

## **DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FOR ACADEMIC AND STUDENT AFFAIRS**

### **MONTANA UNIVERSITY SYSTEM OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER OF HIGHER EDUCATION Helena, Montana**

The Montana University System announces a national search for the System's principal academic and student affairs officer. The Deputy Commissioner for Academic and Student Affairs reports directly to the Commissioner of Higher Education, serves in a staff support role to the Montana Board of Regents, and will provide leadership in the development of educational mission, policy, and operating objectives and programs for the System, while supporting individual campus leadership and their initiatives in academic and student affairs. The Deputy Commissioner will also serve in the Commissioner's place during times of the Commissioner's absence.

### **MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM**

The Montana University System (MUS) consists of two doctoral research universities, four master's/baccalaureate level universities, two stand-alone colleges of technology, and three locally-governed community colleges located throughout the state.

The MUS is governed by a seven-member Board of Regents appointed by the Governor of Montana. Board members are appointed for seven-year staggered terms. In accordance with the Montana State Constitution, the Montana University System is legally autonomous from all other state entities. The Commissioner of Higher Education, Dr. Sheila Stearns, is the chief executive officer appointed by the Board of Regents.

Nearly 42,000 students enrolled in the Montana University System in Fall 2007, with 78 percent of the students enrolled at four-year institutions, 15 percent at colleges of technology, and 7 percent at community colleges. Over the past ten years, full-time equivalent enrollment (FTE) has increased by 7 percent system-wide. Resident students comprise approximately 80 percent of the total.

Since 1994-95, the number of degrees and certificates awarded increased from approximately 6,200 to 7,600 (23 percent growth rate).

The wide array of academic programs available for part-time and full-time MUS students ranges from traditional liberal arts to the very latest in the sciences and technology to work force readiness. MUS students are taught to think critically, acquire enduring problem-solving skills, and attain the competencies necessary for success in the work place and in life.

In fiscal year 2007-08, the state of Montana appropriated approximately \$142 million to the MUS Education Units. Since FY 1992, state appropriations for education units increased by 23 percent. However, in keeping with national trends, state appropriations comprised 74 percent of current unrestricted operating funds in FY 2004 and only 41 percent in FY 2008.

Over 57 percent of the 2003-04 Montana high school graduates attended college in the fall semester immediately following graduation, outpacing the average college continuation for the western states and the nation. On average, 35 percent of Montana high school graduates enroll in the MUS immediately following graduation; 4 percent attend Tribal or private institutions in-state, while 16 percent enroll out-of-state.

Additional information about the Montana University System is available at [www.mus.edu](http://www.mus.edu).

## **THE POSITION**

The division of Academic and Student Affairs in the Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education coordinates the academic and student affairs functions of the Montana University System. This coordination includes the development, interpretation, and enforcement of appropriate policies at the System level, the approval of new academic offerings at each campus, the oversight of student services on the campuses, the implementation of collaborative programs within the System and with other education partners in the state, and the development of programs to assist Montana's citizens in pursuing their education goals.

The Deputy Commissioner has seven direct reports and a total of 15 staff members in the following programs. Each program is led by a Director.

- American Indian/Minority Achievement Program
- Educational Talent Search
- Math and Writing Initiatives
- Montana GEAR UP (Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs)
- Workforce Development and 2-Year Education
- Transfer Initiative

It is critical that the Deputy Commissioner for Academic and Student Affairs serve as a strong advocate for public higher education and its distinctive contributions to the state and region. The Deputy Commissioner must understand the role of K-12 and two-year education and continually search for opportunities to build relationships with the K-12 community throughout the State of Montana. While supporting each campus in the attainment of their missions and understanding the important niche each fulfills, the Deputy Commissioner

shall be committed to a System vision that reinforces a student-centered approach at all times.

## **OPPORTUNITIES/CHALLENGES FOR THE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER**

In fulfilling the position requirements, several focused opportunities for leadership are available for the Deputy Commissioner for Academic and Student Affairs.

### **Academic Affairs.**

Strong working relationships with all MUS institutions must continue in order to meet the increasing and changing demands upon the system. As the Chief Academic Officer, the Deputy Commissioner shall continue the oversight and dialogue concerning all facets of academic affairs. The Board of Regents members rely heavily upon the Deputy to provide leadership essential to success throughout the system.

### **Collaboration with the K-12 Education System.**

The University System's ability to grow and meet the increasing need for skilled workers in the state requires that a higher proportion of high school students enter postsecondary education. This will be a challenge due to the projected decrease in high school graduates in the future. High school academic preparedness, completion, and concurrent programs are necessary. The Deputy Commissioner will be expected to provide the necessary leadership in order to develop and implement strategies to meet these needs. Outreach to the K-12 community by the Deputy Commissioner is essential.

### **Improve Transferability.**

Montana policymakers have been urging the Montana University System to improve the transferability of coursework among institutions. The MUS Board of Regents adopted a System initiative to address this issue. An important goal of the initiative is to improve transferability in the MUS, focusing on academic programs or course offerings that are available at several campuses and programs that have the most transfer students. Faculty councils have begun their work to address outcome alignment. An initial system-wide course equivalency system is being developed. The Deputy Commissioner will provide leadership to the councils and the initiative.

### **Accountability Measures.**

Accountability measures related to some of the System's major initiatives were the focus of discussions by legislators during the 2007 session. The Deputy Commissioner will provide the vision and leadership required to identify and implement meaningful accountability measures throughout the System.

### **Student Affairs.**

Strong leadership must be provided in the area of Student Affairs. Decisions made by the Board of Regents should be student-focused, and members rely in large part on the Deputy Commissioner to ensure they have a knowledge base for such decisions. Critical and emerging issues within the realm of Student Affairs should not be left entirely to individual campuses to address. Central administrative leadership will be provided by the Deputy Commissioner.

**Two-Year Education.**

The Montana Two-Year Education Council was chartered by the Montana Board of Regents in November 2005. The Deputy Commissioner guides the council in accomplishing its mission of advising and assisting the Board of Regents on issues, opportunities, or challenges related to two-year education from a statewide, system focus. The goal is to engender a statewide understanding of the value of two-year colleges and a statewide commitment to promoting and increasing the value of two-year education in Montana.

**Enhancing the Strength and Distinctiveness of Individual Campus Programs.**

The Deputy Commissioner will provide strategic counsel to campus leaders, enabling each campus to discover and develop their increasingly unique mission in the context of the broader MUS program. The Deputy Commissioner will collaborate with senior campus leadership and work closely with faculty and student groups. The Deputy Commissioner's leadership, management, and communication skills should build trust and confidence throughout the System.

**Research and Graduate Education.**

The MUS commitment to research and graduate education is strong. The Deputy Commissioner shall encourage the broadening and strengthening of graduate and research programs. The Deputy will be expected to provide support to campuses and improve communication throughout the system and to the Board of Regents.

**Contributing to the Leadership Team.**

The development of effective professional relationships with the Commissioner, members of the Board of Regents, others in the System office, and at the campuses will be a key to assuring success in the position. The baseline of trust between the Deputy Commissioner and these individuals must be at the highest level to accomplish the Montana University System's plans for the future.

**DESIRED ATTRIBUTES FOR THE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER**

The opportunities and challenges awaiting the Deputy Commissioner will require that the successful candidate possess certain attributes and experiences. Personal characteristics of unassailable integrity, candor, decisiveness tempered

with thoughtfulness and patience, high energy, humility, sense of humor, a strong work ethic, and a tolerance for ambiguity are vital for success.

An earned doctorate is required as is a wide breadth of successful leadership and management experience across academic and student life programs. Those experiences should include:

- Strong planning and management skills, with proven abilities to conceptualize and implement policies and programs effectively;
- An impeccable record of academic achievement in teaching, research, policy, and program development, accompanied by meticulous academic credentials;
- Analytical thinking, with the ability to apply his or her skills to enhance the core values of the System;
- Strong communication skills, with refined writing and speaking abilities that easily engage others;
- Knowledge of national public policy issues and trends and the ability to transform academic processes to meet the need for change;
- A record of accomplishments in leading change, being innovative, and encouraging non-traditional ideas;
- Proven skills in collaborative decision-making and facilitative processes, ensuring that all interests are heard and discussed;
- Experience with collective bargaining environments;
- Commitment to diversity at all levels of human activity;
- Knowledge and support of the roles of two and four-year education and research institutions;
- Strong ground in research, including scientific research, experiences and graduate level teaching.

## **ABOUT THE SEARCH**

An 11-member search committee has been appointed by the Commissioner of Higher Education. Committee members represent two-year campuses, four-year institutions of MUS, and K-12 education. Members include student, faculty, academic and student affairs administrators, and System office staff.

The search committee will review candidate credentials and application materials in February 2008 and will begin to narrow the candidate pool in March 2008. Interviews should occur in early April 2008. Applications will be received until the position is filled. The successful candidate will be expected to assume the position by July 1, 2008. Some flexibility concerning the start date is possible.

Applications should include a letter of candidacy that responds to the desired attributes for the position as they relate to the opportunities and challenges and overall responsibilities of the Deputy Commissioner, a complete resume, and the names and contact information for five references (for future contact), all of which will be received and maintained in full confidence. Letter of reference and nomination are not requested. The candidate will be notified before references are contacted.

Official transcripts will be required of finalists. A criminal background investigation of the finalist will be conducted.

Send application materials to:

Sheila Lopach  
Assistant to the Search Committee  
Deputy Commissioner for Academic and Student Affairs  
Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education  
Montana University System  
46 N. Last Chance Gulch  
PO Box 203201  
Helena, MT 59620-3201

Electronic submission of applications is encouraged. Please send as Word or PDF attachment to [slopach@montana.edu](mailto:slopach@montana.edu).

Position salary shall be commensurate with experience, responsibilities, internal equity, and cost of living.

MUS is an affirmative action/equal opportunity employer committed to recruiting, supporting, and fostering a diverse community of faculty, staff, and students.

### **LIVING IN HELENA, MONTANA**

Helena is the capital of Montana and county seat for Lewis and Clark County. Helena is located in the Rocky Mountains, adjacent to the Missouri River, and midway between Glacier National Park and Yellowstone National Park. A weekend drive will take you to either extraordinary national treasure or many other Montana communities and landmarks.