Year Three Peer-Evaluation Report

MSU Great Falls College of Technology

Great Falls, Montana

April 25 – 27, 2012

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II. Introduction

Montana State University (MSU) Great Falls College of Technology is a public two-year college in Great Falls, Montana, a member of the Montana University System (MUS). It has been accredited by NWCCU (previously NASC) since 1979. It was brought under the control of the Montana Board of Regents of Higher Education by the legislature in 1987. In the legislative reorganization of higher education in 1994 it became one of four campuses of the Montana State University (MSU) system. It is now the largest stand-alone college of technology in the state.

The Montana Board of Regents of Higher Education through the Commissioner of Higher Education has recently initiated a program to increase the awareness of and use of Montana's two-year colleges. With funding from the Lumina Foundation, the state has embarked an educational initiative to re-brand the two-year colleges and enhance their interaction with K-12 education and the community. In that initiative MSU Great Falls is increasing it's activities to serve its local community in the comprehensive community college mission and, as for all two-year colleges in the state, is involved in a discussion of potential name change.

III. Assessment of the Self-Evaluation Report and Support Materials

Assessment of the Institution's Self-Evaluation Report

The Year Three Report presented to the evaluation committee by MSU Great Falls College of Technology was well-organized and made effective use of online links to supporting materials. The document established for the evaluators a good initial understanding of the institution and was organized by the accreditation standards.

This Year Three report and visit is part of an accelerated process for the college implementing the new accreditation standards (2010). Hence the Year Three report and visit has occurred only one year after the Year One Report. The inclusion of discussion of progress on Recommendation 1 from that report is an appropriate subject for a Year Three report. On the other hand, the evaluation committee believes that a report on Recommendation 2 from Year One would be more appropriately included in a Year Five Report, since that recommendation deals with issues addressed in Standard 4. Nevertheless the self-study includes the actions taken by the institution to address both Recommendations 1 and 2, which were reviewed.

Because the institution is in a compressed schedule of working the nominally seven-year accreditation process, they have included some of their documentation of their activities related to Standards 3 and 4 in the Year Three report. A brief written discussion of the purpose of including those items would have added clarity to the purpose of including this

material. That said, these items demonstrate that MSU Great Falls is moving rapidly ahead with some processes that that are called for in subsequent years of the new standards.

The evaluation committee agreed that additional information in the self-study report on the interaction of the 'Common Ground' operational plan (2011-2016), the 2009-2013 Strategic Plan and accreditation planning would have been useful.

Topics Addressed as an Addendum to the Self-Evaluation Report

Addendum I: Progress on Recommendation 1 of the Commission action related to the Year One Report of March 2011

Recommendation 1 of the Commission action follows:

The evaluation panel recommends that the College refine data collection methodology and develop effective assessment measures for core indicators of achievement to ensure that results are measureable for evaluating the accomplishment of the objectives for each core theme.

In response the College conducted a thorough review of the core indicators, with the help of the Office of Institutional Research, established in early 2011. They modified core indicators 5, 10 and 11, which had specifically been identified as a concern in the year one peer-evaluation report. For core indicator 5 (demonstration of abilities) they selected the CCSSE measures of attainment as proxies for the College's Eight Abilities. For core indicator 10 (license and certification pass rates) they implemented a survey of the academic program directors who track and report pass rates for licensing and certification of their students. For core indicator 11 (employer satisfaction with graduates) they have implemented an annual survey of the membership of the Great Falls Area Chamber of Commerce and the Great Falls Development Authority. Data was presented for all core indicators, except core indicator 11, which will have the annual survey done in the June 2012.

The evaluation committee agrees that these actions by the College are a satisfactory response to Recommendation 1.

Addendum II: Progress on Recommendation 2 of the Commission action related to the Year One Report of March 2011

Recommendation 2 of the Commission action follows:

While the College has documented a faculty-driven, comprehensive system of assessment of student achievement, the evaluation panel recommends that the College provide evidence that students who complete its educational course, programs and degrees, wherever offered and however delivered, achieve identified course, program and degree learning outcomes (Standard 4.A.3 and 4.B.2).*
*This Recommendation is in response to Recommendations 1 of the Spring 2010 Regular Interim Evaluation Report as reported in the addendum to the College's Year One Self-Evaluation Report, and thus, the Standards cited in this Recommendation reflect the conversion to the 2010 Standards.

In response to this request the College is implementing a four-phase process that will support systematic and consistent evaluation of both student performance and faculty teaching. There has been a renewed focus on creating a college-wide system for storing student learning outcomes data and longitudinal tracking of that data for better understanding of student learning and the effect of change on that learning.

These actions indicate a commitment of the College to address this issue in its on-going activities. The committee recommends that the College address this recommendation in its Year Five Self-Study Report, since that report includes a report on Standards 4.A and 4.B.

IV. Eligibility Requirements

MSU Great Falls appears to meet the Eligibility Requirements of the NWCCU. It has decades of operation and graduates a number of students with certificates and degrees each year. It is authorized to provide higher education by the Montana State Board of Regents. The college has a published mission and has identified core themes appropriate to its role as a college of technology. The mission of MSU Great Falls is "... to foster the success of our students and their communities through innovative, flexible learning opportunities for people of all age, backgrounds, and aspirations resulting in self-fulfillment and competitiveness in an increasingly global society." The core themes are: workforce development, transfer preparation, academic preparation and community development. That mission and those core themes were approved by the governing board in May 2009. The college is operationally independent from Montana State University and is managed by a CEO/Dean. The current dean is on an interim appointment and will serve until the permanent dean is found in an on-going search.

The institution has a central administrative staff hired by the CEO and a faculty of full-time and part-time membership. The educational programs meet rigorous national standards and there is both general education and related instruction offered as appropriate to each degree or certificate. There is appropriate library, physical and technological infrastructure in place and the college operates with academic freedom for employees and students. There are appropriate admissions processes in place to support students, and there is appropriate public information including a college catalog published. The college has financial resources appropriate to a college of its size and complexity and undergoes an external financial audit by the state of Montana annually.

The college discloses information as appropriate to the Commission and accepts the standards and policies of the Commission. There are published student learning outcomes for degrees and programs and the College appears to have in place appropriate processes to assure institutional effectiveness. It appears to operate at an appropriate scale to its resources and purpose and is sustainable as a member of public higher education in Montana.

V. Mission, Core Themes, and Expectations

Standard 1.A Mission

The mission of MSU Great Falls is "... to foster the success of our students and their communities through innovative, flexible learning opportunities for people of all age, backgrounds, and aspirations resulting in self-fulfillment and competitiveness in an increasingly global society." There was no change in the mission from the one presented in the college Year One report submitted in March 2011. This mission was approved by the governing board, the Montana State Board of Regents in March 2009.

The college defines mission fulfillment as the functional deployment of the comprehensive community college philosophy and the achievement of the objectives tied to the four core themes of the college. They have developed values, policies and objectives around their core themes within the context of their role in higher education in the state. These indicate a focus on continuous improvement, although changes based on measurements were not presented.

Standard 1.B Core Themes

The four core themes are tied to their mission in four specific areas: workforce development, transfer preparation, academic preparation and community development. They have chosen seventeen core indicators based on the 16 core indicators of effectiveness for community colleges by Alfred, Shults and Sybert. They demonstrate how each core indicator applies to one or more of the core themes and discuss data collection, institutional effectiveness and mission fulfillment.

VI. Resources and Capacity

Standard 2.A Governance

There is an effective and widely understood system of governance at MSU Great Falls. The faculty and staff are actively involved in the decision-making process through a system of committees with defined purpose. For example the College Planning, Budget, and Analysis Committee (CPBAC) has wide constituent representation and makes recommendations to the CEO on planning and budget issues, as well as issues related to institutional research.

One of eight institutions of higher education in the Montana University System, MSU Great Falls College of Technology is one of four that are clustered under the Montana State University banner. The hierarchy includes a working relationship with MSU, but the only required linkage is the process to select a CEO (Dean). That process is organized by campus

to meet the requirements of the President of MSU. The process leads to a recommendation to appoint a CEO to the Montana University System Board of Regents, who take the action, at their discretion. The MSU president conducts the annual evaluation of the CEO performance and passes her recommendations to the Regents for their action. The Board operates only as a body of the whole, focuses on policy and strategic direction of the system and appears to meet the requirements of the NWCCU for a governing board. The Board regularly evaluates its own performance.

The staff that supports the higher education system operation includes a Commissioner of Higher Education. That office is also works in planning activities for all of the units in the system. The college operates as an autonomous unit of the MUS under the leadership of the CEO. There is currently an interim CEO with an appointment through June of this year and an active search for a permanent CEO with campus input.

The college has an effective system of management and appoints appropriately qualified administrators.

Standard 2.B Human Resources

The College has a sufficient number of personnel to maintain its programs and operations, although there are times when key positions are left vacant for significant time periods. Position announcements are available on the College website as well as in a printed format, and include clearly defined duties, responsibilities, and minimum and preferred qualifications. The Human Resources Department provides hiring authorities with recruitment and selection guidelines prior to and during the recruitment process.

While the College has a sufficient number of personnel, the evaluator was concerned that the absence of timely recruiting for key positions has the potential to negatively impact college operations. (Standard 2.B.1)

The Human Resources Department notifies employees about and tracks compliance with the performance evaluation process for classified, professional and administrative employees. Classified staff members and professional and administrative staff are evaluated annually.

The College provides faculty, staff, administrators, and other employees with appropriate opportunities and support for professional development. Funding for professional development is requested through the College Planning, Budget, and Analysis Committee (CPBAC) and is provided based upon alignment with the strategic direction of the College. The CPBAC has designated and identified a pool of funds for professional development, which are budgeted and released when enrollment goals are met.

Professional development and growth opportunities are identified by employees and supervisors through the goal setting process that occurs as part of the annual performance evaluation. Requests are prioritized within departments and as funds become available they are awarded in prioritized order. In addition, employees are provided tuition waivers and some employees have used the waiver to obtain degrees. Employees are also encouraged to participate in relevant workshops and trainings on campus and within the region.

Consistent with its mission, core themes, programs, and services, the College employs appropriately qualified faculty as required by the State of Montana, which specifies minimum qualifications for two-year faculty, based on whether they are teaching in transfer programs/disciplines, career/technical program or professional and continuing education. The requirements include formal education, graduate credits in the field, work experience and specialty training. The Montana Board of Regents policy governing two year faculty teaching requirements is accessible through a link on the College website.

It is not clear whether or not the College employs a sufficient number of faculty to achieve its educational objectives, establish and oversee academic policies, and assure the integrity and continuity of its academic programs, wherever and however delivered. The evaluation committee found that part-time faculty is increasingly required to attend non-compensated training such as State of Montana instructor certification and D2L certification. Coupled with the area's demographics and low instructional compensation rates there is growing concern over the attrition of this critical resource and the potential negative impact this may have on meeting the College's goals of student completion.

While the College employs appropriately qualified faculty members, the evaluator is concerned that the high attrition of part-time faculty has the potential to negatively impact the College's ability to achieve its educational objectives, and assure the integrity and continuity of its academic programs (Standard 2.B.4).

The collective bargaining agreement between the Board of Regents and the faculty designates requirements for workload and faculty responsibilities, including expectations for teaching, service, scholarship, research, and/or artistic creation. All faculty members are evaluated in a regular, systematic, substantive, and collegial manner at least once every three years and multiple indices of effectiveness are used for evaluation. Specific requirements for evaluation are included in the collective bargaining agreement and included in the Faculty Evaluation Handbook.

All new part-time faculty members teaching in the academic divisions are evaluated during their first semester of teaching. After the initial evaluation, returning adjunct faculty members are evaluated at least once every three years. The evaluation protocol and forms for evaluation are specified in the Adjunct Faculty Handbook.

Standard 2.C Education Resources

The institution provides programs, wherever offered and however delivered, with appropriate content and rigor that are consistent with its mission. After interviewing the first line academic administrators and program faculty the evaluator found that the college has maintained appropriate instructional rigor that aligns well with its mission. Examples of exceptional historical student performance on nationally-normed professional examinations were cited and provided. Student learning outcomes are published (most often in syllabi) and are clear and appear to connect directly and specifically with their widely recognized fields of study. Of note is the adoption by the mathematics department of common final exams as a method to achieve this intent.

The institution identifies and publishes expected course, program, and degree learning outcomes. The evaluator reviewed a random sample of course syllabi and program outlines from numerous and various college programs indicated that the college had identified and published learning outcomes for courses, programs, and degrees and that these outcomes were directly provided to enrolled students. Programmatic and degree outcomes were readily available and easily produced when requested.

Credit and degrees, wherever offered and however delivered, are based on documented student achievement. After interviewing first line academic administrators and program faculty the evaluator found that the college does document student achievement appropriately and that credit / degrees are consistent with peer norms found in higher education. This was evidenced by the college's partnership in a state-wide effort to accurately document student achievement to facilitate transferability.

Degree programs, wherever offered and however delivered, demonstrate a coherent design. A random sampling of degree programs showed a consistent and logical structure that had appropriate depth, breadth, and sequence. After interviewing the college registrar and reviewing the college website and printed literature provided, the evaluator found that the college does clearly define and publish admission and graduation requirements.

Faculty, through well-defined structures and processes with clearly defined authority and responsibilities, exercise a major role in the design, approval, implementation, and revision of the curriculum. After interviewing numerous faculty the evaluator fund that the college engages faculty very effectively in all aspects of the curriculum process including design, development, implementation, and revision through a collaborative and inclusive set of processes. After interviewing the college HR director and examining several faculty selection records the evaluator found that the college does include faculty in an active role in the selection process. However, a review of the actual college policy indicates that while suggested, the actual inclusion of faculty in this process may be optional. It appears to the evaluation committee that the possibility exists for exclusion of faculty from the screening and selection process, which would not comply with this standard.

Faculty with teaching responsibilities, in partnership with library and information resources personnel, ensure that the use of library and information resources is integrated into the learning process. After interviewing numerous instructional faculty the evaluator found that the use/integration of library resources in the design and delivery of instructional programs is appropriate, wide spread and meets the standard.

After interviewing numerous instructional faculty and the college registrar the evaluator found strong evidence that the granting of credit for prior experiential learning in general is guided by well written and clear policies and procedures that conform to the standard's 25% maximum and has rigorous review by qualified subject matter faculty. However, a specific example came to the evaluation committee's attention involving the Fire and Rescue Technology – AAS program where the 25% limit was exceeded (53.9%). After discussion with both the registrar and the college CAO followed by a phone conversation with the Fire Services Training School that delivered 34 of the total 63 credits (53.9% of the program total) it became apparent to the evaluation committee that the college registrar was accepting clock hours and converting them into college credit hours (experiential learning credit). The Fire Services Training School is not accredited by the commission and does not grant recognized college level credit as such.

No granting of credit for normally offered programs occurs without recommendation of the faculty from that program except as noted in the indicated exception. Student transcripts clearly identify these non-traditional credits and no guarantees are made to petitioners as to how many, if any, credits would be awarded prior to the comprehensive evaluation by the subject matter faculty member(s).

The final judgment in accepting transfer credit is the responsibility of the receiving institution. The college does have adequate safeguards (in the form or processes and policies) in place to ensure that credit transferred into the college does meet minimum necessary content, quality, and difficulty/rigor. After interviewing the college registrar the evaluator was able to pinpoint a pair of articulation agreements between the college and The University of Great Falls (a private four year institution) and Montana State University – Northern (located in Havre) based upon a historical pattern of student movement (in both directions) between these institutions.

Undergraduate Programs

The general education component of undergraduate programs demonstrates an integrated course of study. Upon review of several randomly selected programs of study (both certificate and degree) there was clear evidence of a precisely defined general education core set of courses. In the Montana University System (MUS) this core has been defined for all state public institutions of higher education as a requirement and the college has in turn adopted these courses and integrated them into their specific degree or certificate programs.

The college has demonstrated that the general education components of its baccalaureate degree programs and transfer associate degree programs have identifiable and assessable learning outcomes. After a review of the college's transfer degree program the evaluation committee found clearly identified learning outcomes. These outcomes align with the college's mission.

After interviewing first line academic administrators and numerous faculty the evaluator found that no programs currently embed related instruction in the main program of study. This was confirmed after reviewing several randomly chosen programs of study. One division plans to pilot this process during the upcoming 2012 – 2013 academic year.

Graduate Programs – Not Applicable

Continuing Education and Non-Credit Programs

After interviewing assigned staff the evaluator found that the college's continuing education programs do align with the college's mission and goals. This is also reflected in the college core theme #4 measurements.

The institution maintains direct and sole responsibility for the academic quality of all aspects of its continuing education and special learning. After reviewing several randomly selected continuing education offerings and interviewing assigned staff the evaluation committee found direct connection with the college faculty from those subject matter areas. The college has clearly defined policies and/or procedures that direct the design, delivery, and assessment of continuing education coursework and/or programs.

After interviewing the college's continuing education staff and subsequently reviewing the college policy on granting/converting continuing education coursework into credit the evaluator determined that the college complies with the standard on use of such coursework.

A review of the college's continuing education historical records showed a well-kept and comprehensive set of documentation that provides an accurate and historical picture of continuing education at the college for the previous five years.

Standard 2.D Student Support Resources

The College provides varied programs and services to support student learning. Student achievement and success is a focus for the faculty, staff, and administrators, and this commitment is evident in the learning environment and learning support services available. Students report a positive and effective learning environment that provides them a great deal of support. A few examples of educational of support for student learning follow.

Two full-time eLearning staff, a Student Support Coordinator and an Instructional Technology Specialist provide training and technical support for students attending MSU – Great Falls. Training on the Desire2Learn (D2L) learning management system is offered in a variety of ways. New students are required to register for a Desire2Learn (D2L) orientation session, which is offered in person or online. Continued technical support for students is offered by phone, walk-in, and online chat. In addition two instructional designers assist faculty with course development to facilitate student learning.

Faculty in the health science division provide special learning sessions to assist the students, often prior to examinations. Students also can meet with paid tutors in the Learning Center for their specific program of study.

The Graphic Design, Computer Information Technology, Interior Design, and Sustainable Energy Technician programs offer open lab times where students have access to program specific equipment and software. The division works with the Learning Center to provide tutors for accounting, computers, and business writing.

The Learning Center has changed from requiring an appointment to a drop-in service to improve student access and increase frequency of use. Hours have been expanded and Homework MT, a product purchased by the State of Montana to facilitate online tutoring, has been implemented. The Accounting Procedures I course had low success rates, so adding tutoring services for this course and its sequential course is one of many steps being taken to improve student success.

The evaluator compliments the College for providing comprehensive resources and support for students through the eLearning department to facilitate student learning and success.

Campus safety and security is addressed in the online Catalog as well as in brochures available in Student Services. Campus crime prevention information and campus crime statistics are also available on the website. The College completes the annual Campus Safety and Security Survey as required by the U. S. Department of Education. It can be viewed on the College website.

The College's safety committee, which includes a student member, identifies campus safety needs and acts to improve overall campus safety. In addition, the College contracts with a local security company to provide services.

Consistent with its mission, core themes, and characteristics, the College recruits and admits students with the potential to benefit from its educational offerings. All new, transfer or readmitted students are required to attend a registration session conducted by the Admissions Department. At the session students are assigned an academic advisor in the Advising and Career Center and receive materials including as a guide to the college, program advising sheet, and registration worksheet. Students learn about the policies and procedures of the school, campus resources, placement test scores or transfer work, as well as program specific information.

In the event of program elimination or significant change in requirements, the College provides information about these changes to students in a variety of ways. The specific program director or division director sends an initial notification (by mail) to all currently enrolled students. This notification is also sent to any prospective students and to previous students who did not complete the program requirements. Students are advised about the changes and what they must do to either continue in the current program or adjust to the new requirements. Students are encouraged to meet with the program director regarding their plans and any concerns they may have. Students are given the opportunity to complete their program with either the courses that continue to be offered or through course substitutions appropriate for the program.

The College website provides current and accurate information through an online catalog and student handbook that include the following:

a) Institutional mission and core themes;
b) Entrance requirements and procedures;
c) Grading policy
d) Information on academic programs and courses, including degree and program completion requirements, expected learning outcomes, required course sequences, and projected timelines to completion based on normal student progress and the frequency of course offerings;
e) Names, titles, degrees held, and conferring institutions for administrators and full-time faculty;
f) Rules, regulations for conduct, rights, and responsibilities;
g) Tuition, fees, and other program costs;
h) Refund policies and procedures for students who withdraw from enrollment;
i) Opportunities and requirements for financial aid; and
j) Academic calendar.

The office of the registrar works with each department to make sure all material is up-to-date and accurate. Each year the registrar's office works with program directors and faculty members to review the catalog information for accuracy before it is finalized and works closely with the marketing, admissions and recruiting offices to ensure that all information is accurate. The online catalog and printed program cards reflect specific licensure and/ or unique requirements for the career field. In the program areas, students are given any other related materials that will prepare them for entry into the workforce.

The Registrar's Office is responsible for maintaining paper and electronic student records, which are located in a secure, fire-proof vault in Student Central. The College uses the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers file management and record retention recommendations as guidance for current academic and admissions records retention schedule. The financial aid office uses the Department of Education federal financial aid regulations and Montana state recommendations as guidance for the records retention, archiving and purging schedule.

The College uses SCT Banner for maintaining electronic admissions, academic and financial aid records. The servers for Banner are maintained and backed up by information technology services at the MSU-Bozeman campus.

All employees who have access to the electronic or paper records are required to watch a Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) training video and sign a confidentially statement. New, transfer, and readmitted students are notified of FERPA regulations during new student registration and orientation. The online catalog and student handbook also include the College's FERPA policy. Students can find forms to release or restrict FERPA information on the College's website or obtain the form from staff in Student Central.

Consistent with the College mission, student needs, and institutional resources, the Financial Aid Office focuses on service to students and stewardship of funds. Many aspects of financial aid are mandated by federal and state entities that define the parameters within which institutional programs must operate. Within these requirements, the Financial Aid Office develops and reviews cost of attendance budgets that reflect student needs and packaging policies to extend the limited amount of funding to reach the maximum number of students. Information regarding financial aid programs, student eligibility requirements and procedures for applying for financial aid is available on the College website.

The college offers federal and state aid, which includes the federal Direct Student Loan program, Pell grants, SEOG grants, federal work-study, state work-study, Montana Baker Grant (MTAP), Montana Higher Education Grant and Governor's Postsecondary Need Based Scholarships. The College also offers scholarship assistance from various sources and provides information on its website about scholarships.

In accordance with federal regulation and to ensure accountability, the Financial Aid Office submits various reports to the state and federal government. The Financial Aid Office is also subject to internal audits performed by the state as well as federal program reviews.

Students receiving financial assistance are informed of repayment obligations for student loans. Students are informed of their repayment obligations in three ways: student loan entrance counseling, the master promissory note, and student loan exit counseling.

Federal regulations require the financial aid office to monitor complete withdrawals and unofficial withdrawals to determine if a student has attended classes sufficiently to have "earned" their federal financial aid. The Financial Aid Office regularly monitors the College's Cohort Default Rate (CDR), which is consistently lower than the national average.

The College has designed a new advising system and created the Advising and Career Center (ACC) to provide advising services to all degree and non degree-seeking students at the

College. The ACC is designed to provide holistic advising services including course registration, referral to college and community resources, academic and career goal setting, academic planning, major exploration, and general student support. Advising has transitioned as the model changed from a faculty advisor model to a centralized professional advisor model. All new students are assigned to an advisor who will advise them until graduation. This creates continuity in advising for the student, which supports student development and success. Advisors are assigned as academic division liaisons, participating in division meetings and receiving division information in order to remain up-to-date with program changes.

As part of the ACC design process and fulfillment of the College's Common Ground goals, a group was formed to focus specifically on advising at the College in addition to serving as an advisory board for the ACC. This group is called the Career and Advising Board (CAB). Within this process, the CAB has developed an advising syllabus which outlines the definition of advising, an advising mission statement, student learning outcomes (SLOs), goals of the ACC, responsibilities of the advisor and advisee, contact information for the ACC, and college resources. The syllabus is provided to students at advising sessions, while electronic copies are sent to online only students. Student learning outcomes to be measured for the first year of the new advising program are 1) development of an academic plan for each degree-seeking student and 2) student understanding of how to access resources on the College campus.

Another component of the new advising process is an extended orientation class called COLS 102: Navigating MSU – Great Falls. The course was developed with a cross-campus group of individuals from both academic divisions and student affairs, and introduces students to advising through course assignments including "Meet Your Advisor" and creating an academic plan.

Each advisor in the ACC provides an online advising room shell utilizing the D2L learning management system. The advising shell allows all students to connect with their advisor and access advising information, such as the advising syllabus, catalog information, and academic planning forms. In addition, the advising rooms allow students to add their academic plans to the drop box for advisors to review.

The evaluator compliments the College on its creation of a centralized Advising and Career Center to provide consistent and ongoing advising for students to support student achievement of educational goals.

The College's co-curricular activities are student driven and are consistent with the institution's mission, core themes, programs and services. The overarching organization for student involvement is the Associated Students of MSU – Great Fall. The student government by-laws and constitution are provided on the College website. The student government has authority over the student activity fee and distributes funds to student clubs and organizations for activities and projects.

The bookstore and cafeteria were combined into a single operation under common management in 2011. Extended hours provide evening students access to books, supplies, food, and drinks. Bookstore management works directly with the academic departments and faculty each semester to determine education material needs and ensure required books and supplies are available to students at the beginning of each semester. Students

may purchase their books and supplies by charging them to their financial aid accounts at the checkout stand. Both mandatory and non-mandatory books and supplies are available to enhance the learning environment. Students and staff report that they can provide informal input to the manager regarding new items for the bookstore and that their ideas are often implemented. The College has no intercollegiate athletics/co-curricular programs.

The College uses physical proof at the time of enrollment to establish the identity of each enrolling student, whether campus-based or online. In addition, each student's identity is confirmed using the student integration system (Banner) prior to establishing password security for all online interactions. All students have unique, secure usernames and passwords to access the campus learning management system for online courses (Desire2Learn) and other necessary services. There are not any current or projected charges to students associated with the identity verification process.

Standard 2.E Library and Information Resources

The Weaver Library at the College has a wide variety of services to support its users. After an extensive review and weeding, the print collection, while small, is now focused on more current materials in areas taught at the College. Library staff actively solicits input from library users and is very responsive to suggestions for new materials, making every effort to rapidly supply needed items (including going so far as driving to a local bookstore to purchase a needed item). Through the use of a dedicated student library fee, the library has an extremely well funded materials budget.

In addition to a small number of print journals, the Library subscribes to a very wide variety of on-line databases and reference sources which are available on-campus and via online access 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The breadth and depth of the online resources for students and faculty is commendable. Students also have access to interlibrary loan services and can borrow materials directly from cooperating institutions. Students who are not in Great Falls can ask to have photocopies and books sent to them.

A new library director was hired in May 2010 after a protracted search process that resulted in the library being without a director for two years. Shortly after arriving, the new director was also assigned management of the distance learning operations in a new unit called eLearning and Library Services, reporting to the Associate Dean/Chief Academic Officer. In addition, the Director has recently also been assigned supervisory responsibility for a new testing center with two part-time staff members. These additional assignments have meant that about one half of the time that was originally envisioned as a 100% library director is being used to deal with responsibilities in other areas. The integration of these various units appears to be well underway and additional management staffing for testing is anticipated. This should allow the Director of eLearning and Library Services to give more attention to analyzing and improving library services. It is of particular note that the eLearning staff is well regarded on campus for their skilled support of both faculty members creating on-line classes and students taking them.

The Division of eLearning and Library Services has established a goal to systemize the collection of data within the unit. This will include surveying both users and non-users as well as tracking use statistics for on-campus users and remote users. It is important that

the collection of such data be undertaken and that the Divisions demonstrate that it is used in future planning.

The Director of eLearning and Library Services learns of changes in curriculum by attending the Faculty Senate Curriculum Committee. However it is a concern that consultation with eLearning and Library Services Division staff is not required before the approval of a proposal. This lack of consultation leaves the potential for significant gaps in library resources needed to support new curriculum.

All College students are required to participate in a new student orientation and information about library facilities and services is included in these orientations. In addition, library staff members conduct information literacy workshops for all face-to-face and hybrid sections of College Writing I and many other courses in Development Writing and Interpersonal Communication. Customized information literacy instruction is also provided for other classes, as request by faculty members. It is estimated that about one third of the students receive library instruction beyond the general orientations. Workshops targeted at teaching faculty about research skills have also begun to be presented.

The library, through a subscription to the Libguides webpage development system, has begun creating research and topic guides for online library users. They have also created a D2L self-paced course, 'Library 101,' with research information and electronic reserves for students and faculty. A library chat widget is in development for inclusion within D2L courses. Library instruction videos are being created on various topics upon request for inclusion in D2L courses. An online chat library reference service is already in place through the library webpage. This afternoon, evening, and Sunday service is available more than half of the hours the library is open. The library also has a substantial Facebook presence.

The library moved to a new location in 2008 and is now housed in a larger space. No longer being located in the central part of campus, and the lack of visible restrooms, is reported to have contributed to an initial decline in the in-person use of the facility. Judicious scheduling of the four library staff members allows the Library to be open an impressive 70.5 hours a week, Monday through Friday and on Sunday. Use of the library is reported to be growing again, as is use of online library resources.

The library appears to be strongly committed professional development for the staff. Every staff member has a professional development plan and each has attended a national training event within the past fiscal year.

The Weaver Library has a detailed Collection Development Policy and a very complete Library Procedure manual. Comprehensive usage statistics are not currently available for all databases and online reference sources. The library is working to rectify this situation. In the meantime, the library is using what data is available and is using discussions with faculty members and students to guide purchasing and collection development decisions. The library is particularly fortunate to be able to take advantage of cooperative purchasing agreements with other Montana State University system libraries and the Montana State Library to make available an extensive suite of online databases and reference sources. Outside of these agreements the library adds additional resources to support the unique needs of faculty and students at the College.

One method that students, faculty members, and staff have to participate in the planning and development of library resources and services is through a broad-based Library Advisory Committee that regularly advises on library issues. The Director of eLearning and Library Services also participates as a voting member of the College Planning and Budget Analysis Committee. She attends Faculty Senate Curriculum Committee meetings and other library staff members attend student government meetings.

Standard 2.F Financial Resources

The college demonstrates financial stability with sufficient cash flow, healthy financial ratios and is establishing reserves to support its programs and services. Despite declining state support, financial planning reflects realistic development of financial resources, and appropriate risk management to ensure short-term solvency and ability to meet anticipated long-term obligations. The college has no debt and has a conservative approach to limit future liabilities.

Resource planning and development is carefully reviewed by the College Planning, Budget, and Analysis Committee (CPBAC). Planning and budgeting projections appear to be conservative and realistic. Students are involved in areas of interest such as technology fee expenditure decisions. The college budget process is inclusive and transparent to invite broad campus participation. Budget policies, guidelines, and processes for financial planning and budget development are clearly defined.

The college ensures timely and accurate financial information through its use of the Ellucian (SunGuard Banner) ERP accounting system. Their system follows generally accepted accounting principles and provides numerous reporting options. Access is controlled by role-based security profiles. Compliance is reviewed annually by outside auditors from the state audit division.

The college has embarked on long term capital planning to accommodate future growth consistent with their mission and core theme objectives. Long-range capital plans support the institution's mission and goals and reflect projections of the total cost of ownership, equipment, furnishing, and operation of new or renovated facilities. All physical facilities are owned or leased without any debt service.

The college currently has only two auxiliary enterprises in the bookstore and food court which both report to the controller. Auxiliary operations are self-sustaining for operating and capital requirements. The college does not plan to use funds from auxiliary services to support general operations.

The college has an external financial audit by the Legislative Audit Division of the State of Montana and has been found to be in compliance with generally accepted auditing standards with no material findings noted. Results from the audit, including findings and management letter recommendations, are considered in a timely, appropriate, and comprehensive manner by the administration and the board of trustees.

All college fundraising activities are conducted in a professional and ethical manner and comply with governmental requirements. The college works with the Montana State

University Alumni Foundation to provide fiscal support. The college development officer works with a development board of local volunteers to advocate for the college in the local community under the direction of MSU-Great Falls Development Office and the Dean/CEO.

Standard 2.G Physical and Technological Infrastructure

The college has constructed or obtained physical facilities that are accessible, safe, secure, and currently sufficient in quantity and quality. Program enhancing projects such as the simulated hospital have recently been completed and space for additional growth is available to support the institution's mission, programs, and services.

The college currently adheres to policies and procedures regarding the safe use, storage, and disposal of hazardous or toxic materials reviewed regularly by the campus safety committee.

The college has developed and is using a master plan for its physical development that is consistent with its mission, core themes, and long-range educational and financial plans. The college has thoughtfully provided for informal student engagement space facilities and has implemented "smart" classrooms with robust audiovisual capabilities. The college is further supporting the students ability to attend with the pending addition of a child care center.

Equipment is sufficient in quantity and quality and managed appropriately to support institutional functions and fulfillment of the institution's mission, accomplishment of core theme objectives, and achievement of goals or intended outcomes of its programs and services.

Technological Infrastructure

The college provides an extensive technology platform to support both academic and administrative operations. All locations have robust access to internet resources including wireless access for students as well as two help desks for student support.

The college provides instruction and support for faculty, staff, students, and administrators in the effective use of technology and technology systems through the information technology department that provides training, help desk support, and classroom technology support. The faculty are provided support and training to use instructional software tools.

The college involves representative committees to provide guidance for Technological infrastructure planning from its technology support staff and constituencies who rely on technology for institutional operations, programs, and services and academic support enhancement initiatives.

The college has established an aggressive technology update and equipment replacement plan to ensure technology is kept current and is keeping the total cost of ownership low while maintaining a current technological infrastructure. The college plans near term investments in systems to enhance student success by enabling better planning and tracking of student progress.

VII. Commendations and Recommendations

COMMENDATIONS

1. The evaluation committee commends the College's investment in student success initiatives such as informal student engagement space, "smart" classrooms, excellent eLearning and technology support, and planned investment in systems to enable better planning and tracking of student progress.

2. The College is commended for its creation of a centralized Advising and Career Center to provide consistent and ongoing advising for students to support student achievement of educational goals.

3. The College is commended for its effective use of a dedicated student library fee to create a well-funded library. In combination with cooperative agreements, this has resulted in the Weaver Library having an excellent range of online database and reference sources, one that is well beyond what would be expected of two-year colleges of its size.

4. The College is commended for an open and inclusive process of budget planning and analysis. The staff, faculty, and administration reported that the College Planning, Budget and Analysis Committee (CPBAC) supports the concept of shared governance. During the visit the evaluation committee heard numerous and repeated positive comments in support of this college activity.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The evaluation committee notes with some concern the number of key administrative roles that have been vacant for an extended period or are soon to be vacant. In the absence of timely recruiting these vacancies have the potential to effect the ability of the College to achieve its mission. (Standards 2.A.9 and 2.B.1)

2. While the College employs appropriately qualified faculty members, the evaluation committee is concerned that the high attrition of part-time faculty may negatively impact the College's ability to achieve its educational objectives, and assure the integrity and continuity of its academic programs. (Standard 2.B.4)

3. The evaluation committee found evidence that one program, AAS Fire and Rescue Technology accepts credit for prior experiential learning that exceeds 25% of the total credits required for the degree. This is in conflict with standard 2.C.7 and all programs must meet the standard. (Standard 2.C.7)