

**Academic Affairs Playbook**  
**University of Montana-Missoula**  
*2026–2027*

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

|                                                                                                                           |          |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|
| <b>TABLE OF CONTENTS .....</b>                                                                                            | <b>2</b> |
| <b>INTRODUCTION.....</b>                                                                                                  | <b>3</b> |
| Accreditation.....                                                                                                        | 3        |
| <b>CORE PROJECTS FOR THE YEAR.....</b>                                                                                    | <b>4</b> |
| 1. Implement the Redesigned Student Learning Assessment (SLA) .....                                                       | 4        |
| 2. Prepare for BOR Ongoing Program Review & Federal Earnings Measures.....                                                | 4        |
| 3. Academic Unit Operating Policy: College-Level Procedures .....                                                         | 4        |
| <b>PLAYBOOK ALIGNMENT .....</b>                                                                                           | <b>6</b> |
| Objective 1: Improve Student Recruitment, Access, Retention and Persistence .....                                         | 6        |
| Objective 3: Establish UM as a Platform for Learning for a Wider Range of Learners.                                       | 6        |
| Objective 4: Build Partnerships and Leverage Research, Creative Scholarship, and<br>Economic Development Initiatives..... | 7        |
| Objective 6: Enhance the Employee Experience .....                                                                        | 7        |

# **INTRODUCTION**

Balancing UM's dual identity as an R1 research institution and a high-access institution with an embedded two-year college remains the organizing frame for the coming academic year. Faculty capacity is the dominant structural constraint across the Academic Affairs sector. Aligning our academic portfolio with these constraints continues to be a priority, while ensuring we retain the flexibility to innovate within our current curriculum and launch new programs where we see sustainable demand in the regional market. Maintaining R1 status continues to be both a priority and a challenge. Building a reliable framework for timely PhD completion, as well as exploring research preparation across professional doctoral degrees, will continue to inform our success in this area. AI integration and its associated challenges continue to impact how we deliver and administer our curriculum, student services, and research enterprise.

Last year's Academic Affairs Playbook included a wide portfolio of projects across eight objectives. This year, we are deliberately narrowing our focus. The 2026–2027 Academic Affairs Playbook centers on three core projects:

- Implementing the redesigned [Student Learning Assessment](#) process
- Preparing for the Montana University System's new [Ongoing Program Review](#) and emerging federal earnings-based accountability measures
- Beginning the work of translating the [Academic Unit Operating Policy](#) into transparent procedures at the college level.

Each connects directly to unfinished threads from FY26 and to recommendations from [NWCCU](#). We expect this year's work to make real progress on all three with the flexibility built in to continue this work over the next several academic years.

## **Accreditation**

The FY26 Academic Affairs Playbook tracked our progress against the three recommendations identified as “Substantially in Compliance but in Need of Improvement” following our [2024 Evaluation of Institutional Effectiveness](#). Our Ad Hoc Report and site visit addressing all three recommendations that was originally scheduled for Spring 2026 has now been folded into our upcoming Year Three Mid-Cycle Review.

The Self-Evaluation Report was submitted on August 24, 2026, with a peer evaluation team visit to take place October 5–6, 2026. Recommendation 2, developing an inclusive, integrated framework to assess student learning outcomes at the program and degree level, distinct from student achievement data, is the throughline connecting this year's Mid-Cycle report to two of this playbook's three core projects: Student Learning Assessment and the Academic Portfolio Review work described below.

## ***CORE PROJECTS FOR THE YEAR***

These three projects represent a deliberate narrowing of scope from FY26. Rather than tracking a wide portfolio of parallel initiatives, Academic Affairs is concentrating on this year's capacity on the following work.

### ***Implement the Redesigned Student Learning Assessment (SLA)***

**Purpose:** To roll out the redesigned [Student Learning Assessment](#) process (formerly Program Assessment) across academic programs, replacing the previous biennial departmental model with one rooted in individual Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs). Implementation begins in late fall 2026. This project responds directly to accreditation Recommendation 2 and gives every academic program a curriculum map and narrative reflection process reviewed by the Assessment Advisory Committee (AAC). [Institutional Learning Outcomes \(ILOs\)](#) and General Education assessment are integrated into this same framework.

### ***Prepare for BOR Ongoing Program Review & Federal Earnings Measures***

**Purpose:** To align UM's [Academic Portfolio Review](#) and [Program Review](#) procedures with the Montana Board of Regents' new Ongoing Program Review pilot and with emerging federal earnings-based accountability requirements.

The University will align its Academic Portfolio Review process with the BOR Ongoing Program Review pilot this fall, taking a closer look at program offerings at the 4-digit CIP level and anticipating adoption of OCHE thresholds for future program reviews. An Undergraduate Program Health Check requested from EAB will be available in late August, providing 4-digit CIP-level data on completions, growth, and market share against peer institutions, along with an earnings-risk analysis tied to proposed federal ROI/gainful-employment thresholds. In parallel, UM is developing curricular data strategies to address revised accreditation standards related to ROI, along with the forthcoming Student Tuition and Transparency System (STATS) and Earnings Accountability requirements introduced under the One Big Beautiful Bill.

### ***Academic Unit Operating Policy: College-Level Procedures***

**Purpose:** To translate the [Academic Unit Operating Policy](#) into clear, workable procedures at the college level, so departments and colleges can plan workloads, manage enrollments, and make academic decisions with transparency and consistency.

This project consolidates several threads left unfinished from FY26: the college-level procedure development that was tabled last spring, and the continued scaling of Faculty

Activity Reporting (FAR) in Interfolio, which is close to reaching the implementation phase, but not yet integrated with the evaluation cycle. Rather than track these as separate continuing items, FY27 treats them as one aggregated effort. This work is expected to begin in earnest this year, in collaboration with academic deans and shared governance, but is not expected to reach completion and will likely extend beyond FY27.

# PLAYBOOK ALIGNMENT

Starting in FY26, Academic Affairs intentionally aligns its work with the University's long-term strategic objectives. The [FY27 University Annual Playbook](#) restructures those objectives from prior years; this section maps our work against the current seven-objective structure.

Projects unique to this Academic Affairs Playbook, with no direct University Playbook line item, are **bolded in Griz Maroon**. Academic Affairs has no projects this year under Objective 2 (wellbeing, civic engagement, career readiness), Objective 5 (alumni, donor, and community engagement), or Objective 7 (core infrastructure). This is a deliberate result of this year's narrower scope, not an oversight.

## ***Objective 1: Improve Student Recruitment, Access, Retention and Persistence***

- Enhance Native American student success and Tribal partnerships by acknowledging and implementing the tenets of Tribal sovereignty (*Executive sponsor: Adrea Lawrence*)
- Cultivate excellence in general education by developing a collaborative, cross-disciplinary assessment (*Executive sponsor: Adrea Lawrence*)
- Refine our strategic approach to graduate and professional enrollment, including exceeding the doctoral completor requirement to maintain R1 status (*Executive sponsor: Paul Lukacs*)
- Establish a representative academic AI Working Group to provide academic direction, develop shared principles, identify risks and opportunities, and recommend guardrails that align AI use with UM's academic mission and shared decision-making traditions (*Executive sponsor: Adrea Lawrence*)
- Define reduced-credit baccalaureate models and alternatives, assess them against UM's mission, programs, enrollment strategy, and post-graduate outcomes, and identify promising opportunities for UM leadership and faculty (*Executive sponsor: John DeBoer*)
- **Implement the redesigned Student Learning Assessment (SLA)** — [see Core Projects, above.](#)
- **Prepare for BOR Ongoing Program Review and federal earnings measures** — [see Core Projects, above.](#)

## ***Objective 3: Establish UM as a Platform for Learning for a Wider Range of Learners***

- Establish UM as the regional leader in online education through a focus on academic quality and innovation, support for teaching excellence, and expanded access for a wider range of learners (*Executive sponsor: Shara Tscheulin*)

- Develop a comprehensive and financially sustainable noncredit training portfolio (*Executive sponsor: Shara Tscheulin*)
- Establish a coordinated, institution-wide dual enrollment strategy that expands access, strengthens K-12 partnerships, and improves high school student engagement with UM (*Executive sponsor: Shara Tscheulin*)
- Adapt our systems and processes to support a wider range of learners (*Executive sponsor: Shara Tscheulin*)

#### ***Objective 4: Build Partnerships and Leverage Research, Creative Scholarship, and Economic Development Initiatives***

- Develop a strategy with state, federal, and private partners to grow UM research and creative activities in response to changing federal and state priorities and to remain a top-tier R1 research university (*Executive sponsor: Paul Lukacs*)
- Improve research support systems, processes, and services (*Executive sponsor: Paul Lukacs*)

#### ***Objective 6: Enhance the Employee Experience***

- **Operationalize the Academic Unit Operating Policy through college-level procedures** — [see Core Projects, above.](#)