



HB 754 MUS 2-Year Commission

66th Montana Legislature

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TO: MUS 2-Year Commission
FROM: Pad McCracken, Research Analyst
RE: Possible recommendations and additional input from presenters
DATE: April 24, 2020

At your January 26, 2020, meeting, you indicated that as you begin your discussion of possible recommendations, it would be helpful if staff assembled a list of possible findings and recommendations that have been suggested or discussed in previous commission meetings.

You also directed staff to reach out to previous presenters for any additional input they want to provide in addressing the question:

As the commission considers findings and recommendations, including possible legislation, in preparing its final report for submission to the 67th legislature, what suggestions do you have for enhancing 2-year education in Montana, especially for career and technical education programs?

This memo addresses those requests.

Previous presenters were provided a draft list of possible findings and recommendations and an asterisk * below indicates that a particular finding/rec was emphasized by a respondent; two ** means two respondents mentioned the finding/rec and so on.

Possible findings (numerals) and recommendations (letters):

1. Students and 2-year campuses typically do not receive much financial support in pursuing/offering shorter duration and noncredit workforce training programs.
 - a. Seek federal financial aid changes to allow Pell, etc. to support shorter duration credentials and noncredit workforce programs ***
 - b. Find a way to provide state support for noncredit workforce programs ¹***

¹ One respondent mentioned the [Incumbent Worker Training Program](#) as a good model that could be improved.

2. Postsecondary CTE programs often cost more to start and operate than non-CTE programs. **
 - a. Create a grant program to provide start-up funds for 2-year campuses for new CTE programs that demonstrate industry need and support **
 - b. Provide more state support for higher-cost CTE programs at 2-year campuses **

3. With a rapidly changing economy and workplace, education has become less aligned with workforce needs.
 - a. Encourage/support sector partnership/industry alliance approach in aligning workforce and education to develop skilled worker pipeline (like the Montana Photonics Industry Alliance) ***
 - b. Promote work-based learning opportunities for students**

4. Too few students are aware of or encouraged to pursue postsecondary CTE programs at 2-year campuses. **
 - a. Continue statewide outreach to increase postsecondary participation in associates degree programs, nondegree credential programs, and workforce training programs, including apprenticeship and military; focus on the existing 40% that isn't participating in postsecondary at all, rather than competing with 4-year campuses (grow the pie)² *
 - b. Consider top 4 recs from [chamber survey](#):³
 - i. Incentivize school districts to emphasize all career pathways
 - ii. Require school districts to incorporate workforce readiness skills into curriculum *
 - iii. Strengthen career advising in MS and HS*
 - iv. Require business and economics education in MS and HS
 - c. Request BPE examine school counselor ratio *

5. Coordination between K-12 and the MUS could be improved, especially regarding CTE.
 - a. Strengthen (or make independent) the Board of Education⁴ in its role for long-range planning, K-12 and MUS alignment, especially vocational ed/CTE
 - i. Via constitutional revision ([Article X, Section 9 \(1\)](#))
 - ii. Via statute ([20-2-101, MCA](#))
 - iii. Via rec to Governor

² One respondent emphasized the need to focus on the 40% not currently participating in postsecondary education, but rejected the notion of competition between 2- and 4- year campuses.

³ One previous presenter pointed out that this survey represented only a fraction of the business voices across the state and cautioned that the recommendations may not represent the whole.

⁴ The Board of Education is composed of the Board of Regents and the Board of Public Education. From Article X, Section 9: “[The Board of Education] is responsible for long-range planning, and for coordinating and evaluating policies and programs for the state's educational systems. It shall submit unified budget requests.”

6. CTE programs may benefit if 2-year campuses have greater autonomy in terms of their governance structure.
 - a. Remove statutory barriers that prevent 2-year campuses from changing their governance model
 - b. Encourage the Board of Regents to afford 2-year campuses greater flexibility
7. Too often those with authority over money allocation undervalue investment in workforce development programs.
 - a. Encourage appropriators (LEG, REG, campus level) to see funding for workforce programs as an investment, "spending money to make/save money" *

Additional input from previous presenters:

1. In creating a grant program to provide start-up funds for CTE programs at 2-years, link this effort to state economic development goals and strategies.
2. Recommend that OCHE have a Deputy Commissioner of Two-Year Education⁵. Right now, the Deputy Commissioner is pulled in a 4-year direction and a 2-Year Direction. These missions may often conflict.
3. Help “message” the value and importance of two-year and workforce education for state success. Labor market data demonstrates that 70% of our future workforce requires a 2-year certificate or less. We need to invest in this level of education.
4. Industry alliances could use staff support to keep their business strategies aligned and moving forward. Perhaps existing DLI staff could provide genuine staff support for these clusters.
5. Encourage industry to advertise, recruit, hire, and pay, graduates from two-year institutions, this will add value to the certificates. *
6. Restructure funding model to incentivize community and 2-year colleges to participate in non-credit workforce training.

⁵ As noted in a previous [memo](#), when the legislature transferred governance of the then "vo-techs" from the superintendent of public instruction to the Regents in 1987, the [legislation](#) included a requirement that the Regents appoint a deputy commissioner of vocational-technical education. This requirement and other duties pertaining to vocational-technical education were repealed in Senate Bill No. 156, the restructuring bill of 1995.

7. Funding model should acknowledge non-traditional students who attend part time. Additional funding allotted for career and technical programs, especially in rural areas, where it is important to local industry, but smaller numbers make operations less feasible.
8. Incentivize local/regional partnerships with high schools, community and 2-year colleges, economic development organizations, apprenticeships and workforce training, and industry to make recommendations for curriculum at K-12 and 2-year postsecondary programs.
9. Empower and support 2 -year colleges in self-determining, approving, and creating their own programs and classes as directed by local business, industry and community needs and demands.
10. Move to a postsecondary education system that includes and rewards credit and non-credit stackable, industry-recognized and other credentials, certificates, and degrees based on competency or proficiency standards; work-based learning; prior learning assessment; and learning, teaching, and assessment strategies using multiple technologies.
11. Build a robust technology network to address postsecondary education opportunity gaps in rural Montana to ensure we develop the potential of all Montanans and help rural communities not just survive, but thrive.⁶
12. As lifelong learning becomes an increasing necessity, educational structures and financial aid models will need to adapt to enable engagement at different points across an individual's lifetime.
13. Today's increasingly tech-driven economy calls for new skills and a new educational approach:
 - a. Educators need to interpret market signals and employer feedback and adjust curricula and learning experiences—and do so at an accelerated pace.
 - b. Bring the right employers to the table to co-create curricula and develop meaningful applied-learning opportunities.
 - c. Direct funding toward programs that are aligned with industry needs and have achieved proven results.
 - d. Provide incentives for educators and hold them accountable for graduate outcomes.
 - e. Replicate successful programs from other states

⁶ See <https://luminafoundation.org/resource/focus-magazine-fall-2019-a-dangerous-divide/>