

HB 754 MUS 2-Year Commission

The MUS 2-Year Commission created in HB 754 would like input from campus leaders as the commission examines the impacts of the 1994 restructuring that moved the vo-tech campuses into the Montana University System and how the current governance structure for 2-year education might be improved to better serve workforce needs, students, and communities. The questions below provide some guidance as to the input the commission desires. Not all the questions apply to all the campuses.

1. What is your campus mission? How has your mission changed since the 1994 restructuring that brought the vo-techs into the MUS?

Great Falls College MSU and Helena College UM were designated as stand-alone institutions in 1994 because they are located in communities without public four-year institutions. Each of the institutions have their own independent accreditation through the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities. Each institution, while aligned with a flagship university, has its own responsibility for personnel, budget, facilities management, academic program development and management, faculty senates and curriculum committees, and community/partnership development.

Great Falls College MSU's current mission is that of a fully comprehensive two-year institution. Program offerings are delineated as transfer, workforce development, developmental education, lifelong learning, and community development, as per the 2012 College Now initiative.

The college's names were also changed at this time to reflect, first, their location, and second, which of the flagship universities the institution was aligned with.

Transition Journey from Vo-Tech Center to Great Falls College MSU

Early Years – Vocational Training as part of OPI

- In 1969, five K-12 vocational centers, the Great Falls Vo-Tech Center being one, were created by the legislature to offer employment training in vocational and technical fields for high school and adult students not considered to be college bound. The early programs were adult education (GED), licensed practical nursing, dental assisting, and food services. To this day, some area residents still reference us as the Vo-Tech.

Authority Transition to the Montana University System

- In 1987, the Legislature delegated general administration and supervisory control of the Vo-Techs to the Montana Board of Regents of Higher Education.
- In 1990, the Vo-Tech Center was granted authority of award Associate of Applied Science degrees in Allied Health, Business and Office Technology, and Trades and Technology. AAS degrees are considered terminal degrees, not transfer degrees.
- In 1994, as part of the restructuring, the institution was renamed Montana State University College of Technology - Great Falls and was known as the COT, another long-lived name.

Board of Regents Granted Authority for College Transfer Associates Degrees

- In 1996, the COT started offering Associate of Science transfer degrees.
- In 1996, the COT was approved to deliver technical programs to the Bozeman area. This was the beginning of what is now Gallatin College.
- Computer Technology programs were developed and delivered at this time. Use of the Internet and other technologies were used to deliver learning at a distance.

- In 2004, the COT was authorized to offer the Associate of Arts transfer degree.
 - Many degree programs were created to meet the demand of the regional communities and businesses, and to offer a local accessible and affordable path to a bachelor's and graduate degrees at the four-year institutions.
 - Different programs, some non-credit and through customized training and credit, were and are developed in response to community and business needs.
2. Can you provide a snapshot of your campus in the early 1990s, and how does it compare to your campus currently?

a. What was your enrollment and who were the students you were serving at that time?

	AY 1992	AY 2002	AY 2018	AY 2019
FTE	556.44	951.075	1,128	1,030
Headcount	1,989	3,321	2,358	2,143

The majority of the two-year institution students are older than traditional aged 18-year-old high school graduates. The average age throughout the last 50 years has ranged from 29 to the mid-30s. However, with increased dual credit enrollment, that average age has decreased a few years.

What you will also note is the almost 2:1 ratio in enrollment at the two-year institutions. Fewer of our students are full-time; thus we have many more students we are serving than the funding received from the system. We have to provide the same level of service or often a higher level of service to each student whether they are full- or part-time. The coin of the realm is FTE, a measurement that is based on the four-year institutions that does not reflect the work of the two-year institutions.

In 1999, the adult students were often voc-rehab referrals and women returning to the workforce.

In 2019, the age range of our students is from 16 into the 70s. Adult students are comprised of first generation students, those seeking new career opportunities, those wanting upward mobility in their current careers, are often working two-three jobs, and raising a family while attending college. Their life needs require different support services from an institution with more traditional aged students.

Dual enrolled students are seeking an early or jump start toward their bachelor's degree, understanding the monetary savings by attending a two-year institution whose tuition is about half that of a four-year institution, and the time saved to earning their degree and starting their career.

Great Falls College MSU is somewhat unique in being located in a community bookended by two military installations. The college is recognized as a Military Friendly Yellow-Ribbon school and has a successful Veterans Success Center. Veteran students who use the center have higher GPA and retention rates than Veteran students not using the Center.

b. What programs did you offer then?

AY 1992	AY 2020
General Education	General Education
Office Technology	Associate of Science
Administrative Assistant AAS	Associate of Arts
Legal Secretary AAS	Montana University System Core
Medical Secretary AAS	Business and Accounting
Business Occupations	Accounting AAS
Accounting Technology	Computer Technology
Business Management/Entrepreneurship	Computer Programming AAS

Data Entry/Computer Occupations	Cybersecurity AAS/CTS
Dental Receptionist	Microcomputer Support AAS
General Office Assistant	Network Support AAS
Legal Receptionist	Health Sciences
Medical Office Assistant	Dental Assistant CAS
Medical Receptionist	Dental Hygiene AAS
Medical Transcriptionist	Health Information Coding Specialist CAS
Microcomputer Management - Word Processing Operator	Health Information Technology AAS
Health Occupations	Paramedic AAS
Occupational Therapy Assistant AAS	Physical Therapy Assistant AAS
Respiratory Care AAS	Practical Nurse CAS
Child Care Specialist Certificate	Registered Nurse ASRN
Dental Assistant Certificate	Respiratory Therapy AAS
Emergency Medical Technician Certificate	Surgical Technology AAS
Nurse Attendant/Orderly Certificate, Respiratory Technician	Trades
Practical Nurse Certificate	Industrial Technician AAS/CAS
Respiratory Technician Certificate	Renewable Energy Technician AAS
Trades and Technology	Welding Technology and Fabrication AAS/CAS
Auto Body Repair and Refinishing	
Commercial Cooking/Food Management	
Watch/Microprecision	
Jewelry Technology	

3. What programs have you added or dropped in the last 10 years?

Programs Added since AY 2010	Programs Terminated since AY 2010
Business Admin. Entrepreneurship	Auto Body & Refinishing
Business Admin. Management	Business Fundamentals
Business Fundamentals	Carpentry
Computer Programming	Web Design
Cybersecurity	Dietetic Technician
Dietetic Technician	Electronics Technician Tiers I and II
Healthcare Informatics Technician (certificate)	Graphic Design
Healthcare Office (certificate)	Healthcare Informatics Tech
Industrial Technician	Healthcare Office
Medical Scribe Apprentice	Industrial Maintenance Tier I
Paramedic	Interior Design
Phlebotomy/Pre-Medical Assistant	Machinist Technician Tier I and II
Registered Nurse	Medical Assistant
Renewable Energy Technician	Medical Billing Specialist
Sustainable Energy Technician	Medical Billing and Coding Specialist
	Medical Scribe Apprentice
	Medical Transcription
	Pharmacy Technician
	Phlebotomy/Pre-Medical Assistant
	Radiologic Technician

a. What drove these changes?

Great Falls College MSU has consistently reviewed its offerings and closed programs if enrollment decreased or employment opportunities declined. Interior design, as an example, was one GFC MSU created in the Gallatin Valley in the early years of what became Gallatin College. Due to the expansive growth in the Bozeman area, Interior Design has consistently had strong enrollment there with good wage levels. With little growth in the Great Falls area, enrollment and job opportunities steadily declined.

In 2015-16, Great Falls College MSU undertook an Academic Prioritization process. Recognizing the resources needed to develop new programs in response to industry demand and the changing world of work could only come from existing levels of funding, it was necessary to close inefficient and ineffective programs to fund new and future programs. Additionally, if a business partner who had been supporting the program indicated the market was saturated and they could no longer provide fiscal or human resources. Another data point in the decision making process was availability of employment in the field, opportunity for career progression, and the wage level. 10 programs were terminated and went through the teach-out process for students to complete their programs.

b. Are there programs you'd like to add or expand to better serve local/regional workforce needs or student demand?

GFC MSU would like to develop more apprenticeship programs for students who prefer to learn via on-the-job training supplemented with needed soft skills, leadership, communication, and/or the theory behind job-based decisions. Great Falls employers to date have been reluctant to engage in apprenticeship, internships, or work-based learning. Concerns center around worker's compensation costs and slowing production resulting in an impact on their bottom line.

The college started a very successful apprenticeship with Dick Anderson Construction in Helena three years ago that has now expanded to their Bozeman, Great Falls, and Missoula offices. The first five graduates just received their apprentice completion documentation on October 30th, 2019.

Another successful non-credit training done by the college was the recent customized paramedic training for the City of Great Falls through which 8 paramedics completed the program in 7 months and received their national certification.

As the local chamber of commerce, economic development authority, and county strategize in their attraction of new business and young families to the area, both the college and local school districts are seen as active leaders in these activities.

As mentioned before, Great Falls houses two active military installations, one of them being Malmstrom Air Force Base whose ground-based strategic deterrence system will be completely upgraded bringing hundreds of workers to the area for a number of years. The Air Force and the selected contractors would like to hire as many local people as possible. The work will range from highly sophisticated engineering, cyber-security, welding and fabrication, construction, bridge building, etc. This will be a boom period for Great Falls and surrounding rural communities that house missile sites and command centers. The college must remain active in its work with the military and be prepared to provide training prior to the start of the upgrade. Again, this training will most likely be non-credit.

And last, but not least, there is a desire in the community for Great Falls College MSU to be able to offer limited bachelor's of applied science or bachelor's of applied technology degrees; i.e., for dental hygienists and potentially dental therapists. No other postsecondary institution in the state provides dental hygiene degrees; therefore as graduates want to continue their education to advance in their careers, they need to seek a degree outside of the state.

c. Are there any barriers to this expansion?

The barrier to providing non-credit customized training and other non-credit workforce training programs is the lack of state funding supporting this work to grow our communities. The world of work is changing faster than any of us can keep up. Our education models need to evolve as well.

With customized training, the companies do pay the direct expenses for their employees to receive the training as well as a portion of the indirect costs. Another example is providing CDL training for truck drivers. Students are the ones paying for the training and there is no student aid available to offset the cost. Therefore, enrollments stayed low.

While the companies, businesses, community partners and their employees appreciate of the college's work in meeting their training needs, the university system does not have a mechanism in place to recognize or fund this work.

4. What would make you nimbler in serving rapidly evolving workforce needs?

Increased salary levels for faculty teaching our high-demand programs such as health care and computer technology. The current levels make it extremely difficult to attract and retain faculty. The college just lost its cyber-security faculty to the local school district because of our salary levels.

Increased funding for professional development for all employees. We must stay even with or ahead of the curve with the changing world of work, or we will become obsolete.

Two year institution students need to continue to work and must have flexible options for taking classes, in the delivery of classes and programs, and the time schedule of when classes are taught.

5. What do you see as the benefits and challenges of the current 2-year structure? Do you see ways in which the 2-year structure could be improved to better serve your mission, students, community?

The benefits of the current structure are multiple. Smaller MUS institutions would not have the financial capability of paying full price for administrative/operating systems such as Banner, web site common code base, library collection access and systems, legal support, the various fiscal and administrative audits, and access to research funding, some grant funding, and the sharing of professional training costs. A very valuable piece of the current structure is the expanded professional network by being aligned with the flagship institution and partner institutions.

Unlike the imbedded two-year institutions, Great Falls College MSU and Helena College UM do pay for and administer their own human resources office, admissions, advising, financial aid, financial services, facility maintenance, student honor society and student government. They also pay for their own regional accreditation and all programmatic accreditation costs. They each pay for their own institutional researcher and federal reporting requirements. There is value to being a stand-alone institution because of our ability to be flexible and nimble to deliver just-in-time training in a structure and time schedule not afforded through a four-year model.

To me, the greatest challenge in the current model, is the lack of working knowledge from having "lived" in a two-year institution by the vast majority of our OCHE and university staff. What drives the four year institution is far different from what drives the two-year. Often, the MUS and BOR appear to be flagship driven.

In my opinion, the state does not have enough people or resources to have a separate two-year governance model, with all its expenses. If we were all to become community colleges, it would cost our colleges and counties a tremendous amount of money to hold elections on creating a tax base to support the institutions, and elect and support our own boards, with an unknown election outcome.

Needed improvements include recognition of the importance of and funding for our non-credit workforce development leading to economic and community development. Current success metrics focus primarily on FTE, retention and completion of credit bearing degrees. While this is important, it does leave out the rest of the two-year mission.

