

Year Three Peer-Evaluation Report

**Montana State University Billings
Billings, Montana**

November 1, 2013

*A confidential report of findings prepared for the
Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities*

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Introduction

Montana State University Billings (MSUB), a public Masters University, is a regional comprehensive university serving the eastern third of Montana. Billings is the largest city in Montana and serves a culturally, ethnically, and educationally diverse metropolitan area.

The Montana University System is governed by a seven member Board of Regents and is made up of two campus families: the University of Montana and Montana State University. MSUB is part of the Montana State University system and is the third largest unit in the system.

MSUB is organized into five colleges, one of which serves a two-year community college purpose. It is dedicated to serving the educational and workforce needs of the region through work force training and the delivery of 70 degree options culminating in certificate, associate, bachelor, and master degrees. The University describes itself as “a dynamic, evolving student-centered institution that works to assure Access and Excellence across all levels”.

The University recently completed a year-long strategic planning process, named FutureU. Led by a team representative of University constituents, the plan sets the stage for unit strategic plans. The development of the core themes, objectives, and indicators was done in conjunction with the work of the FutureU team process.

In conjunction with the strategic plan implementation, the University is engaged in a program prioritization process. A process has been articulated for program review for the purpose of determining programs to strengthen, maintain, or discontinue. The entire University community is involved; substantive changes proposed for action will occur in conjunction with identified system and accreditation processes.

A number of administrative changes have occurred since the 2011 Year One Self-Study was submitted. Two new positions were created, a Vice Provost position with responsibility as the Accreditation Liaison Officer and for institutional accreditation and a Director of e-Learning. Changes occurred in six other leadership positions; in most cases an interim appointment was made followed by a national search.

Assessment of the Institution’s Self-Evaluation Report and Support Materials

The Evaluation Panel found that the self-study report was organized according to the document information provided by NWCCU. It was easy to follow and provided an update for Standard One and responses to Standard Two. Sections of the report were easily located. Active links to institutional sources provided access to supporting materials and information which aided the evaluation process. The Sharepoint electronic report provided access to documents, sites, and links referenced for the standards.

Some areas of the report were not fully up-to-date. For example, some sections referred to the Draft FutureU plan and had links to it. Others were using the final Discovering the MSUB Advantage, Strategic Plan 2013-18. This dissonance made the evaluation more challenging. In some areas, the information provided in the report was incomplete and lacked evidence to support the narrative and/or links that led to “Under Development”, draft items, or out-of-date information. The overall report development would have benefitted from more consistent and well-developed analyses of the status of the University in relationship to specific standards.

Topics addressed as Addenda to the Institution's Self-Evaluation Report

The accreditation of Montana State University Billings was re-affirmed based on the Fall 2011 Year One Peer-Evaluation. At that time, the Commission requested that MSUB provide an up-date on Recommendations 1 and 2 of the Fall 2011 Year One Peer-Evaluation.

Recommendation 1: Although the University has a clear mission statement that is published on their website and approved by the Board of Regents, there is no evidence to demonstrate that its mission statement is widely published and generally understood by its community. The evaluators recommend that the University document and provide evidence for how the University community is aware of the mission statement and understands it (Standard 1.A.1).

Montana State University Billings used several university-wide initiatives to engage the university community and its constituents in knowledge and understanding of the mission statement. Initiatives included posting the strategic plan with the mission statement prominently on the institutional web site, developing the FutureU strategic plan, seeking public comment and suggestions, and disseminating the plan (with mission statement) widely on completion. Based on the information provided in the Year Three Evaluation Report, on the MSUB web, and through interviews, the evaluation panel finds that this recommendation has been addressed.

Recommendation 2: The institution has listed numerous (over 50) indicators to assess core themes, however, they appear as lists of everything that could possibly be included as opposed to key, strategic indicators. In addition, there is no mention of establishing targets by which to gauge progress. The evaluators recommend that the University examine each indicator to determine its value for measuring progress toward goals and core themes, that it establish baseline data, and that it determine appropriate targets to measure progress (Standard 1.B.2).

The FutureU team reviewed and revised the indicators identified as measures of the four core themes. Using the university's strategic plan as a guide, the 60 indicators reported at the time of the Year One Evaluation Report were reduced to 28 indicators reflecting more specifically the core themes. Baseline data have been developed for each of the 28 indicators and are included in the Year Three Evaluation Report. Internal discussions and verification of the baseline data are in process; some targets have been identified and work is in progress on the development of targets for the remaining indicators. MSUB has made progress in addressing Recommendation 2; they are encouraged to begin to use the data they gather to begin the process of evaluating mission fulfillment.

Eligibility Requirements

The Year Three Self-Study provided a summary of Eligibility Requirements 4-21. The Evaluation Panel found that Montana State University Billings met these Eligibility Requirements.

Policy Implementation

Credit Hour Policy

MSUB adopted and uses a credit hour policy consistent with the federal regulation. The policy was approved by the Academic Senate and signed by the Chancellor. The policy is available on the Provost and Vice Chancellor web site.

Monitoring Student Complaints

MSUB has identified processes and procedures to monitor and address student complaints (see also Standard 2.D Student Support Resources).

Section One

Mission, Core Themes, and Expectations

Report on Standard 1.A Mission

The MSU Board of Regents reviewed and approved the mission for MSUB September 23, 2010. The mission of the University is provided in the self-study and is posted on the University web site and included in University publications. Since the time of the Year One Evaluation Report and feedback, MSUB has engaged in a concerted and coordinated approach to strategic planning with clear mission, vision, and values statements articulated in print and web materials, known throughout the University community, and underpinning the mission and core themes. The mission is understood and was articulated by individuals interviewed as part of the evaluation process.

The mission is easy to locate and serves as the basis for the development of the four identified core themes. Vision and core values derive from the mission and are articulated in print and web documents. The strategic plan, FutureU, is consistent with the mission and core themes and includes strategies that support these.

Mission fulfillment is interpreted through the mission, vision, core values, and core themes. The strategic plan, based on the approved mission and core themes, provides the path to interpret mission fulfillment. Mission fulfillment will be assessed through progress guided by a rubric developed for this purpose.

The MSUB mission, vision, and core values are articulated clearly. These provide a base for mission fulfillment, and a system is in place to assess and provide evidence to address mission fulfillment (Standard 2.1.A).

Report on Standard 1.B Core Themes

The MSU Board of Regents approved the four core themes January 8, 2013. The core themes are consistent with the mission, vision, and core values of the University. Each of the four core themes is broadly described and further defined through descriptions of "Opportunity to Achieve". Specific tasks are articulated for each Opportunity to Achieve. Indicators are identified for each core theme. The overall number of indicators has been reduced from 60 to 28, and baseline information has been established for each indicator using a three-year rolling average of current performance.

Rationales are provided for the 28 indicators identified in support of the core themes. Baseline information has been developed and some targets have been established. While progress has been made, the remaining targets need to be identified to provide the bases on which mission fulfillment is addressed (2.1.B).

Section Two Resources and Capacity

Report on Standard 2.A Governance

Governance

Montana State University Billings (MSUB) has a system of shared governance that includes faculty, staff, and students. The Academic Senate reviews all curricular changes and informs decisions through its eight sub-committees. Staff members participate in university governance through the Staff Senate. The Student Senate meets regularly and offers suggestions to the administration. A review of minutes from each organization and conversations with faculty and staff leaders confirm their active engagement in University governance (2.A.1).

The Collective Bargaining Agreement and the Vocational-Technical Educators of Montana bring faculties and administration together to address working conditions; the agreements result in policies and procedures that guide employee and system practices.

MSUB is part of the Montana University System, governed by the Board of Regents which has full authority for higher education in Montana and guides overall operations through the Policy and Procedures Manual. The Board meets bimonthly; representatives from MSUB regularly attend and participate in the meetings (2.A.2).

The Provost and Vice Chancellor has responsibility for tracking the collective bargaining agreements, accreditation standards, and legislative actions to understand the impact of changes and to provide processes to track changes, as needed (2.A.3).

Governing Board

The Board of Regents (BOR), the governing board for the Montana University System and for MSUB, consists of seven members, including the Governor and Superintendent of Instruction who are ex-officio, and a student representative. The board is appointed by the governor. The Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education (OCHE) has responsibility for administrative oversight of the work of the BOR. The BOR works as a committee of the whole; BOR meetings are open to the public, and opportunities exist for faculty, staff, and students to engage with BOR in meetings throughout the year. Policies and procedures for the oversight of the Montana University System including MSUB are articulated in the BOR *Policies and Procedures Manual* (2.A.4, 2.A.5, 2.A.6).

The chief executive officer, the chancellor of MSUB, on the recommendation of the Montana State University president, is appointed and reviewed by the BOR. The chancellor provides executive leadership of MSUB as the chief executive officer. The president of MSU Bozeman conducts the Professional Employee Evaluation of the chancellor to review leadership and performance in the fiscal, managerial, and organizational skills expected of the chancellor while working within MSUB and with external constituents (2.A.7).

The Commissioner of Higher Education serves as the chief executive officer of the BOR. The performance of the commissioner is evaluated annually by the BOR based on goals established for the year and includes setting of goals for the next year. The BOR conducts a self-study of its stewardship every three to four years. BOR policy includes a provision for a joint five-year review when a long-term relationship exists with the Commissioner and Board.

BOR policies are in place to guide and assure that the roles, functions, and responsibilities of the BOR, the OCHE, and the Chancellor are clearly defined and evaluated (2.A.8).

Leadership and Management

The chancellor is the chief executive of MSUB, serving as the full-time administrator for the university. The chancellor does not serve on the Board of Regents. Roles and relationships among the administration, academic affairs, administrative services, and student affairs are reflected in the organizational chart. A review of descriptions of university leaders shows the background and experience needed to lead and manage the University and to support its mission, vision, and goals (2.A.9, 2.A.10).

The MSUB Chancellor's Cabinet, Provost's Council, and Accreditation and Assessment Council include representation from administrators, faculty, staff, and students and are engaged in supporting the work of the University as it strives to achieve the mission and core themes through the implementation, analysis, and assessment of its strategic plan (2.A.11).

Administrative positions are filled using established university processes. As part of the process, required and preferred qualifications are identified, consistent with the University definition of the position responsibilities and in concert with qualifications for similar positions at other institutions. Positions are filled with administrators meeting the criteria for the positions. In periods of transition, interim appointments are made while national searches are in process (2.A.11).

Policies and Procedures

Academics

Academic policies and procedures are imbedded in several documents: the *Collective Bargaining Agreement*, the *Vocational-Technical Educators of Montana* contract, the labor agreement on the Human Resources web, and the *Student Policies and Procedures Handbook*. These documents are easily accessible on the University web, and, in the case of the student handbook, made available through orientation programs (2.A.12).

The mission statement of the Library provides a context for services and access provided through the Library. Policies and procedures are accessible through the On Campus Library Access, Off-Campus Access, and Interlibrary loan sites (2.A.13).

Transfer policies are mandated by and articulated in BOR Policy 301.5 and include common course numbering; institution specific policies are included in the MSUB General Bulletin. Tools such as DegreeWorks are in place to support transfer credit evaluation and course advising functions for faculty and students (2.A.14).

Students

Student rights and responsibilities are defined in the *Student Policies and Procedures Handbook* which includes the Code of Student Conduct. In addition, the handbook provides information on various aspects of student life as well as conduct and consequences for misconduct. The handbook and code of conduct are reviewed annually; the process for making changes is clearly articulated. The handbook is made available to students at the beginning of each semester through several dissemination strategies. The *Residence Hall Policies and Procedures Handbook* is distributed at the beginning of each semester, establishing policies for residence halls, and serves as the primary guide for conduct and contractual agreements for the resident halls.

Student rights and responsibilities are defined in the *Undergraduate Catalog*. Processes are in place to address student conduct issues and violations of policies, proactively and when conduct violates the code of conduct. Personnel who address conduct issues are trained. A trained Student Behavior Team is in place to address issues, recommend solutions, and review policies (2.A.15).

Standards and policies for admission and placement of students at MSUB are established by the Board of Regents. These standards are articulated in the *General Bulletin*, and specific criteria are used when admitting students to MSUB. Advising is required for first time freshman students prior to registration for classes; new students are encouraged to participate in the New Student Orientation program. Additional support for the transition to college is available through programs such as Student Opportunity Services/TRiO and other student support programs (2.A.16).

Policies on co-curricular activities and student rights and responsibilities in these activities are found in the *Student Policies and Procedures Handbook*. Specific information on activities is included on the Student Live Web page. Board of Regents policies include protection under the First Amendment of the Constitution for student media and productions; policies and procedures for student media are stated in the responsibilities of the Publications Board in the ASMSU Billings By-Laws (2.A.17).

Human Resources

Human resource policies and procedures for classified, craft, and faculty employees are articulated in several policy documents including Human Resources policies on the University web and contractual agreements for different employee groups. Personnel policies for administrators are included in the Board of Regents policies. Interviews with faculty and staff indicated that policies and procedures were well understood and applied equitably (2.A.18).

New employee orientation programs include information on employee benefits, contracts/agreements with information on conditions of employment and performance reviews. A new faculty orientation program is provided at the opening of the academic year, and mentors are assigned for the first year of employment (2.A.19).

By policy, some elements of human resource information is public (title, duration of employment, and salary) while other elements are confidential. Depending on the position, personnel files are maintained either in Human Resources or in the Chancellor's Office (2.A.20).

Institutional Integrity

The University has a well-developed website; it is navigable and provides comprehensive information about its mission and goals, programs and services, and policies and procedures. Catalog materials are available and include similar information. The information is consistent and accurate and accessible in print and web formats (2.A.21).

Ethical standards are articulated in the collective bargaining agreements, *Employee's Guide to Standards of Conduct in Montana State Government*, and handbooks for students. Processes are established and published for resolution of concerns and complaints (2.A.22).

Administrators and faculty adhere to the conflict of interest policy adopted by the Board of Regents. Relevant policies provide for disclosure and management of conflicts, including those that arise with sponsored research projects (2.A.23). Policies and procedures are included in BOR policy to address intellectual property (2.A.24).

Print and web publications include references to regional and specialized accreditations. The presentation of the information is inconsistent with the NWCCU Public Notification of Information About Affiliated Institutions statement and should be reviewed for accuracy and consistency with the Notification statement (2.A.25).

Policies and procedures are in place for contractual agreements with somewhat different processes for domestic and for international institutional partners, consistent with the laws, policies, and procedures of the State of Montana, the Montana State University system, and Montana State University Billings (2.A.26).

Academic Freedom

Rights and responsibilities of academic freedom are included in the Collective Bargaining Agreement and in the Vocational –Technical Educators of Montana contract; the agreements are reviewed and negotiated every two years (2.A.27). The pursuit of knowledge is clearly reflected in the MSUB mission statement, core themes (most notably in Core Theme 1 and the strategic plan), and the University community continues to develop an institutional culture that supports academic achievement and scholarly and creative activity (2.A.28).

Policies and procedures are in place to support teaching and scholarly practices that meet standards of fairness, accuracy, and objectivity and that guide appropriate approaches to scholarly work. These can be found in the Code of Ethics included in the Montana Code, on the Office of Research Compliance web site, and in the Institutional Review board by-laws and processes (2.A.29).

Finance

The Board of Regents has clearly defined policies for oversight and management of financial resources. Money management is governed by state law. The Board of Regents approves the overall budget, including operating budgets, reserves, and funds use, for MSUB annually; the BOR approves long range building plans biennially. The University adheres to the National Association of College and University Business Officers (NACUBO) principles and the College and University Business Administration guidelines (CUBA) (2.A.30).

Report on Standard 2.B Human Resources

Position announcements include criteria, qualifications and procedures for selection of employees. Job descriptions accompanying position announcements for staff and administrators provided duties, responsibilities and authority for the position as well as appropriate qualification requirements. However, job descriptions accompanying position announcements for faculty were inconsistent in describing duties and responsibilities. MSUB is encouraged to develop job descriptions for faculty positions, which more accurately reflect general responsibilities and duties supplemented with discipline-specific requirements.

The evaluation team found little evidence that MSUB has assessed the sufficiency of personnel to maintain support and operations functions. Data provided by request of the team indicate that the student FTE to staff employee ratio has increased 10 percent over the past five years. Staff leaders indicate concern that vacancies, particularly for positions paid \$50,000 and less, have become increasingly more difficult to fill due to external market salaries and employment opportunities. These vacancies increase workload for existing staff (2.B.1).

In accordance with the MUS performance review process, staff members are evaluated annually based on performance of work duties and responsibilities. A plan to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of administrators on a five-year rotation schedule has been developed. Evaluations under this new plan and rotation schedule are scheduled to begin this year but the process is already behind schedule (2.B.2).

Faculty are provided a variety of professional development opportunities through the faculty professional development fund, Creative and Research and Endeavors (CARE) program, Information Technology funds for e-learning, Carl Perkins funds, and sabbatical leave. Access to professional development funds is competitive with more requests than funding can support. Recently, faculty development funding has moved from one-time to on-going budget and the amount has increased. Faculty report an abundance of faculty development opportunities. Though no requests from faculty have been submitted in the past few years, funding exists to support sabbatical leaves. General campus training and workshops are provided. Staff report an increase in professional development opportunities internally and adequate support for participation in external conferences (2.B.3).

The student-to-faculty ratio has decreased slightly (from 21.5 to 20.2) in the past five years and is comparable to other MSU campuses. MSUB is currently conducting a program prioritization process, which includes a review of the sufficiency of faculty on an individual program level. Faculty are appropriately qualified with 57 percent holding terminal degrees and 43 percent holding master's degrees. Minimum faculty qualifications vary based on program level and discipline. Collective bargaining agreements limit the percent of faculty in lecturer (temporary salaried) positions and the University operates within that limit.

Faculty responsibilities and workloads reflect the range of instructional offerings in the diversity of MSUB's mission and are specified in collective bargaining agreements. University College faculty workload is consistent with public masters' institutions providing some time for scholarship and service, while City College VTEM faculty workload is consistent with community and technical colleges. University College faculty indicate workload is heavy compared to national peers particularly for faculty responsible for writing intensive courses. Criteria for reassigned time are being developed. Workload provision is made for faculty with administrative responsibilities, such as department chairs (2.B.5).

Faculty evaluation principles, purposes, processes, criteria, and timelines are articulated in collective bargaining agreements. The process includes evaluations by students, colleagues, and supervisors, appropriately involves peer committees and administration, and provides for the maintenance of a written record of the evaluation. For reappointment, rank advancement, and tenure, faculty must demonstrate excellence in teaching as well as strength in scholarly development and contributions or service to the University and public. As needed, the evaluation process provides for written plans for improvement for individual faculty development (2.B.5 & 2.B.6).

Concerns: The evaluation team expresses concern with a) the lack of evidence-based assessment (such as student-to-staff ratios, turnover rates, and vacancy trends) regarding sufficiency of qualified personnel to support its programs and services, b) inconsistency in job descriptions for faculty positions and c) lack of recent and regular evaluation of administrators.

Report on Standard 2.C Education Resources

Montana State University (MSUB) provides an established path of assessment of programs, from the classroom to the degree, from the Deans to the Provost to the Regents. Assessment plans are in place and will be reviewed by Northwest in Year Seven. Numerous special accreditations (e.g., AACSB, NCATE,

NASAD, and NATEF) add further assessment rigor (Standard 2.C.1). New degrees must be vetted through the Curriculum Committee, Academic Senate, the Provost, and the Regents (2.C.4).

Program learning outcomes are posted clearly in the catalog and on respective websites (2.C.2). General Education requirements are defined in a number of course credits and areas of study (2.C.9). In Applied Science programs, programmatic expectations are in place (2.C.3). Guidelines for experiential learning and for credit through prior learning are posted (2.C.7). Transfer credit policies are included in the General Bulletin with course equivalency numbers established statewide in the Montana State University system to ease transfer from campus to campus (2.C.8). The University is currently engaged in a comprehensive program review process.

Faculty exercises a clear and major role in the design, approval and revision of curriculum. All new and changed proposals start at the department level before going to the Curriculum Committee, Faculty Senate, Provost, and Regents. Faculty is primarily responsible for hiring. Students sit on Faculty hiring committees as well (2.C.5).

Integration of library resources and curriculum is advanced through faculty librarian liaisons with departments and the University Library Committee. Faculty is involved with the selection of added digital materials (2.C.6). Structures and resources are clearly in place. Students self-reported that using the library was required in approximately fifty percent of courses (fairly standard) (2.C.4).

General Education requirements (2.C.9) are clearly delineated and have been revised as a part of the FutureU strategic plan. Learning outcomes (2.C.10) are listed though some challenges in collecting assessment data to date exist. Assessment will be a strong component of the Year Seven review. In City College, industry advisory boards provide a strong base for assessing learning objectives (2.C.11).

The ten graduate programs provide clear guidelines with specific and measureable outcomes (2.C.12). Graduate admissions for student qualifications are documented based on established criteria (2.C.13). MSUB is currently working on a permanent structure for a Director of Graduate Studies that will better stabilize the Graduate leadership structure. Learning outcomes are developed and published (2.C.15). MSUB does not offer graduate credit for prior experience (2.C.14).

While Graduate Faculty in Public Health is restricted from undergraduate teaching, other graduate faculty teach both graduate and undergraduate with some stacked courses (both graduate and undergraduates in the same course) offered as well. Faculty reports that this impacts undergraduate teaching, particularly in the lower undergraduate survey classes.

Extended Campus (2.C.16) offers mission-specific continuing education, both credit and non-credit. Individual departments are responsible for academic content as well as the University Provost. Non-credit courses such as seminars in writing, autism, Certiport certification, and Chicks in Science are clearly academically and mission oriented (2.C.17). Course credits or CEUs include course syllabi and requirements and are consistent with University mission (2.C.18). Extended Campus maintains all appropriate records of course completion (2.C.19).

Report on Standard 2.D Student Support Resources

Student support service policies and services follow established procedures with clearly posted information on the MSUB website. The catalog publishes the mission, entrance requirements, grading and academic programs, degrees, tuition and financial aid, rights and responsibilities, and a calendar (2.D.5). Special licensures and unique requirements of employment such as Special Education and

Nursing are outlined in the catalog (2.D.6). Any programs eliminated have a clear three-year phase-out with established procedures (2.D.4).

A newly established Office of New Student and Retention Services offers orientation sessions, assigns a College Success Specialist to each student, and encourages enrollment in the First Year Seminar course (approximately 50% of students participate). The Advising Center gives initial guidance to career and degree planning. DegreeWorks, recently implemented, assists students in planning their academic careers. Meeting with an advisor is mandatory the first two semesters, and henceforth if the student's GPA is below 2.0. Students report the numbers of advisors as adequate. When a student declares a major, faculty advisors within their respective majors then offer this service (2.D.3; 2.D.10).

The Academic Support Center provides tutoring in math and writing, as well as other specific disciplines. Three learning labs and an information commons in the Library (2.D.1) provide additional support. All dormitories have computer labs with lab techs. Wireless is provided throughout campus.

Financial aid is available and policies posted and documented (2.D.8). Effort is made to inform students of repayment plans and to give financial counseling (2.D.9). Student records are retained on the Banner EIS system with adequate back-up. Older records remain in the legacy VAX software with even older paper records stored in secure, fire-proof cabinets (2.D.7).

Students have ample opportunity to participate in campus clubs and organizations. The Office of Experiential Leadership and the Office of Community Involvement enhance the community and promote civic responsibility to support MSUB core values (2.D.11). MSUB provides student leaders remarkable representation on various committees such as Academic Senate, Administrative Support, Rank & Tenure, Faculty Searches, Library, Academic Standards, Dining, Safety, Recreation Center, Research, and the Graduate School.

Housing is available for 500 students and 10 families, serving about 12% of the student enrollment (2.D.12). Bookstore services and meal plans for dining support students adequately. The bookstore recently remodeled with an electronics store, rental program, ebook program, and a VIP ordering plan. Seven well-trained police officers provide security, and a University Safety Committee provides a forum for communication. Crime statistics are posted on the MSUB website as required by the Clery Act (2.D.2).

The Director of Intercollegiate Athletics reports directly to the Chancellor and maintains oversight of budget, planning, gender equity (MSUB is Title-IX compliant), scholarships, and NCAA compliance. Student athletes have an admirable graduation rate that exceeds that of the general student body (80% as opposed to 30%), and consistently maintains an overall cumulative GPA above 3.00 (2.D.13). A Faculty Athletic Representative provides academic oversight and liaison for athletes as well.

Faculty designs all online courses with IT providing support in terms of best practices. Establishing the credentials of students in online courses is provided through LDAP authentication through Banner. Increasingly, faculty use proctored exams for this, though the Space Use Committee is still trying to identify space. The high percentage of faculty turning to proctoring suggests some concern with the need to verify that the student whose achievements are evaluated and credentialed is the same student taking the exam (2.D.14), particularly with the directive to make online courses 100% online.

MSUB provides methods to record and adjudicate student complaints. Grade issues, as stated in the *Student Policies and Procedures Handbook*, are resolved through an appeals process monitored by the Vice-Provost of Academic Affairs. Student behavior problems are first reviewed by the Conduct Review

Team and/or the Care and Behavior Assessment Team and solved via policies and procedures outlined in the Code of Student Conduct, which is administered by the Vice-Chancellor for Student Affairs.

Report on Standard 2.E Library and Information Resources

Montana State University Billings (MSUB) Library has built a solid foundation of library services and collections. Databases selected have a clear relationship with programs and curriculum. Communications and Mass Marketing Complete has been added as a result of this analysis. Collaborative partnerships (Standard 2.E.4) with MSU Bozeman enable the purchases of packages such as Taylor & Francis, OVID, and JSTOR. All databases are authenticated over the Web via proxy server. Database usage statistics are maintained for assessment with over 360,000 searches in the previous year.

The Library's collection of 624,604 volumes provides a solid monographic foundation for student support. In addition, the Library is a 44% selective government document depository. Recent weeding projects make collections more usable (2.E.1). The Library has identified some areas of concern, and as old and new programs are developed, library resources need to be accessed as part of that process.

Seven FTE Librarians, all holding the Master's degree in Library Science, and 6.0 FTE staff supports library services an adequate 77 hours per week. The recent addition of an Assessment Librarian (2010) and a Distance Education Librarian (2012) relate directly to the University mission and goals.

Policies are posted on the Library website for student use such as collection development, circulation policies, and Interlibrary Loan. However, finding policies on the Library website is difficult. Policies are scattered throughout the Library website, and it would be easier if found in a single location (2.A.13). The *Library Behavior Policy* was found only by searching the general MSUB website.

Appropriate instruction and support for students is necessary to maximize use of materials (2.E.3). Librarians teach information literacy to English 101 and 201 basic writing courses. Specialized classes for particular disciplines are available upon request. Subject specific presentations such as Public Administration, Athletic Training, Sociology, and Business Writing are available. A three hour for-credit course, LS125 (Research in the Information Age), fulfills General Education requirements. Students evaluate faculty librarian instructors on a regular basis.

The Library completed a new Strategic Plan in 2012, and ongoing planning and evaluation continues as library practice (2.E.2). Students give feedback through instruction evaluations and surveys such as the national LibQual survey. Circulation statistics, database use statistics, and direct questions give additional input (2.E.4). A librarian is assigned as liaison to each faculty department, and the University Librarian serves on the Provost Council and the Faculty Library Committee. Faculty librarians serve on campus committees such as Faculty Senate, General Education, and Graduate Studies. In addition, each faculty department is assigned a direct library liaison for all library matters.

Compliments:

- 1. The Library's effort to imbed the Library in the course management system for online courses is commendable.**
- 2. Database access to electronic journal holdings and primary materials is very strong.**

Concern:

- 1. In the future, the Library needs to assess more directly how the Library contributes to student success, particularly with regard to how information sources are integrated into the learning process.**

Report on Standard 2.F Financial Resources

As an institution in the Montana University System, fiscal oversight of MSUB is provided by the Board of Regents with audited financial reporting aggregated at the system level. Reports for both the Montana University System and MSUB indicate financial stability and sufficient cash flow and reserves to support programs and services. The University maintains reserves in the general operating budget to address unexpected fluctuations in revenues and expenditures and monitors revenues and expenditures against the budgetary plan. Further, the University provides a reserve for renewal and replacement of facilities in accordance with bond indenture. Funding for debt service is annually reflected in the University's budget and reported to the Board of Regents. MSUB funds are invested by the State of Montana investment pool with the University receiving investment income (2.F.1).

At the Montana University System level, the allocation of appropriations to institutions is changing. Historically, the University received a direct appropriation. Beginning with FY2014 and FY 2015, MUS will allocate funds to institutions, including Billings, based on budget requests, enrollment, and other strategic considerations. During this transition, some uncertainty exists. Internally, financial and budgetary planning and development for all sources of revenues involves administrators, fiscal officers, and budget committees. This planning includes a review of current year budget performance as well as enrollment projections and enrollment monitoring which is essential as Montana is expecting a decline in the number of high school graduates (2.F.2).

MSUB's internal budget process is managed through the Budget Office. The budget process is well defined and communicated. The Budget Office's website provides information, budget policies and procedures, timelines, and other planning and budgeting information. The University Budget Committee provides opportunity for constituents to participate in the process (2.F.3).

The University uses BANNER for financial accounting and reporting and presents financial statements in compliance with GAAP and GASB requirements. Appropriate internal controls are established and maintained through the Business Services Office, internal audit (conducted both by MSUB budget office and MSU Bozeman Internal Audit Office), and administrative oversight (2.F.4).

MSUB engaged in a master planning process in 2009, which included an assessment of need aligned with the University's mission. This plan outlines facility needs for renovation, construction, and expansion. From this plan, University leaders select projects for inclusion in Montana's State Long Range Building Program (LRBP). This process is conducted biennially to inform legislative prioritization and allocation. Additionally, Discovering the MSUB Advantage, Strategic Plan 2013-2018, outlines facility project needs aligned with the University's mission and objectives.

MSUB's funded projects are administered through the Montana State Department of Administration unless otherwise delegated. All capital funds are associated with specific capital projects approved and/or funded by the state. Operation and maintenance funds for new capital projects are approved as part of the project appropriation. MSUB relies on one-time legislative appropriations for the majority of its deferred maintenance. For the last two years, the legislature has provided no deferred maintenance funds. Internal funds from operations and a building fee account have provided some funding for smaller projects.

Debt service is reviewed and reported annually to the Board of Regents and an independent audit firm annually conducts an audit of bond indebtedness. Debt service coverage ratios are sufficient to ensure no adverse impact to educational purposes (2.F.5).

The relationship between general operation and auxiliary enterprise funds is defined by state law. Some programs appropriately crossover between both funds (for example, civic engagement with coursework funded from general operations and service learning from auxiliary funds). Such expenditures, which support both education and general and auxiliary programs, are allocated between the revenue sources. Administrative overhead costs are reimbursed to general funds through a recharge process (2.F.6).

MSUB's annual financial information is included in the Montana State University consolidated financial statement. The State of Montana Legislative Audit Division conducts an audit by professionally qualified individuals in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards every two years. Their findings are published in an MSU specific audit report as well as in the State's Single Audit Act Report. Independent audits are performed annually for revenue bonds and component units of MSUB. Additional focused independent audits or financial reviews are conducted on sponsored programs and financial aid as required. Audit results are reviewed by MSUB's administration and presented to the Legislative Audit Committee and to the Board of Regents. Corrective action plans are developed in response to findings or recommendations (2.F.7).

Fundraising efforts are administered and conducted through the MSU Billings Foundation. The MSU Billings Foundation's relationship with MSUB is clearly defined in an Operating Agreement which was most recently renewed in February 2013. The Foundation's financial statements are audited regularly; such audits include a review of internal controls and significant accounting policies. By Foundation policy, the same audit firm may not conduct the audit for more than six years in a row. Policies, procedure manuals, and internal training assure professional, ethical, and compliant practices in fundraising (2.F.8).

Compliment: The transparency and accessibility of budget development and annual budget information is notable.

Report on Standard 2.G Physical and Technological Infrastructure

Consistent with its mission and core themes, MSUB has completed a number of renovations to enhance the learning environment, improve the accessibility of campus, and enhance the student experience. Discovering the MSUB Advantage, Strategic Plan 2013-18, outlines key facility priorities as well as strategies for assuring alignment of facility priorities with the Plan and increasing collaboration on facility expansion and utilization. Through this planning and assessment process, four buildings were identified as being in poor condition. One building has since been vacated with the intent to demolish, one building has been approved by the legislature for major renovation/expansion, one building has had significant improvement to its mechanical systems, and one building has been prioritized for funding request to demolish and replace. Facilities Services has obtained several grants to improve the safety of the campus.

A new space utilization committee is being established. Faculty and staff reported general satisfaction with facilities though some concern was expressed about the size of some faculty offices and the availability of office space for adjunct faculty. Many classrooms have been updated with technology and multi-modal furniture with recent efforts having been made to improve some of the older classrooms. Through these ongoing efforts, the University ensures physical facilities that are accessible, safe, secure, and sufficient to support its mission, programs, and services (2.G.1).

The University is classified as a small-quantity generator of hazardous waste by the Montana Department of Environmental Quality. The Hazardous Material/Waste Coordinator receives training on new requirements, provides training to personnel as appropriate, and maintains Materials Safety Data Sheets (MSDS) in areas where hazardous materials are stored or used. The University is in the process of transitioning to the new Globally Harmonized System (GHS) standard requirements. All facilities employees receive regular training on hazardous waste. Recently, facilities purchased a bulb crusher to ensure proper storage and disposal of bulb waste which improved safety and reduced costs (2.G.2).

MSUB's Master Plan is the guiding document for physical facility development with the most recent comprehensive update completed in 2010 followed by a review in 2012. Discovering the MSUB Advantage, Strategic Plan 2013-18, includes a provision that the Master Plan be reviewed annually to ensure its alignment with the strategic plan. The priorities identified by the Master Plan are used in the State of Montana's capital budgeting process, fundraising priorities, student fees, etc. (2.G.3).

Three distinct areas of equipment were identified in the self-evaluation—infrastructure, facility services equipment, and instructional equipment. Facilities Services has overseen the completion of several major mechanical projects in the past two years including energy-related projects. Given recent operating and deferred maintenance budget constraints, Facilities Services successfully obtained grants to upgrade aging service equipment. Over the past three years, instructional equipment has been upgraded and purchased to support student learning. These purchases have been supported with University funds, grant funds, and private partnerships. Faculty and staff reported general satisfaction with quality and quantity of equipment while recognizing the need for additional equipment for the sciences. Efforts to improve planning for instructional equipment are evidenced in Discovering the MSUB Advantage, Strategic Plan 2013-18 (2.G.4).

Technological Infrastructure

The Office of Information Technology provides total service, support, purchasing, and replacement for all appropriated computing equipment and software and manages the University's infrastructure, enterprise applications, and e-learning operations. As part of a four-campus initiative, MSUB achieves efficiencies in purchasing, implementation, and operations. Faculty, staff, and students have access to regularly replaced and standardized hardware and software. Most classrooms are equipped with technology to enhance the learning experience. MSUB enrolls many students in on-line courses; 60-70 percent of these students reside in the Billings area and are enrolled in other MSUB courses; these students have physical access to student computer labs. For all students, IT provides 125 virtual machines which provide access to specialized software (2.G.5).

Training on Ellucian Banner (EIS) is primarily performed by the functional areas. Faculty and academic support staff are trained on the learning management system as part of an annual back-to-school training time as well as on demand. Specialized training and support for multimedia equipment and learning tools are provided by Information Technology. Face-to-face training is supplemented with two sets of online, specific training licenses (2.G.6).

Technological infrastructure planning occurs at both the institutional level and across the four MSU campuses. Opportunities are provided for input by functional governing groups, administrators, and the Office of Information Technology (OIT). To strengthen coordination with academics, the Office of Information Technology reports to the Provost. OIT maintains a replacement schedule based upon age and purpose of hardware. Faculty and staff are very pleased with the very deliberate replacement

schedule, IT staff support, and implementation of cutting-edge technology/software. Efforts to improve planning that is connected to the mission are evidenced in Discovering the MSUB Advantage, Strategic Plan 2013-18, which indicates the need to develop a master plan related to use of mobile devices in teaching and learning environments (2.G.7 and 2.G.8).

Commendations and Recommendations

Commendations

1. The evaluators commend MSUB on creating an environment in which shared governance is valued in the University culture. Faculty, staff, and students alike appreciate the collegial approach to and involvement in planning, sharing, and supporting the mission of the University.
2. The evaluators commend MSUB on the integration of facilities, infrastructure, and information technology in the Discovering the MSUB Advantage, Strategic Plan 2013-18. This integration assures alignment of critical infrastructure with the mission, programs, and services of the University.

Recommendations

1. While noting that MSUB has a widely published mission statement and that work is progressing on the core theme indicators, evaluators did not find evidence that targets have been consistently identified for the core theme indicators. The evaluation committee recommends that MSUB continue to refine targets for the indicators of performance for the core themes as it evaluates the accomplishment of its core theme objectives, achievement of its strategic plan, and mission fulfillment (Standards 1.A.2 and 1.B.2).
2. While the evaluation team found that MSUB has defined policies and procedures for human resources, there are inconsistencies in the application of practices and the use of assessment information to assure sufficient staffing, clarity of job duties and responsibilities, and regular evaluation of administrators. The evaluation committee recommends that MSUB fully and consistently implement human resources procedures to assure that the resources and capacity are consistent with the MSUB mission, programs and services, and the strategic plan (Standards 2.B.1, 2.B.2).