



Montana University System

Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education

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DATE: December 6, 2023

TO: Education Interim Budget Committee

FROM: Shauna Lyons, MUS Director of Budget & Planning

RE: HiSET Update

During the September Education IBC meeting, there were several questions posed regarding the HiSET initiative funded by the Legislature. This memo is to provide the responses received to the questions.

Best practices – what is working and what has not been successful in building a HiSET program on your campus? What have been the lessons learned?

Little Big Horn College (LBHC) partners with the HRDC in Billings to connect with the Lincoln Center's HiSET program director and formed a MOU to share resources and services that could be accessed online at LBHC. The LBHC HiSET coordinator works with the Lincoln Center team to share texts, materials, and online resources. Additionally, LBHC has established a partnership with Ed Ready for online assessments in reading/writing and math skills.

Aaniiih Nakoda College (ANC) has started to increase the base score needed in their Aztec program before signing students up for the HiSET. This is leading to more initial HiSET success.

Chief Dull Knife College (CDKC) currently has fifty HiSET Academy seat licenses, and they are all filled. CDKC has had an increase in HiSET student population since going online. The program also allows for their students to go to CDKC and have one-on-one time with their instructor, to order and use the HiSET books that are available, and in the next semester the HiSET will be incorporated into CDKC's new math and English facility providing more onsite instructors.

Blackfeet Community College (BCC) has expanded their outreach and marketing efforts to expand availability of HiSET tutoring and testing services. One of the best practices that seems to be working is utilizing the Education Services which is an online program. They've created a partnership with the Blackfeet ManPower One Stop Center which provides support services such as transportation, laptops and provide vouchers for the participants who are taking the HiSET exam.

How many students are matriculating to college after passing the HiSET?

LBHC's program has assisted 19 students in completing their HiSET and earning their diploma since the beginning of the HiSET Project 2019-2020 to present. Of the 19 students that completed, 12 students enrolled in college.

- One student graduated from LBHC in 2023 with an associate degree and is currently enrolled at SKC for a bachelor's degree

- Another student graduated from a trades program in highway construction at LBHC in 2023 and earned a CDL certificate and is currently working for the City of Hardin
- LBHC assisted one student who joined the military after completing the HiSET
- The remaining 6 students are currently working and mentioned interest in attending college or a trades program soon

CDKC is currently not gathering this data.

For Salish Kootenai College (SKC), this fall 5 students have chosen to attend SKC and 1 has chosen to attend college elsewhere.

Most of the BCC participants are obtaining their HiSET for employment purposes. There have been a few who are enrolled at BCC. For future purposes, this will be data that will be collected.

Are students reporting why they are pursuing the HiSET? Is it workforce access or further education?

ANC students state college is the main goal.

CDKC indicated that this is age group dependent. Generally, the younger individuals are moving to further their education while the older students are pursuing the credential for the workforce training on the Northern Cheyenne Reservation.

SKC indicated it is a split between workforce, furthering their education or just want to complete high school. SKC has also started systematic collection of data this year. SKC has an online questionnaire (Google Forms) to send out to HiSET graduates. Unfortunately, many students did not complete the survey.

The participants at BCC indicated they are primarily seeking job employment.

Is there an opportunity to get data for completions for Chief Dull Knife College? What challenges is Chief Dull Knife College having in becoming a certified testing center?

CDKC is unable to provide this data as they are no longer a testing center and must have students test in Hardin or Billings. Other students test on their own and CDKC does not have access to that data. OCHE arranged a meeting with OPI's HiSET coordinator and the Billings Adult Education Program to determine if the MOU model with LBHC and Billings AEP would be the best practice for CDKC as well. Part of this meeting also addressed the accessibility of data sharing of completions; due to privacy concerns the data currently cannot be shared.

CDKC indicated that the biggest challenge is hiring someone to be the site coordinator and finding someone to proctor the exam. CDKC has not had a site coordinator since COVID.

OCHE has instituted monthly HiSET meetings with the independent Tribal Colleges whereby OCHE has facilitated guest presenters on best practices. Campuses are also invited to share their best practices and challenges experienced in their project implementation. The HiSET funding is a pass-through from OCHE to each Tribal College and while OCHE can assist in supporting the delivery of these projects, the OCHE team recognizes the autonomy of each campus. OCHE would recommend inviting the Tribal College partners to a future Education Interim Budget Committee to directly address the questions and future goals with the funding.