will research access to education, health, and economic opportunity in rural and Indigenous communities and develop academic offerings that span history, philosophy, public policy, and administration and law, among others. UM's deep grounding in the humanities, policy, and professional fields will provide multi- and inter-disciplinary opportunities for the entire UM community to understand current systemic inequities and their historical contexts. These opportunities to understand will in turn lead to positive change as students, faculty, and staff remedy complex, "wicked problems."

- **Science & Technology**

We explore the nature of the physical and natural world through systematic observation, computation, and experimentation and sustain research and technology. We are able to compete on the world market for new knowledge and advance ideas and applications that enhance local, regional, and national economies and communities. UM features world class researchers, centers, field stations and an unparalleled natural environment. Students learn ethical inquiry and how to create and communicate knowledge. Science and Technology related courses, certificates, and degree programs can be found throughout every college at the University of Montana. Our community amplifies the innovative science and technology discoveries and discourse currently happening at UM and facilitates new conversations, big ideas, and collaborations across disciplines.

The University of Montana-Missoula Mission Statement

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.

A brief description of the process used to determine these academic priorities.

Beginning their work in May, 2020, the [University Design Team \(UDT\)](#), comprised of UM students, faculty, and staff, has been deliberately exploring how we can best position UM for long-term success and impact. Drawing upon the perspectives of our campus community, as well as of our external stakeholders – including community leaders, business leaders, admitted students and prospective students – the UDT is considering the challenges and opportunities faced by institutions of higher education and will identify design principles and potential strategies to position UM as a flagship for America's future. The UDT and our wider campus community will continue to explore 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.

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.

In support of our Academic Priorities, below are the programs UM plans to pursue this year. The first four degrees relate to Health and Medicine, and there are also strong connections to the Future of Work.

- Non-Professional option in Pharmaceutical Sciences BS
- Integrative Physiology and Rehabilitation Sciences PhD
- Option in Human Physiology in the Integrative Physiology BS
- Skaggs Center for Telehealth and Precision Medicine
- Computer Science PhD
- General Studies certificate
- Brewing CAS and certificate
- UM Democracy Project
- Montana Repertory Theatre

If/where applicable, 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.

Programs that have been placed in moratoria this last month include the Facilities Management Certificate, the Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning (HVAC) Certificate, and the Film Studies minor. As we review our budget and student demands for academic programs across campus, additional moratoria and terminations may be added to this list.

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