Our Future U

Montana State University Billings

Strategic Plan (2013-2018)
Taking the Long View

(a letter from the chancellor)
We’re in This Together

(Statement and signature page from committee)
Preamble: The MSUB Experience

At its heart, Montana State University Billings is about community. We are a community of scholars; students prepare for brilliant futures in distinct communities of learners; and the University is located in the largest business/healthcare/retail community in Montana.

Those who work, learn and live in these communities have a vested interest in seeing MSU Billings succeed in the near and distant future. As such, those constituencies have a role to play in thinking and performing strategically with an ongoing commitment to meet the enrollment and workforce demands of the region we serve.

Expectations have never been greater. Montana citizens’ educational needs continue to expand and tomorrow’s careers – locally and globally – will require higher levels of educational attainment. MSU Billings’ eventual success is fundamentally connected to meeting those demands with one eye on our current mission and the other on the horizon. Our student-centered community provides a highly valued education with unique urban learning opportunities at the lowest practical cost. That distinctiveness – “The MSUB Advantage” – will be visible daily in the teaching, learning and service provided at this university.

With the Montana University System strategic plan as its foundation, this plan moves MSU Billings forward in fulfilling its unique role in helping the system meet the future educational and economic needs of the state, region and nation. Thus, this plan was born out of the three underlying goals of the current Montana University System strategic plan:

1. Access and Affordability
2. Workforce and Economic Development
3. Efficiency and Effectiveness

The plan also has strong ties to the ongoing integration of the four units that make up the Montana State University family with MSU Billings serving as the comprehensive regional urban university embodying distinctive characteristics of MSU’s Land Grant mission.

Our strategic plan builds on the proud history of MSU Billings’ culture of student-focused teaching and learning. As a part of fulfilling the Land Grant mission of our MSU affiliation, we maintain our commitment to open access for all students and to providing an experience that positions them for success after college. We also recognize the importance of community engagement and shared governance that includes each of our various stakeholders.

This plan, therefore, is a mirror that reflects the values and commitment of many. Our faculty, staff, students and community partners share not only the principles that frame this document, but also the responsibilities embodied within it and a pledge to carry it out.

The action items in this plan are not bounded by physical or geographical space, and will encompass our community of scholars, learners and supporters in virtual and real environments. As such, the outcomes of this plan will have broad impacts on the city, state and region.
Background and History: Montana State University Billings has been an integral part of the Billings community and a student-centered learning environment since its days as Eastern Montana Normal School. Founded in 1927, the University continues to nurture a longstanding tradition of educational access, teaching excellence, civic engagement and community enhancement in an urban setting. In the classroom and in the community, students receive a well-rounded education in the form of career-oriented certificates, Associate’s, Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees through the university’s four academic colleges: Arts and Sciences, Business, Allied Health Professions, and Education, as well as, the university’s new home of comprehensive two-year programs, City College at MSUB.

Set in the largest city in the state, MSU Billings provides a unique college experience. Students have opportunities to learn from encouraging faculty as well as to obtain real-world experiences from business, industry and public leaders. Students live and learn on 110 park-like acres at the base of the spectacular Rimrocks as well as at a two-year campus on the growing West End of Billings. The university has a long track record of scholarship, cooperative education experience and civic engagement in the larger community and many graduates remain in the area after graduation to work and raise their families.

MSUB Mission/Vision/Values: During the 2009-2010 academic year, MSU Billings conducted a detailed review of its mission as required by the Montana Board of Regents. The Board and the MSU Billings administration approved a mission that guides the institution in developing its strategic directions. The following Mission, Vision, Core Values, and Core Purposes were approved to give MSU Billings a direction to build on its distinctive strengths in the University System. This plan, which flows from that mission and from the core themes (reported to and approved by NWCCU in 2011) will guide our work between January 2013 and December 2017.
MSU Billings Core Purpose, Mission, Vision & Core Values

Core Purpose: To assure that all members of the University community reach their individual potential.

Mission: Montana State University Billings provides a University experience characterized by:
- Excellent Teaching
- Support for Individual Learning
- Engagement in Civic Responsibility
- Intellectual, Cultural, Social and Economic Community Enhancement

Vision: Montana State University Billings will be recognized as a regional leader for:
- Teaching and Learning
- Translating Knowledge into Practice
- Researching for the Future
- Accepting Leadership for Intellectual, Cultural, Social and Economic Development Beyond University Boundaries

Core Values

Integrity: MSU Billings’ actions are ethical and principled to assure dignity and equity for all

Educational Excellence: MSU Billings provides distinctive programs and challenging educational experiences for a diverse university community

Student Achievement: MSU Billings provides academic support and administrative services to foster academic & professional achievement of the university community

Community of Learners: MSU Billings respects and nurtures variety in intellectual contribution and scholarship enriching both the University and its extended community

Meaningful Engagement: MSU Billings supports all members of the university community in their individual growth toward confidence, individual sense of purpose and acceptance of civic responsibilities

Responsiveness: MSU Billings meets the changing needs of our learners with informed action and innovation based on current standards of educational & technical excellence
Core Theme One: Cultivating Teaching Excellence

Our strong commitment to teaching excellence stretches back to the founding of the university in 1927. That commitment is evidenced by close connections between students and faculty in classroom and online learning environments; experiential teaching and learning opportunities in the community; and a learning environment that encourages leadership and involvement. We have opportunities to further cultivate teaching excellence by enhancing support systems for instructors and students in traditional, blended, and e-learning courses and activities. Other opportunities outlined below focus on maintaining a university learning environment that appreciates, stimulates, and supports faculty and student research and creative endeavors. We realize that none of this is free. Therefore, there will be a need to be good stewards of our resources and to pursue new external funding sources to improve teaching and enhance learning via new technologies, lab equipment and endowed professorships.

A. Opportunity to Achieve: Enhance excellence in traditional, online, and online/blended pedagogies.

Specific tasks to undertake to realize this opportunity:
1. Identify evidence-based strategies for developing best practices in teaching and learning.
2. Provide seed grants to incentivize faculty to explore, implement, and assess strategies that enhance their effectiveness at improving learning.
3. In conjunction with the faculty, develop expectations and/or other guidelines for courses/teaching.
4. In conjunction with the faculty, establish a university metric to monitor/demonstrate teaching excellence.
5. Increase nominations for MSU Billings faculty to receive external teaching awards.
6. Develop a plan to evaluate and enhance the integrity and credibility of the practices in, and delivery of, our e-learning programs.
7. Develop methods to assess online courses/programs including a study to assess the success of online student learning versus traditional student learning.
8. Develop, implement, and budget for a master plan for instructional equipment.

B. Opportunity to Achieve: Develop a culture that maintains and supports rigorous academic achievement as well as creative and inquisitive scholarly endeavors.

Specific tasks to undertake to realize this opportunity:
1. Continue development and implementation of the University Honors Program including infrastructure, funding and robust programming.
2. Identify and formalize appropriate leadership and processes for facilitating and supporting faculty and staff research, grants, and other creative endeavors at all stages.
3. Develop clearer ties with Montana University System research campuses.
4. Formalize an undergraduate research program.
C. Opportunity to Achieve: **Enhance compensation for faculty and staff.**

Specific tasks to undertake to realize this opportunity:
1. Analyze CUPA/CCAS/AAUP national salary data to determine MSUB’s gaps.
2. Explore and develop merit pay options for staff and enhance merit pay options for faculty.
3. Develop and implement a plan to address compression and inversion for faculty and staff compensation.
4. Develop and implement a set of university criteria for reassigned activities for faculty.
5. Balance full time and part time faculty ratios with respect to each department or unit’s needs ensuring results are sustainable and scalable.

D. Opportunity to Achieve: **Facilitate additional professional development opportunities and resources for faculty and staff.**

Specific tasks to undertake to realize this opportunity:
1. Institutionalize and augment the “one-time funded” professional development pool allocated for faculty each fall.
2. Formalize a recurring professional development line for e-learning instruction.
3. Establish similar competitively-allocated professional development pools for staff.
4. Establish a clearing house that catalogs all of the professional development opportunities available in e-Learning.
5. Create a comprehensive university calendar of existing pertinent dates, deadlines, etc. for all professional development resources for two-year, four-year and graduate education.

E. Opportunity to Achieve: **Identify and procure increased external funding through grants, contracts, and foundations.**

Specific tasks to undertake to realize this opportunity:
1. Seek sponsorship for laboratories and other appropriate campus facilities.
2. Develop processes to promote additional research and grant activities and to incentivize interdisciplinary projects and partnerships.
3. Seek sponsored (endowed) personnel lines and/or positions.
4. Develop increased coordination between the MSUB Foundation and the Grants and Sponsored Programs Office.
F. Opportunity to Achieve: **Implement an Online Learning Office to facilitate e-Learning leadership on a college and university level.**

Specific tasks to undertake to realize this opportunity:

1. Develop a position description, formalize responsibilities and establish expectations for college-level and campus-level e-Learning leadership and staff a University-wide leadership position in e-Learning.
2. Formalize responsibilities and expectations for the college-level e-Learning coordinators and prepare existing coordinators or recruit new individuals to serve.
3. Conduct a needs assessment at two-year, four-year and graduate levels to determine appropriate priorities and resource needs for faculty and support staff.
4. Develop and evaluate processes to fully communicate new technology to all constituents.
5. Develop a master plan related to the use of mobile devices in teaching and learning environments.
6. Review opportunities for beginner and advanced online teaching credentials as appropriate.
7. Implement and fund an online teaching certificate and/or professional development continuing education credit activity.
8. Scale up and roll out an MSU Billings version of the MUS online learning criteria.
9. Develop a university-wide system to proctor online exams.
Core Theme Two: Provide an Environment for Learning

MSU Billings values individual learning at all levels – in the classroom, in cooperative education experiences and in leadership opportunities. We have identified several opportunities that bolster our commitment to an inclusive student learning environment. They include offering high-quality academic programs; further establishing MSU Billings’ reputation as a high-value, affordable institution; building capacity for programs that are in high demand; enhancing student retention and graduation rates; building capacity to meet enrollment projections; increasing graduate program opportunities; and solidifying MSU Billings’ reputation as the frontrunner for online learning in Montana.

A. Opportunity to Achieve: Establish MSUB’s reputation as: Enhanced Affordability and Excellence.

Specific tasks to undertake to realize this opportunity:

1. Secure additional private funding for scholarships and programs in the colleges at the two-year, four-year and graduate levels.
2. Secure additional grant and/or foundation funding to assist students in underrepresented populations and/or in targeted discipline areas.
3. Design and implement local strategies to carry out Board of Regents initiatives that will reduce student debt.
4. Increase work study, internships, and other employment opportunities for all MSU Billings students.

B. Opportunity to Achieve: Implement recommendations from the recent MSUB Enrollment Management Initiative. Fully communicate the initiatives to all faculty and staff.

Specific tasks to undertake to realize this opportunity:

1. Develop an information strategy that results in broad knowledge and use of recruitment/retention tools known as the Futureu Recruitment and Retention Initiatives.
2. Develop and implement strategies that deliver effective services, programs and activities to support accessibility, recruitment, and retention efforts of all diverse student populations by meeting their apparent and more subtle needs.
3. As a part of task 2 above, set overall recruitment and retention goals for each student demographic group.
4. Create and implement strategies to achieve annual university-level enrollment and retention goals within each of these targeted areas.
5. Implement college-level and administrative-level plans to address Futureu Recruitment and Retention Initiative needs.
C. Opportunity to Achieve: **Enhance programs that have room to grow and potential to expand.**
Specific tasks to undertake to realize this opportunity:

1. Identify programs which are in highest demand and have room for growth.
2. Work to create a culture that is flexible and quick to respond to necessary changes.
3. Develop a strategy to identify and manage “phase out” programs as necessary and appropriate.

D. Opportunity to Achieve: **Expand Graduate Program Opportunities.**
Specific tasks to undertake to realize this opportunity:

1. Establish clear university-level leadership for Graduate Studies.
2. Begin the next appropriate steps with each of the following graduate programs that are currently in various stages of consideration for further development.
   - Master's in Public Administration
   - Master's in Business
   - Doctor of Education
   - Master's in Occupational Therapy
3. Perform a market analysis for these and other potential new graduate programs.
4. Explore appropriate graduate-degree program opportunities for City College faculty, Tribal College faculty and faculty at other two-year institutions seeking advanced degrees.

E. Opportunity to Achieve: **Continue to strengthen the university initiative to expand outreach and recruitment of international students.**
Specific tasks to undertake to realize this opportunity:

1. Identify the desired characteristics and credentials for and then recruit and hire permanent leadership for *International Studies and Outreach (ISO).*
2. Design and implement an appropriate organizational structure for ISO including streamlining international admissions into the overall university admission processes.
3. Locate a long term home for ISO that best suits the needs of staff and students.
4. Design and implement an appropriate business model for ISO that best meets the needs of all university units that support the initiative.
5. Collaborate with academic and student affairs areas to increase opportunities for MSUB students to be exposed to and gain awareness of a variety of diverse global cultures.

F. Opportunity to Achieve: Maintain the MSUB edge as front runner for online education in Montana

Specific tasks to undertake to realize this opportunity:

1. Identify appropriate new program opportunities and the potential markets for those programs.
2. Formulate a development and implementation strategy for each program that is chosen to move forward.
3. Develop a metric that demonstrates MSUB’s commitment for e-Learning opportunities appropriately balanced with our traditional classroom offerings.
4. Develop and communicate concrete ideas about what it means for MSUB to be the *e-Learning Frontrunner* in Montana.

G. Opportunity to Achieve: Enhance student learning through cutting edge teaching and learning techniques that utilize technology, experiential learning, inter-disciplinary approaches, and a well assessed and analyzed general education philosophy.

Specific tasks to undertake to realize this opportunity:

1. Provide seed grants and/or incentives for faculty to prepare proposals for external grants to develop new course models that exemplify these various approaches.
2. Conduct a formal review of the MSUB general education core in light of the MUS requirements.

H. Opportunity to Achieve: Embrace the new mission of two-year education in Montana, and provide students from the City College service region with access to comprehensive, full service two-year attributes of a comprehensive community college mission.

Specific Tasks to undertake this opportunity:

1. In conjunction with the University campus, Provide affordable, open access transfer education opportunities through associate’s degree education.
2. In conjunction with the University campus, identify and provide workforce education opportunities relevant to the service region.
3. In conjunction with the University campus, identify and provide developmental, adult basic education, and other lifelong learning opportunities relevant in the service region.
4. Implement a comprehensive general education program at the City College campus.
Core Theme Three: Promoting and Engaging in Civic Responsibility

Civic and public engagement are hallmarks of MSU Billings and we seek to encourage engagement in local, regional and global arenas. Active involvement in our communities not only ensures we fulfill our role as part of the MSU Land Grant University family, but it also demonstrates our desire to be a regional asset with global aspirations. MSU Billings will strive to be a civic-minded institution that encourages students to embrace civic responsibility, diversity and a determination to make a difference.

Overall

A. Opportunity to Achieve: Strengthen MSU Billings’ reputation as a locally, regionally, and globally engaged Institution.

Specific tasks to undertake to realize this opportunity:

1. Clearly define local, regional, and global civic engagement opportunities and establish a baseline for what is already being done in each of these three areas.
2. Identify internal and external engagement champions for each of these areas.
3. Determine appropriate expectations and a compensation model for a university-level business plan for faculty and staff engagement activities.
4. Develop public recognition for faculty and staff who actively participate.
5. Determine for each department/unit which activities are relevant for their disciplines and students and then begin to infuse these activities into the curriculum.
6. Develop additional funding sources for community engagement including revenue streams from self-supporting engagement activities.
7. Apply for the Carnegie Classification category “community engaged university”.

Local

B. Opportunity to Achieve: Strengthen MSU Billings as a well-recognized, locally-engaged institution.

Specific tasks to undertake to realize this opportunity:

1. Strengthen the civic engagement component of First Year Seminar.
2. Collaborate across the curriculum to increase civic engagement in courses so that a civic engagement component will be required for all academic programs.
3. Work with all academic colleges, and with two-year programs at City College, to strengthen existing partnerships and build new ones with a goal of enhancing quality of life in our surrounding community.
Regional/National

C. Opportunity to Achieve: Strengthen MSU Billings as a well-recognized, regionally-engaged Institution.

Specific tasks to undertake to realize this opportunity:

1. Conduct a needs analysis of the workforce training and other education requirements of Eastern and Central Montana communities impacted by the current energy boom.

2. Formalize partnerships with regional academic institutions, community and government groups, and/or private foundations to better serve our surrounding region.

Global

D. Opportunity to Achieve: Strengthen MSU Billings as a well-recognized, globally-engaged Institution.

Specific tasks to undertake to realize this opportunity:

1. Explore opportunities for international alumni participation in MSU Billings activities.

2. Link and build study-abroad opportunities for students with a goal of adding opportunities that have a civic engagement component.

3. Link and build faculty and student exchange programs abroad.

4. Increase program articulation agreements, joint degree programs, and other university/community collaborations with international university partners.
Core Theme Four: Enhancing the Community

Because MSU Billings is a university that is deeply connected to the Billings community, it is important for us to contribute to the intellectual, cultural, social and economic advancement of the city. Faculty, as experts in their fields of study, and staff, who are passionate about cultural engagement, will have leadership opportunities in this theme. Students will be encouraged to follow their passions as far as possible in this effort. As such, it is imperative that the university establish the infrastructure necessary to sustain those efforts.

A. Opportunity to Achieve: Develop and launch an MSUB Extended Campus initiative.

Specific tasks to undertake to realize this opportunity:
1. Establish clear university leadership for the MSUB Extended Campus organization.
2. Review the Continuing Education Task Force Report and begin an implementation plan.
3. Investigate, procure, and implement an electronic registration system for non-credit offerings.
4. Better connect academic programs with outreach initiatives.

B. Opportunity to Achieve: Engage the community through a wide range of activities and events.

Specific tasks to undertake to realize this opportunity:
1. Perform a review and record an inventory of current activities and events hosted or sponsored at MSUB.
2. Perform a review and record an inventory of external community/state events and initiatives in which MSUB participates.
3. Analyze data gathered through those reviews, to prioritize the events and programs that should continue along with developing a list of new partnerships and programs with mutually beneficial outcomes.
4. Explore opportunities for new engagement activities with or by MSUB alumni.

C. Opportunity to Achieve: Enhance partnerships with two-year and tribal colleges.

Specific tasks to undertake to realize this opportunity:
1. Update existing and develop appropriate new articulation agreements with two-year campuses both within and outside of the Montana University System.
2. Develop a relationship protocol for outreach development with tribal colleges to enhance existing relationships and initiate new partnerships.
D. Opportunity to Achieve: **Better utilize faculty, staff and program expertise for community outreach.**

Specific tasks to undertake to realize this opportunity:

1. Create an “expert’s guide” with associated “talking points” to promote the University.
2. Provide a mechanism to coordinate internal and external opportunities for speakers and programs.
3. Develop an infrastructure that supports and facilitates launching outreach initiatives that are responsive to business, industry, and community needs to seamlessly connect with faculty, staff and students.

E. Opportunity to Achieve: **Implement the MUS College!Now initiative.**

1. Continue to monitor the rebranding initiative of the former College of Technology as City College at MSU Billings and analyze progress made toward its new comprehensive two-year mission
2. Implement a plan to fully embrace the comprehensive mission philosophy within the embedded structure and the strong shared governance commitment of our University.
Essentials for Success

Everyone associated with MSU Billings – faculty, staff, students, alumni and community supporters – have a role to play in forming the foundation that will make this plan successful. Through enhanced attention to our resources, facilities, operations, procedures, and communications across all levels of the university, opportunities will arise to improve the university’s standing as an institution of access, excellence, service and value. With a continuing focus on efficiency, aggressive implementation of best practices in technological, educational and service areas, and continuous engagement with students, MSU Billings will set itself apart.

A. Opportunity to Achieve: Enhance efficiency, awareness, and operations across campus.
Specific tasks to undertake to realize this opportunity:

1. Document appropriate policies and procedures, make them easily available and commonly known by MSUB employees, and provide awareness and training when necessary.

2. Develop a comprehensive program to sustain a safe, fun, and mutually supportive working and learning environment for faculty, staff and students.

3. Provide impeccable service by embracing an espoused set of university-wide customer service expectations through awareness and training.

4. Enhance cultural/global awareness of all faculty, staff, and students through communication and training plans.

B. Opportunity to Achieve: Evaluate and reassign personnel and financial resources to match strategic plan priorities.
Specific tasks to undertake to realize this opportunity:

1. Evaluate and when necessary, revise unit organizational structures as academic, student affairs and administrative divisions examine their effectiveness in light of university strategic priorities.

2. Incorporate plans for faculty and staff attrition with appropriate succession planning.

3. Use established budget planning to achieve the Montana University System’s goal of an instruction allocation of 50% and a combined percentage allocated to instruction, academic support, and student services to be a minimum of 70%.

4. Develop a tool to review current budget allocations.

5. Review current programs and services for potential budget reallocation or investments.

6. Reallocate budget savings to the prioritized opportunities for enrollment growth and university enhancement.

7. Work with the MSU Billings Foundation to determine how future development campaigns can be aligned to help execute this plan.
C. Opportunity to Achieve: **Enhance communication concerning our relevant image across all stakeholders.**

Specific tasks to undertake to realize this opportunity:

1. Review and catalog current internal and external communication tools and materials.
2. Develop, consistent with Montana University System goals, a common message with appropriate internal and external strategies to promote the “MSUB Advantage” of value, engagement, access and excellence.
3. Implement an aggressive promotional plan for e-learning courses and programs.
4. Implement a comprehensive communication plan for the Community Engagement/Extended Campus initiative.
5. Develop a marketing and communication plan supporting a comprehensive MSUB Web-based university calendar tool that is used both internally and externally.

D. Opportunity to Achieve: **Update university facility plans to integrate with Futureu.**

Specific tasks to undertake to realize this opportunity:

1. Continue to advocate for approval of, and then prepare for, detailed design, construction, occupation and utilization of the University campus Allied Health/Science Building Project.
2. Continue to advocate for approval of, and then prepare for, detailed design, construction, occupation and utilization of the Residence Hall/Conference Center Complex Building Project.
3. Continue to advocate for approval of, and then prepare for, detailed design, construction, and then occupation and utilization of each component in the Athletic Facilities Master Plan.
4. Perform annual reviews of all university building/facility plans consistent with Futureu.
5. Implement The Space Utilization Committee Concept and use it to create a more collaborative University space expansion and utilization culture.
Conclusion: Action and Advantage

The MSU Billings Advantage is not a marketing slogan, but a way of life at our university. It means our students engage with faculty, pursue leadership and find support at levels unmatched in the Montana University System. It means we are efficient stewards of tuition and taxpayer dollars and use those resources for educational, cultural and economic enhancement at many levels. It means our location in the state’s retail, financial, educational, healthcare and energy hub present our faculty, staff and students with numerous opportunities. Yet while our mission, location and opportunities are unique, nothing resides in a silo. Everything in this plan touches our communities of scholars, learners, service providers and supporters.

It also requires action.

The opportunities that lie ahead of us are many, but cannot be achieved independently or in isolation from the larger community. Faculty, staff, students, alumni and supporters in the community have a collaborative commitment to move this plan forward and hold each other accountable for outcomes. As part of this “Futureu” initiative, each major operational unit of MSU Billings will review, revise and/or create its own strategic plan to capitalize on opportunities and achieve broad goals. Annual reports will review outcomes and outline tasks yet to be achieved. Overall plan review and revision will take place annually to correct our course of actions, inform our decisions and make appropriate programmatic and systemic changes.

The processes will be open and transparent. Tools will be developed to assess, monitor and communicate continuous progress. At each step, our distinctiveness – “The MSUB Advantage” – will be visible daily in teaching, learning and service.