

# Stefani Gray Hicswa, Ph.D.

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## EDUCATION

- Doctor of Philosophy**      **The University of Texas at Austin, 2003**  
Educational Administration  
Cognate: Public Policy and Rural Development  
Dissertation: *The Role of Rural Community College Presidents in Vision Building for Community Development*
- Master of Education**      **Montana State University, Bozeman, 1996**  
Adult, Community, and Higher Education
- Bachelor of Arts**      **University of Montana, Missoula, 1991**  
Organizational Communication  
Honors Thesis: *Attrition at The University of Montana*
- Minor: Spanish  
High Honors, Watkins Scholar, Honors College

## HIGHLIGHTS OF QUALIFICATIONS

- Twenty-one years of progressive administrative experience including 14 at the chief executive level
- Attained the highest graduation rate in Northwest College history in 2018 and 2019
- Achieved the highest fall-to-fall retention rate at Northwest College in 16 years
- Realized a 17% increase in the total unduplicated number of degree and certificate completers at Northwest College from 2015 to 2016
- Implemented student success practices resulting in 74% transfer/graduation rate and 64% retention rate at Miles Community College in 2012
- Led comprehensive strategic enrollment management, strategic planning, and facilities master planning initiatives at two colleges
- Received among the most positive accreditation reports in Northwest College history
- Skilled in organizational development, strategic planning, fundraising, innovation, community relations, academic program assessment, and fiscal accountability
- Possess a collaborative management style with strong technological, spoken, written, and listening skills
- Negotiated numerous collective bargaining unit contracts
- Oversaw construction and funding of Northwest College's largest instructional facility
- Fifteen years collegiate teaching experience

## **EXECUTIVE-LEVEL ADMINISTRATIVE EXPERIENCE**

### **President**

Northwest College, Powell, WY, 2013-present

### **Responsibilities**

Oversee all college operations including planning, policy development, enrollment, fundraising, athletics, residence life, accreditation, a budget of \$28.6 million, \$42 million endowment, 300 employees, and enrollment of 1,100 credit headcount/850 non-credit headcount in a three-county rural area with a population of approximately 49,000.

### **Accomplishments**

Led campus as the COVID-19 Incident Commander through the closure and subsequent reopening of campus. Oversaw reopening protocol development for all campus departments including instruction, athletics, travel, childcare, fitness center, dining, and residence halls.

Led strategic enrollment management and student success initiatives, which resulted in the highest graduation rate in college history in 2018 and 2019 and the highest fall-to-fall retention rate in 16 years. Saw a 17% increase in the total unduplicated number of degree and certificate completers at Northwest College from 2015 to 2016.

Received among the most positive Higher Learning Commission accreditation reports in the institution's history in 2017 and advanced to Open Pathway status.

Oversaw comprehensive program and services assessments which resulted in improved operational efficiencies and significant budget savings throughout campus.

Received unqualified audits with no findings every year since 2015.

Implemented a Summer Leadership Institute to identify and develop effective future leaders and stabilize campus operations.

Created *Strategic Vision 2020* and *Vision 2025* through an inclusive strategic planning process to inform and guide the strategic direction of campus operations.

Revamped the athletic scholarship program and substantially increased annual giving to athletics.

Oversaw construction and funding of the college's largest instructional facility.

Improved employee satisfaction in 2016 by 25%, as evidenced in the Personal Assessment of the College Environment (PACE) Survey.

**EXECUTIVE-LEVEL ADMINISTRATIVE EXPERIENCE (continued)**

**President**

Miles Community College, Miles City, MT, 2006-2013

**Responsibilities**

Oversaw all college operations, including planning, policy development, fundraising, athletics, residence life, accreditation, collective bargaining unit contracts, a budget of \$9.8 million, 150 employees, and an enrollment of 500 credit headcount/1,500 non-credit headcount in a nine-county rural area with a population of approximately 32,000.

**Accomplishments**

Implemented student success practices and quality initiatives resulting in 74% transfer/graduation rate, 64% retention rate, and nomination for the prestigious Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence for two consecutive years.

Implemented institutional strategic planning and policy processes which earned a commendation from the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities.

Addressed all previous accreditation recommendations within four years and implemented outcomes assessment across all academic programs.

Initiated an aggressive academic program implementation and review process, which resulted in the addition of 22 new programs and the discontinuation of seven programs.

Stabilized campus finances under difficult economic circumstances by tying the budget to the campus strategic planning process.

Implemented controls which addressed all previous audit findings in two years. Received unqualified audits with no findings in 2008 and 2010.

Created campus systems which increased annual giving by 96% in three years.

### **SENIOR-LEVEL ADMINISTRATIVE EXPERIENCE**

#### **President**

Strategic Visions Consulting, Wilsall, MT, 2001-2006

#### **Selected Projects/Contracts:**

*Miles Community College, Miles City, MT*

Facilitated campus-wide strategic planning process.

*Parkland College, Champaign, IL*

Moderated nationally recognized leadership seminar. Trained participants in ethical decision making and understanding leadership styles.

*UM Helena College of Technology, Helena, MT*

Researched and analyzed campus issues and made recommendations for improving shared governance, effectiveness, and efficiency. Researched and designed third-semester welding curriculum. Projected and prioritized capital equipment needs. Worked with faculty to develop operational budgets for all occupational programs.

*Flathead Valley Community College, Kalispell, MT*

Reviewed college policy manual and made recommendations for substantive revisions.

#### **Interim Director of Bozeman Operations (Start-up, now Gallatin College)** MSU Great Falls College of Technology, Bozeman, MT, March-July 2005

Contracted to establish infrastructure for a new branch campus in a fast-growing university community not currently served by a community college. Served as the chief operating officer and chief academic officer. Responsible for the administration of campus services, programs and operations including supervision of faculty, staff, programs, and facilities. Implemented an associate of science in aviation program in partnership with Summit Aviation. Created an academic development center to assist students in developmental courses. Facilitated communication and cooperation between personnel at MSU Great Falls and Montana State University, which resulted in development of a seamless registration system between Montana State University and the College of Technology. Negotiated schedule options for university athletes needing developmental math courses.

**SENIOR-LEVEL ADMINISTRATIVE EXPERIENCE (continued)**

**Visiting Scholar, President's Office (Associate Vice President Level)**  
Parkland College, Champaign, IL, 2003

Selected as a visiting scholar to study exemplary practices and research methods to enhance institutional excellence at a college with a service region of 243,000 residents, FTE of 12,000, and operating budget of \$35.8 million. Analyzed and made recommendations to restructure the Adult and Community Education Program, saving approximately \$140,000 annually. Developed an operational plan for the Adult Degree Completion Center. Identified performance indicators for the College Development Office and made recommendations regarding the role and scope of the Director of Development. Analyzed future trends and assisted senior administrators in goal alignment for the 2005-2010 strategic plan.

**Interim Instructional Dean and Director of Strategic Planning (Start-up)**  
Cy Fair College, Houston, TX, 2002

Led and implemented the collegewide strategic planning process for a newly established college in Houston with a service region of 750,000 residents, FTE of 7,000, and operating budget of \$23.6 million. Determined instructional equipment needs for 53 academic departments including trades, technical, and general education programs. Chaired 15 search committees and hired faculty experienced in team-teaching and distance-learning pedagogical methodologies.

**Lincoln County Campus Director**  
Flathead Valley Community College, Libby, MT, 1999-2001

Responsible for the advancement of countywide educational programs in a rural, economically-depressed service region with a population of 20,000. Supervised and evaluated all campus operations, including curriculum, physical plant, bookstore, faculty of 45, staff of 15, and an enrollment of 200 credit headcount/350 non-credit headcount. Projected, planned, and monitored annual revenues and expenditures for a \$1,000,000 budget, including state and county allocations, grants, student tuition, and fees. Purchased land, raised funds, and designed a new campus facility. Raised \$2.2 million for capital improvements in one year. Established a three-year institutional quality improvement plan, which was 90% complete in two years. Decreased fund balance deficit by 83% in two years. Implemented retention and enrollment management strategies, which immediately improved public relations and increased enrollment by 16% in three semesters.

### **ADDITIONAL EXPERIENCE**

**Assistant Director, Upward Bound (TRIO)**  
Flathead Valley Community College, Kalispell, MT, 1994-1999

Responsible for the day-to-day administration and performance standards of a TRIO program designed to assist low-income, first-generation, minority, and disabled high school students develop the skills and motivation necessary to enter and succeed in post-secondary education. Supervised and evaluated a staff of 12 and managed a \$235,000 budget. Raised student performance standards and increased participation by 50% in four years.

**Transfer Advisor, Student Support Services (TRIO)**  
Flathead Valley Community College, Kalispell, MT, 1991-1994

Implemented a program to facilitate successful retention and transfer of low-income, first generation, minority, and disabled community college students to bachelor's degree-granting institutions. Assisted over 1,500 students in three years with admissions, financial aid, and academic advising. Sixty percent of students earned a bachelor's degree within three years of transferring.

### **FACULTY EXPERIENCE, GRADUATE**

#### **Adjunct Faculty, Higher Education**

University of Wyoming, online, 2018-present

Developed and taught HEID 5660, *Community College*, examining the philosophy, organization, and administration of the community college.

#### **Visiting Faculty, Community College Leadership**

National American University, online, 2015-present

Served as a guest lecturer on transformational leadership for the Community College Leadership Program doctorate capstone course. Served on doctoral dissertation committees and supervised practicums.

#### **Guest Lecturer, Department of Human Resource Education**

University of Illinois, Champaign-Urbana, IL, 2003

Introduced graduate students taking HRE 444, *The Community College*, to the role and mission of community college education in the United States.

### **FACULTY EXPERIENCE, UNDERGRADUATE**

#### **Instructor, Humanities Division**

Flathead Valley Community College, Kalispell, MT, 1992-1999

Taught *Introduction to Interpersonal Communication* from 1998-1999 using experiential learning pedagogy. Developed and team taught *Tolerance and Intolerance* in 1995 as part of the Flathead Valley Community College Honors Symposium. Developed, implemented, and taught *Freshman Seminar* from 1992-1994. Served as an academic advisor for high-risk students on financial aid probation.

#### **Instructor, College of Arts and Sciences**

The University of Montana, Missoula, MT, 1990

Developed, implemented and taught *Freshman Seminar* fall semester 1990. Served as an academic advisor.

### SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

- Hicswa, S.G. (2020). Creating a home away from home for international students. *Community College Journal*, 90(5), 8-9. [https://www.ccjournal-digital.com/ccjournal/april\\_may\\_2020](https://www.ccjournal-digital.com/ccjournal/april_may_2020)
- Hicswa, S.G. (2017). Crafting a rewarding life: A president's perspective. In Ellis, M. & Garcia, L. *Generation X Presidents Leading Community Colleges* (pp. 85-93). Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Hicswa, S.G. (2011). *Vision Miles City*. Miles City Area Economic Development Council. <http://content.milesc.edu/DownloadFiles/VisionMilesCityDocument.pdf>
- Hicswa, S.G. (2004). Rural community visioning. In Northcutt, N. & McCoy, D. *Interactive qualitative analysis: A systems method for qualitative research* (pp. 413-418). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Hicswa, S.G. (2004). *The role of community college presidents in vision building for rural community development* (Doctoral dissertation, The University of Texas at Austin, 2003). Dissertation Abstracts International. AAT3116317, 232



**SELECTED PRESENTATIONS and KEYNOTE ADDRESSES**

- Hicswa, S.G., & Sedney, C. (2019). *The applied baccalaureate and Wyoming's attainment goals*. Wyoming Association of Community College Trustees Annual Conference. Powell, WY.
- Reid, B., Hicswa, S.G., Rainone, J.J. (2018). *Executive CASE studies panel*. CASE Community College Executive Symposium. Palm Springs, CA.
- Hicswa, S.G. & Wetzel, S.B. (2018). *Better together: Building strong college and foundation relationships*. CASE Annual Conference for Institutionally Related Foundations. Miami, FL.
- Hicswa, S.G. (2018). *Leading edge and emerging trends in agribusiness* panel facilitator. Wyoming Agriculture Diversification Summit. Powell, WY.
- Wragge W.W. & Hicswa, S.G. (2016). *Wyoming governance institute for student success*. Association of Community College Trustees Leadership Congress. New Orleans, LA.
- Hicswa, S.G., Newlin, A., & Hanan, R.A. (2016). *Mission possible: Meaningfully revising mission statements using a data-driven methodology*. The Higher Learning Commission Annual Conference. Chicago, IL.
- Hicswa, S.G. & Harper-Marinick, M. (2015). *Your first presidency: The minority serving or rural institution, a president's perspective*. American Association of Community Colleges Annual Convention. San Antonio, TX.
- Hicswa, S.G. & Limbaugh, J.M. (2012). *Strengthening the energy workforce through Eastern Montana workforce training*. Eastern Montana Development Forum. Miles City, MT.
- Hicswa, S.G. & Nieves, W. (2011). *The leader and ethics: Setting the example*. American Association of Community Colleges Future Leader Institute. Baltimore, MD.
- Miles, C.L., Burke, M.L., & Hicswa, S.G. (2011). *Building the pipeline for equality and excellence en route to the college presidency*. American Association of Community Colleges Annual Convention. New Orleans, LA.
- Hicswa, S.G. (2003). *Building hope for rural survival: A model for college leaders*. Rural Community College Alliance Annual Conference. San Antonio, TX.

**SELECTED PROFESSIONAL and COMMUNITY SERVICE**

**National**

Higher Education Research and Development Institute (HERDI)  
National Advisory Board, 2014-present

American Association of Community Colleges  
President's Academy Executive Committee, 2019-present

Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society  
Wyoming All State Coordinator, 2019-present

Association of Community College Trustees  
Western Region Awards Committee, 2011-2013

American Association of Community Colleges  
Future Leaders Institute Faculty, 2010 and 2011

Council for Opportunity in Education (TRIO)  
Board of Directors, 1995-1998

**Regional**

Mountain States Association of Community Colleges  
Treasurer, 2011-2013

Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities  
Evaluator, 2012-2013

ASPIRE, Inc. (TRIO)  
Board of Directors, 1995-1998  
President, 1996-1997  
Past-Presidents' Council Founder, 1997  
Finance Committee Chair, 1998  
Strategic Planning Chair, 1998

**SELECTED PROFESSIONAL and COMMUNITY SERVICE (continued)**

**State**

Wyoming Community College Presidents Council

Academic Affairs Committee Presidential Liaison, 2013-2019

Phi Theta Kappa Presidential Liaison, 2013-present

President, 2019-present

Educational Attainment Executive Council, gubernatorial appointment

Co-chair, 2018-present

Wyoming Tomorrow Legislative Task Force, gubernatorial appointment, 2019-present

University of Wyoming Council on Economic Development, 2020-present

Montana Workforce Development Taskforce, 2011-2013

Chair, 2012-2013

Governor's Community Service Commission, gubernatorial appointment, 2010-2013

Montana Campus Compact

Board of Directors, 2006-2013

The University of Montana Alumni Association

Board of Directors, 1999-2001

**SELECTED PROFESSIONAL and COMMUNITY SERVICE (continued)**

**Local**

Powell Economic Partnership, Chamber of Commerce, and Visitor Center  
Board of Directors, 2013-present  
Vice-Chair, 2019-present

Forward Cody  
Board of Directors, 2013-present  
Executive Board, 2019-present

Buffalo Bill Center of the West, Buffalo Bill Memorial Association  
Education Interpretation Advisory Board, 2020-present

Powell Rotary, 2013-2019

Miles City Area Economic Development Council Board of Directors, 2006-2013  
Board Chair, 2010

Holy Rosary Hospital Board of Directors, 2010-2013

Miles City Rotary, 2006-2013  
President, 2012

Libby Area Chamber of Commerce  
Board of Directors, 2000-2001

Libby Economic Development Council  
Board of Directors, 1999-2000

**AWARDS**

Phi Theta Kappa, Shirley B. Gordon Award of Distinction, 2018

Rotary International Membership Award, 2012

Distinguished Graduate, College of Education, University of Texas, Austin, 2007