

The University of Montana—
Helena College of Technology

Year One Report

February 25, 2011

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Introduction

Located in the foothills of the Montana Rocky Mountains, The University of Montana—Helena College of Technology is a vibrant, growing two-year comprehensive college offering 32 credentials in 14 program areas as well as a variety of learning opportunities in personal enrichment and customized training. Through these offerings, UM-Helena serves over 3000 students each year throughout the region.

UM-Helena maintains two campuses. The Donaldson Campus is the main facility, housing the majority of administrative and student support services as well as academic programs in general education, nursing, fire & rescue, and accounting, business, computer and office technology. The Airport Campus, situated approximately two miles from the main campus, houses the trades programs: automotive, aviation, construction, diesel, machining and welding. The administrative organization of the college is divided into three divisions: Academic Affairs, Student Services and Business Services, each led by a Dean-level position who reports directly to the Dean/CEO.

UM-Helena began in 1939 as the first vocational-technical school in Montana. Its original program emphasis was aviation; throughout World War II it trained workers for war production in shipyards, at aircraft factories and on Air Force bases. After World War II, it steadily expanded its occupational programming. Until 1987, this institution was jointly governed by Montana's Office of Public Instruction and the Helena School District. In 1987, the state legislature authorized the transfer of governance to the Montana Board of Regents of Higher Education. As one of five state-funded colleges of technology in the Montana University System, Helena Vocational-Technical Center, as it was then called, had no organizational or administrative ties to other institutions. In 1994, the Montana University System, with its eleven separate two- and four-year units of higher education, was restructured. All units were placed in a reporting structure that linked them to one of the two Montana research universities, either Montana State University—Bozeman or The University of Montana—Missoula.

During this restructuring, Helena Vocational-Technical Center became the Helena College of Technology of The University of Montana. One of four units comprising The University of Montana (UM), it retained its independent status, but linked its resources and operations with the other three UM units. It continued to pursue its historical mission and goals, but embraced an enhanced mission as it became more responsive to the needs of the Helena community and to the Montana University System itself.

Now known as The University of Montana—Helena College of Technology, UM-Helena continues to expand its community outreach by strengthening its delivery of technical education and occupational programming and increasing its ability to provide rigorous general education courses. Strong partnerships with industry continue to provide exciting opportunities for students in the career and technical education area as well as a well-trained workforce for regional businesses. New collaborations with community organizations and local public school districts have amplified the connection between the College and the community in the transfer and personal enrichment areas.

Institutional Context

Over the last five years, the number of students served by UM-Helena in credit and non-credit courses has more than doubled. In response to this growth and with the goal to facilitate further expansion, the College has made systematic efforts to strengthen its infrastructure and services. These have included a complete policy review, restructuring of the administrative organization, major facility renovations, upgrading of technical capabilities, increased offerings in student support services, and additions and revisions in academic programming.

Facility renovations and upgrading of technical infrastructure have made an immeasurable impact on the appearance, efficiency and capacity of the institution. Since 2007, approximately 42,000 square feet of instructional, study and work space has been added. This space includes classrooms, labs, shops, student support service areas, faculty and staff workspace, conference areas and informational resource areas. The technical upgrades include instructional equipment in labs and classrooms and have increased access to computer services for students and staff. There has also been significant growth in the area of informational resources through the Library to support teaching and learning.

During this same time, new positions have been added in the areas of marketing, financial aid, information technology, library services, continuing education, academic administration, facilities, and counseling services. Academic programs have expanded in general education, career and technical education, and developmental education. New faculty positions in developmental math, English, physical sciences, computer technology, welding, machining, and nursing have been added. Growth in online education created the need for a director who was hired permanently in the fall of 2010. The institution was also awarded a TRIO grant, which supplements existing student support services and adds three employees to the campus.

The implementation of the new College Council, an outcome of the recent self-study process, has strengthened participatory governance on campus. Throughout the last year, the Council has led institutional-level assessment and Core Themes development while also undertaking the mission review process. The Council meets monthly and is comprised of representatives from across the institution, including staff, faculty, administration and students.

UM-Helena underwent its re-accreditation during the spring of 2010, with final approval in July. Over the last nine months, the college has stretched its resources to respond to the evaluators' recommendations and is working toward a better synthesized assessment process to include better data use. Currently resources are being examined to determine the ability to hire an institutional researcher to strengthen the use of data on campus. As the Core Theme indicators and measurements were established, it remains true that there is still work to be done in accessing, understanding and using data across the campus.

UM-Helena continues to strengthen its offerings and services as a comprehensive, two-year college. The recent self-study, mission review and core theme development processes have reaffirmed that assertion with both the internal and external community.

Preface

The last report submitted to NWCCU by UM-Helena was the ten-year self-study in spring 2010. Since that time no significant changes have occurred at the institution with the exception of responses to recommendations and the development of the core themes as detailed below.

Response to Recommendation One

During the 2010 accreditation process at UM-Helena, the evaluation team made four general commendations and four general recommendations. UM-Helena has been asked to respond to general recommendation number one in this report. The recommendation states:

“The committee recommends UM-Helena carefully and strategically consider staffing decisions through an inclusive process that makes provision for faculty, student and staff input (6.A.3) and results in:

- a. Sufficient faculty with primary commitment to the college who guide curriculum in all majors and disciplines in which the college offers major work. (4.A.1)
- b. Administrative and student services that are staffed with qualified individuals whose academic preparation and/or experience are appropriate to their position, duties, and responsibilities. (5.D.1)
- c. Staffing decisions that are consistently tied to strategic goals and objectives. (6.B.7; 7.A.2).”

Since 2005 UM-Helena has used an inclusive process for considering staffing decisions that requires input from faculty, staff, students and administration. Staff requests are determined by individual programs as they identify the need for additional human resources through the assessment process. All staffing requests must be connected to one of the priorities as stated in the strategic plan (student success, connect with community, develop resources, create access). These requests are made directly to the Budget Committee annually, which contains representatives from across the campus, including students. Until 2009, the Budget Committee would then review these requests, prioritize them and submit them to Leadership (the Dean-level positions) for final approval. During the 2009-2010 year, the Budget Committee asked Leadership to step in, prioritize the requests and return a recommendation to the Committee. Leadership granted that request and last year submitted its prioritization for positions, based on those submitted by the campus programs, to the Budget Committee for further discussion and final review. This inclusive process ensures all budget items are reviewed and evaluated by the representative body prior to final Leadership approval. The requests, and final decisions, continue to be connected to the strategic goals as identified above.

A more specific staffing discussion involves the UM-Helena Library. Historically, the UM-Helena Library relied heavily on work study positions to staff the library information desk and provide extended hours of operation. Beginning in April 2010, the Library committed to only staff the front desk with paid, regular employees. This was accomplished by 1) reducing the hours of operation, 2) eliminating some low priority services and activities, and 3) hiring an additional half-time librarian. After a survey of faculty, administration and the library advisory committee, library services and activities that were least used were identified and these hours of operation and services were eliminated. Due to the addition of

a .5 FTE position, the Library has been able to successfully provide professional or technical staffing of the library at all times, beginning April 2010.

A full-time, tenure-track instructor in the Fire & Rescue program was successfully hired in January 2011. The previous instructor left unexpectedly mid-year 2010 and part-time instructors stepped in during the Spring semester to help administer and manage the program. The new Water Resources program does not yet have a full-time faculty; however, there is a full-time staff position in charge of administration of the program who also teaches 3 credits each semester in this program. All areas of program management, including curriculum development, student advising, advisory council facilitation and industry relations have been handled appropriately and effectively by the staff person. As the program enrollment grows, it is hopeful that a full-time position can be attached to Water Resources, perhaps even during the next budget cycle.

UM-Helena offers an assortment of general education courses that do not culminate in enough credits to hire a discipline-specific full-time position. These courses include Fine Arts, History, Drafting, Spanish, Anthropology, Sociology and Physics. In order to provide access to students in these foundational disciplines, UM-Helena hires part-time, adjunct faculty who are responsible for teaching the courses, reviewing the curriculum, and providing recommendations on materials and equipment. In order to strengthen these academic areas, a new academic administrator was hired in November 2011. The General Education & Business Technology Division Chair was added to improve support and oversight for the adjunct faculty and the connected curriculum. As UM-Helena grows and demands for these courses grow, the College will hire full-time faculty in these areas as can be supported, but in the meantime the College is able to still continue to provide students appropriate access to these areas through the use of part-time faculty.

Mission Review

UM-Helena underwent a mission review process during fall of 2010 that included external and internal constituent involvement. The review was not only done in preparation for core theme development for NWCCU, but also as a foundational step for a new strategic plan as the current one expires in fall of 2011. The College conducted surveys and polled focus groups to review the validity of the existing mission statement; the College decided that a new mission statement should express the comprehensive nature of the college as it has evolved during the last five years. Business and industry leaders, partners in K-12 education, staff, faculty, administration, students and community members at large were also given the opportunity to provide individual perceptions of UM-Helena, which the College Council used to develop the core themes and initial ideas for a new mission statement.

The campus community was then given another opportunity for final review, and a new mission was accepted by the College Council on January 25, 2011:

The University of Montana—Helena College of Technology, a comprehensive two-year college, provides access to and support of lifelong educational opportunities to our diverse community.

Chapter One: Mission, Core Themes, and Expectations

Section I: Mission

A new mission statement was approved by the College Council after input from both internal and external constituents. The new mission reflects the growing comprehensive nature of the college and its desire to serve all learners regardless of their level of preparation, academic desires or future goals.

The University of Montana—Helena College of Technology, a comprehensive two-year college, provides access to and support of lifelong educational opportunities to our diverse community.

The mission aspects are defined as:

- Access: an opportunity that is known and able to be taken advantage of without barriers
- Support: efficient and effective processes of admissions, advising, counseling, placement, financial aid, scheduling, interventions, skill development, tutoring, facility access, and social belonging
- Lifelong learning: continuous development of skills and knowledge through a vast variety of training and educational offerings

This mission statement more fully illustrates the comprehensive nature of UM-Helena and its growth and development in the area of general education, transfer and personal enrichment, while still encompassing the areas of career and technical education.

When the community accesses the college's services, activities and educational programs to achieve their goals, UM-Helena fulfills its mission. UM-Helena will demonstrate its mission fulfillment by meeting the intended outcomes of the stated core themes. The themes and their outcomes were specifically chosen to support the mission aspects and to successfully provide UM-Helena a tangible manifestation of its mission as a comprehensive two-year college.

Mission fulfillment will be evaluated through UM-Helena's institutional assessment process which consists of an annual review of goals for all programs as they connect to the strategic plan, an annual allocation of program resources through committee, and academic program review, completed on a three year cycle (with at least four programs being reviewed every year). These sets of information will be compiled into an institutional level assessment, which will track the overall progress toward mission fulfillment.

Each core theme has objectives, indicators, rationales and benchmarks which, in totality, indicate overall mission success. The indicators are assessable because each has associate metrics and data sources although not all of the data sources are complete at this time. UM-Helena saw the opportunity to identify new places for data collection to strengthen the assessment process and without merely relying on existing sources. The indicators are meaningful because they were identified through a collaborative process involving representatives from all areas of the college, and they connect to UM-Helena's strategic planning and decision-making.

Baseline measurement for individual core themes will determine the acceptable threshold of mission fulfillment although the stated goal may be different. UM-Helena is currently in the process of determining baselines and goals for some of the indicators and sees this not as a moving target but rather the need to appropriately identify goals that will demonstrate growth but also be realistically attainable considering the resources available.

Through an inclusive campus- and community-wide discussion of UM-Helena's purpose and goals, three core themes have been identified as key aspects of the College's mission:

- Provide access and support
- Demonstrate academic excellence
- Strengthen the community

Together these themes encompass UM-Helena's mission and represent the College's commitment to serving the needs of its region and are generally defined as such:

- High quality opportunities to participate in educational activities and appropriate support throughout this endeavor
- High degree of quality in all programming
- High level of response to community needs

It is recognized that this is a work in progress at UM-Helena. Over the last two years all resources had been focused on the ten-year accreditation review which took place in spring 2010. As soon as that process was complete, the institution took that learning experience and moved forward with the year one components.

Each core theme has objectives, indicators, rationales and benchmarks which will determine mission fulfillment. The metrics for the indicators will be solidified by July 1, 2011 and a minimum of 3-years of data will be trended in order to determine a meaningful baseline and achievable goal. The College will continue to refine its measurements, identifying data, and addressing these areas in more detail in the Year Three report.

Section II: Core Themes

Core Theme 1: Provide Access and Support: high quality opportunities to participate in educational activities and appropriate support

Objective 1: To provide access to lifelong learning opportunities.		
Indicators of Achievement	Rationale	Desired Outcomes
FTE Enrollment	Used to indicate growth or recession by standardized enrollment method and also to differentiate between part-time and full-time students as it connects to overall headcount	Continuous increase Current FTE: 1067 UM-H 5-year average: 857
Headcount Enrollment	Used to indicate growth or recession by overall individual enrollment	Continuous increase Current headcount: 1500 UM-H 5-year average: 1202
Number of educational activities with K-12	Used to show opportunities for K-12 to connect with campus	Continuous increase Fall 2009: 17 dual credit courses with 6 area high schools
Continuing Education Enrollment	Used to indicate growth or recession by overall individual enrollment	10% increase annually 09-10 headcount: 1216 UM-H 3-year average: developing
Objective 2: To provide support through institutional processes and academic experiences.		
Percent of students receiving Financial aid	Used to indicate level of financial support for students who don't necessarily have resources of their own	Meet or exceed IPEDS comparison group IPEDS comparison group 08-09: 68% UM-H 3-year average: 68.16%
Percent of need met	Used to demonstrate how well student need is being met as determined by the FAFSA process	New measurement: beginning July 1, 2012
Retention rates	Used to indicate student persistence and success	Continuous increase 2009-10: 57% Current 3-year average for fall to fall: 54%
Graduation rates	Used to indicate success in completion of student goals	Meet or exceed ACT 3-year average ACT 3-year average: 28% IPEDS 3-year average: 34%
Student surveys	Used to indicate level of student satisfaction and engagement	Initiated CCSSE and SENSE survey in 2010-2011 AY, will receive benchmarking info in Spring

Core Theme 2: Demonstrate Academic Excellence:
high degree of quality in all programming

Objective 1: To enhance learner's college level skill development.		
Indicators of Achievement	Rationale	Desired Outcomes
Pass rates in remedial English and Math courses	Indicates appropriate placement and learning success	Continuous increase Initial measurement: July 1, 2011 UM-H 3-year average: developing
Attrition rates in remedial English and Math courses	Indicates appropriate placement and learning success	Continuous increase Initial measurement: July 1, 2011 UM-H 3-year average: developing
Subsequent success in courses after remediation in English and/or Math	Indicates appropriate placement and learning success and adequate preparation for future	Continuous increase Initial measurement: July 1, 2011 UM-H 3-year average: developing
Objective 2: To facilitate transfer.		
Completion of Gen Ed core	Indicates students' awareness and success in using established tool/resource to facilitate transfer	Continuous increase Initial measurement: July 1, 2011 UM-H 3-year average: developing
AA/AS degree production (number)	Indicates students' potential for transfer	10% Increase annually 2008-09: 16 UM-H 3-year average: 14
Transfer rate	Indicates actual student transfer (150% transfer rate)	10% Increase annually 2008-09: 16% MUS average: 16%
Transfer success (further degree attainment)	Indicates success rate of actual student transfer	Continuous increase Initial measurement: July 1, 2011 UM-H 3-year average: developing
Objective 3: To prepare the 21 st century employee.		
Professional licenses/certifications (number and pass rate)	Indicates successful preparation for workplace in specified fields	Maintain or exceed 90% pass rate on all certification tests Nursing, AWS, FAA, ASE, HAAS, CNST Initial measurement: July 1, 2011
Performance on information literacy test	Indicates knowledge in core aptitude for information access, processing and understanding	Test to be developed for implementation for Spring 2012
Career and technical education degree production (number and rate)	Indicates students' potential for employment	10% increase annually 2008-09: 161 UM-H 3-year average: 167
Employer satisfaction survey	Indicates successful skill	Continuous improvement

	development and learning	Initial measurement: July 1, 2011 UM-H 3-year average: developing
In field placement rates	Indicates success in student goals, skill development, learning and filling employer needs	Continuous improvement Initial measurement: July 1, 2011 UM-H 3-year average: developing

Core Theme 3: Strengthen the Community:
high level of response to community needs

Objective 1: To be responsive to regional workforce needs.		
Indicators of Achievement	Rationale	Desired Outcomes
Placement of students into regional workplace	Indicates success in students' goals and filling employer needs	Continuous increase Initial measurement: July 1, 2011 UM-H 3-year average: developing
Employer satisfaction surveys	Indicates success in filling employer needs and appropriate learning outcomes	Continuous increase Initial measurement: July 1, 2011 UM-H 3-year average: developing
Recommendations implemented from advisory council feedback	Indicates appropriate response to employer needs	Developing rubric and tracking system for advisory council recommendations
Objective 2: To serve as a facility and cultural resource for the community.		
Number of events hosted	Indicates level of activity that connects to community	10% increase annually 2009-10: 52 3-year average: developing
Number of individuals attending events	Indicates level of activity that connects to community	10% increase annually 2009-10: 2510 3-year average: developing
Use of library, food service, bookstore by community	Indicates perception and use of campus as community resource	Continuous increase Initial measurement: July 1, 2011 UM-H 3-year average: developing
Objective 3: To meet community needs through learning, volunteer and service collaborations.		
Number of collaborations with community stakeholders	Indicates connections to community	Continuous increase Initial measurement: July 1, 2011 UM-H 3-year average: developing
Service to community by students and staff	Indicates connections to community need	Continuous increase Initial measurement: July 1, 2011 UM-H 3-year average: developing
Foundation and alumni activities	Indicates connections to community	Continuous increase Initial measurement: July 1, 2011 UM-H 3-year average: developing
Use of academic programs to support community needs	Indicates response to community need	Continuous increase Initial measurement: July 1, 2011 UM-H 3-year average: developing

Objective 4: To develop and strengthen employee knowledge, skills and engagement.		
Number of professional development activities for faculty and staff	Indicates opportunities for professional development & personal growth	Continuous increase Initial measurement: July 1, 2011 UM-H 3-year average: developing
Retention rate of employees	Indicates employee success in position	Maintain or exceed 95% retention rate FY10 98% retention 3-year average: developing
Employee satisfaction surveys	Indicates employee success & engagement at college	Maintain or exceed 85% overall satisfaction rate FY10 88.2% overall satisfaction 3-year average: developing

Conclusion

UM-Helena's Year One Report outlines the mission statement, core themes, outcomes and indicators to be used for assessment of institutional effectiveness. For clarity's sake, measures and data that pertain to smaller scope ideas are not included here. Only the measures that elevate to the institutional level and that, together, provide the framework to measure mission fulfillment are included here.

The process of preparing this Year One Report has created UM-Helena's focus on three core themes: provide access and support, demonstrate academic excellence, and strengthen the community. These themes provide the foundation for the rest of the accreditation process and for the strategic planning efforts that will begin shortly. As UM-Helena uses this structure through its planning and assessment efforts, indicators and desired outcomes will be further clarified and developed.

In agreement with the recent self-study process, UM-Helena has identified data collection and synthesis as a priority for the campus. Efforts are currently underway to allocate resources for an institutional research position that will be critical to the future assessment of the strategic goal and core themes. The connection of the core themes and the concurrent synthesis of the measurable data are paramount in providing meaningful institutional assessment.

UM-Helena has used the new accreditation process as a means to develop, reinforce, and solidify its mission and gauge mission fulfillment. The new focus on outcomes versus actions will hold UM-Helena accountable to its community. This process of continuous improvement will strengthen UM-Helena's role as the best place for its community to access teaching and learning.