EXHIBIT 8
DATE 1/24/2005
HB

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

STATE OF MONTANA

JUDY MARTZ
GOVERNOR

STATE CAPITOL
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June 9, 2004

Honorable Joan Anderson
Interim Education and Local Government Committee
Montana State Legislature
State Capitol
Helena, MT 59620

Dear Representative Anderson,

It is our pleasure to take this opportunity to share with you recent work of the State Board of Education. As you know, the Board of Education is a constitutional entity comprised of the Board of Regents and the Board of Public Education with the governor serving as the chair and the superintendent of public instruction serving as the secretary.

The Board is responsible for long-range planning, and for coordinating and evaluating policies and programs for the state's educational systems. It strives to meet its constitutional mandate to "establish a system of education which will develop the full educational potential of each person."

During the spring of 2003, the two boards expressed their commitment to work more closely ensuring the Board of Education serves as a unified, proactive entity, providing leadership and guidance to all levels of Montana education. The Board created four committees — P-20, Indian Education for All, Policy and Evaluation, and Budget – in order to formalize its work. The charge of each committee is described on the attached handout. During the past year these committees have made significant progress. They have identified areas of mutual interest, built relationships, and begun to develop policies and efforts to address these issues.

The P-20 Committee in particular has undertaken an ambitious agenda. P-20 refers to an integrated system of education stretching from early childhood through graduate school. The goal of P-20 is to create a fully aligned system of education that links and coordinates each education level fundamentally guided by the principle that success in college begins in pre-kindergarten.

Recognizing that developing human capital is the best way to ensure economic prosperity, twenty-five states have already passed some form of P-20 legislation. Three states with exemplary P-20 programs cited by the National Conference of State Legislatures include Missouri, Maryland and Georgia. They have experienced demonstrable gains in student achievement as a result of their efforts. Montana is now joining the ranks of states involved in this essential policy reform effort and is receiving significant attention from national P-20 policy-makers for its evolving and far-reaching efforts.

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Under the committee's leadership, recent months have seen several key activities and numerous critical conversations related to P-20 efforts as highlighted on the attached P-20 summary.

The committee has taken advantage of input and assistance from national experts who are familiar with how other states have gone about developing an effective P-20 culture and infrastructure. Cheryl Blanco, Director of Policy and Analysis for the Western Interstate Commission on Higher Education consulted with the P-20 Committee at its March meeting. She strongly recommended it consider undertaking development of a strategic plan with specific objectives, benchmarks, and timelines for P-20. Such a document would provide both structure and sustainability for its efforts.

P-20 efforts are integrally related to other state economic development efforts, such as the Shared Leadership project. Discussions around a P-20 strategic plan would provide a process to integrate these parallel and sometimes overlapping discussions and efforts. Thus, we have directed our staffs to design and develop a process to help the P-20 committee, the Board of Education, and key stakeholders to develop a strategic P-20 plan in preparation for the joint Board meeting in September.

Again, thank for you for the opportunity to share with you the work of the Board of Education.

Sincerely,

JUDY MARTZ
Governor

LINDA MCCULLOCH
Superintendent of Public Instruction

JOHN MERCER
Chair, Board of Regents

KIRK MILLER
Chair, Board of Public Education

Revised 12/16/02

Montana Board of Education Committee Descriptions

P-20 Committee

This committee provides guidance and oversight in the establishment of "seamless education for Montana students." In an effort to ease the transition between educational levels, the committee will focus attention on the structure of the Montana University System and P-12 schools, encouraging cooperation between the systems. The committee will promote P-20 initiatives that attempt to build smooth transition and to encourage collaboration between P-12 and post-secondary education. This emphasis should serve to strengthen the system of public education in order to maximize the full educational potential of each person in Montana to obtain, at a minimum, two years of higher education

Budget Committee

This committee will establish a unified budget request stating the real needs of public education in Montana. The committee shall review all budget requests for K-12 education and the Montana University System, as well as budget requests for the Board of Public Education, Montana School for the Deaf and Blind, Montana Historical Society, Montana Library Commission, and Montana Arts Council. The committee, recognizing the importance of collaboration among all public education entities and boards, will provide recommendations to the Board of Education considering its commitment to work with the Governor in providing advice or recommendations regarding amounts and priorities for education to be included in the Executive Budget.

Indian Education for All Committee

This committee will meet with the Indian Education Association, MACIE, the education community, and tribal college representatives to explore and ***monitor*** the possibilities ***and progress*** for the presentation of curriculum and materials and educational processes that will focus upon the relationships between American Indians and the State of Montana and this nation. The committee will make recommendations to the Board of Education for processes to be carried on in our public schools (K-12 and higher education) recognizing the distinct and unique cultural heritage of the American Indian for all Montana's students (as outlined through the intentions of House Bill 20-1-501).

Policy and Evaluation Committee

This committee will establish the policies, operating procedures, and bylaws of the Board of Education consistent with the Montana constitution and statutory language. The committee is also responsible for evaluating process and procedure used in conducting the business of the Board, continually seeking efficient and effective means of operation.

Board of Education P-20 Committee

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Outreach

Goal: To disseminate positive messages promoting education to Montana families, encouraging high expectations and college readiness for all students, regardless of the economic or educational status of the family.

Curriculum and Assessment Systems

Goal: To ensure that alignment of standards, curriculum and assessment systems from pre-school through post secondary education are simplified, non-duplicative, effective and timely.

Student Financial Assistance

Goal: To encourage and assist students and families to plan for and finance at least two years of post-secondary education.

High-Quality Teaching

Goal: To strengthen teacher quality for P-12 personnel, higher education personnel and administration through collaboration and coordination.

Data and Accountability Systems

Goal: Provide for an effective and comprehensive system of shared common characteristics, to identify effective educational practices and identify problems, in order to provide the tools needed to monitor and improve performance.

Strengthening and Integrating Public Education

Montana has a long history of strong support for its educational systems. Recently, however, attention of the state's leaders has increasingly focused on the necessity to improve the educational achievement of a greater number of Montanans in order to ensure the state's economic vitality and social well-being. Higher education and K-12 are intertwined. Their destinies are linked. Education and economic health are likewise intertwined. Across the country, educators and public leaders have come to realize that the entire educational system must work more effectively and coherently to help an ever-larger portion of the population reach increased levels of educational attainment.

Nearly half of all states are working on how they can improve connections between the various sectors of their education systems which have historically operated independently of one another. They are undertaking P-20 reform as a fundamental effort to increase their state's welfare through an educated citizenry and economic development. Montana has recently joined the ranks of states that are undertaking the task of creating a more "seamless" education system, one that stretches from kindergarten through life-long learning.

Recent P-20 History in Montana:

- In October 2002, the Governor's Office, Board of Public Education, Office of Pubic Instruction and the Board of Regents co-sponsored a Pathways to College P-16 Policy Roundtable to develop recommendations related to preparation, access, success and finance issues for low-income students within a P-16 framework. The goals of the meeting were to introduce the concept of P-16 (or P-20 as later adopted) and launch a multi-level statewide dialogue on these issues. Participants included fifty-two K-12, postsecondary, legislative and executive leaders.

- Subsequently, in spring 2003, the Board of Education created the P-20 Committee to promote initiatives that attempt to build smooth transitions for students and encourage collaboration between K-12 and postsecondary education. In September 2003, the Board of Education adopted the P-20 Committee report that outlined goals in five key areas: Outreach, Curriculum and Assessment Systems, High-Quality Teaching, Student Financial Assistance, and Data/Accountability Systems.

- The P-20 committee has convened two major statewide forums – March and September 2004 – to engage key stakeholders in strategic planning discussions. Both meetings were facilitated by senior staff from the Western Interstate Commission on Higher Education (WICHE). There have also been extensive meetings and consultations between the leadership and staff of OPI, OCHE, BPE, the BOR and the Governor's office. The focus and goal has been to build a strong collaborative foundation and common understanding regarding Montana's P-20 mission, goals, terminology and supporting action plan. Creating a more integrated, seamless education system involves grappling with a host of complex issues and real differences in organizational and institutional missions and cultures. It is widely agreed that in a relatively short period of time, the efforts of the P-20 committee have resulted in significant conversations and activities that are truly leading the state towards a more comprehensive, coherent educational approach.

- P-20 efforts are closely related to with those emerging from the Shared Leadership Steering Committees, as well as with the Indian Education for All committee. P-20 planning during the next several months will include how to appropriately align and integrate various aspects of these projects.

The P-20 Committee has undertaken an increasingly ambitious action agenda in the past eighteen months. Currently the committee has oversight of the following projects:

Dual Credit Task Force: Dual Enrollment provides high school students the opportunity to take postsecondary courses in two and four year institutions. Currently there exists a Dual Enrollment policy in the state, but it needs consistency in nomenclature, prerequisites, cost and application across the system. This task force is examining the current Dual Enrollment programs within the state and developing recommendations to the P-20 committee on definition, eligibility, requirements, timelines and costs.

Assessment Alignment Task Force: One of the Goals of the P-20 Committee is to ensure that the alignment of standards, curriculum and assessment systems across the spectrum of public education are easily understood, non-duplicative, effective and timely. A primary objective is the coordination and alignment of high school outcomes assessments and qualifying entrance and the placement examinations used by colleges and universities, beginning with language arts and math skills.

Counseling Leadership Initiative: In January 2003, a *Counseling Leadership Initiative* steering group was convened by the Deputy Commissioner for Academic and Student Affairs and the Deputy Superintendent for the Office of Public Instruction. Members represent key organizations, agencies and stakeholders with an interest in school counseling. The group's purpose is to review current policies and practices related to school counselors and school counseling programs in Montana and to make recommendations to support and strengthen school counseling at all levels.

Distance Delivery Program at the University of Montana: The Board of Regents accepted a $250,000 allocation from Governor Judy Martz for this program on December 16, 2003. Dean Rowland subsequently requested that the P-20 Committee provide oversight for this project. The goal of the K-12 Distance Education for Montana Program is to serve as a pilot project to demonstrate a technology-based means for providing public school students in the State of Montana with learning opportunities that are not otherwise available to them.

Integrated Data Systems: Arlene Parisot, the director of two-year education and workforce development in the Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education, has been working on a national project to integrate data collected by state agencies charged with workforce development and labor programs. As a result of that work, she has become quite knowledgeable about integrated data systems that have been developed by other states, particularly Florida. Recently, the director of that Florida system addressed the Montana Board of Education. As a result of her efforts, several key administrators and data experts from the Montana Department of Labor, the Office of Public Instruction and post-secondary education are laying the groundwork for a more integrated data system in Montana.

Next Steps for P-20 In Montana:

- Complete the WICHE/Montana P-20 Policy Audit. The policy audit will attempt to address the following questions: 1) Which policies and rules support a P-20 environment in Montana? 2) Which polices and rules inhibit a P-20 environment in Montana? and, 3) Based on the audit, are there specific legislative initiatives that might be suggested to strengthen a P-20 environment in the state?

- Complete the strategic planning process for P-20 efforts and present a draft P-20 strategic plan document at the July 2005 Board of Education meeting.

- Align the work of the P-20 committee with related efforts in the "Shared Leadership for a Stronger Montana Economy", Indian Education for All and other related efforts.

- Continue to identify and involve critical stakeholders, build collaborative relationships and develop communication strategies that will help to create a long-term P-20 culture and infrastructure.