Montana State University
NORTHERN

Responses to Recommendations from Past Reviews

Prepared for the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities

October 1, 2019

MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY
NORTHERN
Education that Works

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Response to Recommendation 1

Revised Recommendation 1: Mission Fulfillment

While the University has identified core themes, objectives, and indicators of achievement, the evaluation committee finds that levels of mission fulfillment have not been defined in a manner that permits evaluation of mission fulfillment. The committee recommends that the University establish meaningful, assessable and verifiable indicators of achievement, and threshold levels of achievement, that can form the basis for evaluation of mission fulfillment and accomplishment of the objectives of its core themes. Progress toward mission fulfillment should be regularly assessed, reported and documented (1.A, 1.B, 4.B.1, 5.A).

1.A Mission
1.A.1 The institution has a widely published mission statement—approved by its governing board—that articulates a purpose appropriate for an institution of higher learning, gives direction for its efforts, and derives from, and is generally understood by, its community.
1.A.2 The institution defines mission fulfillment in the context of its purpose, characteristics, and expectations. Guided by that definition, it articulates institutional accomplishments or outcomes that represent an acceptable threshold or extent of mission fulfillment

1.B Core Themes
1.B.1 The institution identifies core themes that individually manifest essential elements of its mission and collectively encompass its mission.
1.B.2 The institution establishes objectives for each of its core themes and identifies meaningful, assessable, and verifiable indicators of achievement that form the basis for evaluating accomplishment of the objectives of its core themes.

4.B Improvement
4.B.1 Results of core theme assessments and results of assessments of programs and services are: a) based on meaningful institutionally identified indicators of achievement; b) used for improvement by informing planning, decision making, and allocation of resources and capacity; and c) made available to appropriate constituencies in a timely manner.

5.A Mission Fulfillment
5.A.1 The institution engages in regular, systematic, participatory, self-reflective, and evidence based assessment of its accomplishments.

Response

MSU-Northern's Core Themes were approved by the Montana Board of Regents[1] in November 2011. The Mission Statement was revised and approved in July 2016. Both are clearly displayed on the MSU-Northern website,[2] in the academic catalog and academic guide, in the student handbook, and across campus to reflect their centrality to our institution (1.A.1).

Our Mission Statement, Vision Statement, three Core Themes, and four Comprehensive Plan Goals (see Table 1 below) reflect our institution's unique purpose as the only comprehensive university in Montana's expansive and diverse northern frontier region (see APPENDIX 1: Institutional Strategic Plan). Because MSU-Northern is an open-enrollment institution and serves

a relatively high percentage of low-income, first-generation, minority, and non-traditional students, we are guided by a dedication to 1) offering high-quality programs that support the academic needs of students with diverse backgrounds and diverse goals, 2) providing a student-centered and culturally enriched environment that fosters belonging, and 3) maintaining strong partnerships that help connect students with real-world skills and career opportunities.

MSU-Northern's Mission Statement: MSU-Northern provides higher education to students for professional and technical careers through an institution dedicated to teaching and the pursuit of knowledge.

Vision Statement: MSU-Northern will be known for its supportive, student-centered environment in which a unique mix of academic programs are responsive to local, regional, and state workforce needs, offered in an atmosphere that promotes student success.

Table 1: Alignment of Institutional Comprehensive Plan Goals and Core Themes		
Comprehensive Plan Goals		**Core Themes**
STRATEGIC GOAL 1 **Stability** Establish a new enrollment baseline of 1500 students	**STRATEGIC GOAL 2** **Quality and Efficiency** Provide practical, high-quality educational experiences in a timely manner	**CORE THEME 1** **Comprehensive Programs** Provide liberal arts, professional and technical programs that serve a diverse student population
	STRATEGIC GOAL 3 **Engagement** Strengthen students' sense of belonging	**CORE THEME 2** **Student Success** Promote a student centered and culturally enriched environment that fosters student success
	STRATEGIC GOAL 4 **Collaboration** Expand industry and alumni engagement	**CORE THEME 3** **Inclusive Partnerships** Partner with external entities to enhance and expand learning experiences

MSU-Northern's Core Themes and Strategic Goals are closely aligned and operate in tandem with one another and promote cohesion and shared goals among administration, faculty, staff, students, and alumni. Strategic Goal 1 unites all of the remaining Strategic Goals and the Core Themes with an overarching enrollment goal of 1500 that would provide increased financial stability and thus open doors for deeper capacity-building in each of the other areas (1.A.2).

Defining and Assessing Mission Fulfillment

MSU-Northern's annual process for assessing mission fulfillment is carried out by the Institutional Assessment Committee (IAC), which falls under the purview of the Office of the Provost/Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs and is co-chaired by the three academic deans. The committee consists of both faculty and staff and meets regularly during the academic year.

APPENDIX 2: Institutional Assessment Committee Members outlines the makeup of the IAC, including its executive committee.

Since the Year One Self-Evaluation Report submitted in 2017, the IAC has initiated a number of revisions to the annual review process in order to promote broader participation and shared responsibility among various campus constituencies as well as clearer institutional communication surrounding the process. These revisions are displayed in APPENDIX 3: Mission Fulfillment Indicators and include:

- The establishment of two to four specific, numbered indicators for each of the eight Core Theme objectives. Indicators also identify key reference documents and responsible parties involved in data reporting. (1.B.2)
- Benchmarks for each indicator for each reporting period to guide incremental change.
- A definition of acceptable achievement at 75% or above the current benchmark.
- A visual system of categorization to communicate the level of action needed at three different performance indicator achievement levels: Meeting/Exceeding Target, Approaching Target, Moving Away from Target. See Table 2 below. (4.B.1)

Table 2: Levels of Achievement for Performance Indicator Results	Fulfillment Progress	# of achievement result levels in each performance category (1 result TBD)
Meeting or exceeding the target (100% or above target). Continued effort required to maintain acceptable performance.	★	13/30
Approaching the target (75-99% of target). Continued monitoring and interventions required to reach acceptable performance.	⬆	14/30
Moving away from the target (less than 75% of target). Immediate action required to reach acceptable performance.	⬇	2/30

MSU-Northern defines Mission Fulfillment as "Meeting/Exceeding the target" (green level) or "Approaching the target" (yellow level) for ≥ 75% of the indicators for each of its Core Themes objectives. Because averages can mask individual areas of underperformance, we do not average achievement indicator levels within the categories. (5.A.1)

As is evident in APPENDIX 3, all of our Core Themes objectives currently reach the "Meeting/Exceeding" or "Approaching" level with ≥ 75% of their corresponding indicators.

Timeline for Assessing Mission Fulfillment

The above revisions to the annual assessment process have helped shift MSU-Northern's institutional assessment process toward a "regular, systematic, participatory, self-reflective, and evidence-based" mechanism for data-driven planning and action (5.A.1). The articulation of specific Core Themes indicators and benchmarks, and the creation of a system for monitoring

and evaluating progress towards the Core Themes objectives have also allowed the IAC to implement a regular timeline for its annual review cycle, as outlined below:

Table 3: Annual Review Cycle Timeline for Mission and Core Themes Fulfillment	
July 1	IAC Executive Committee requests data for the year from key university programs and services personnel to contribute to the annual review of the Core Themes objectives. Data is recorded in the Core Themes Indicators chart (APPENDIX 3)
Oct. 15	IAC reviews the new data in light of the established benchmarks and uses it to draft institutional planning recommendations. The IAC also reviews the Core Themes performance indicators themselves to ensure that they are still reliable and meaningful indicators of achievement for the objectives.
Oct. 30	Findings are reported to the Core Leadership Committee (the Chancellor's cabinet) with recommendations to address any underperforming results. At this time, IAC also solicits input from the Core Leadership Committee, and key programs and services personnel, if existing Core Themes indicators and/or benchmarks are not proving to be reliable and meaningful.
Nov. 15	The new Institutional Assessment Plan is finalized and updated on the website.
Monthly	Monthly meeting of IAC Executive Committee to ensure data collection and action steps where underperformance has been determined. Entire IAC meets to sustain broad communication and coordination regarding Institutional Assessment Plan.

Sustainability of Annual Review Process and Mission Fulfillment

As reflected in the Core Theme Indicators chart in APPENDIX 3, the Institutional Assessment Committee at MSU-Northern has made significant progress since the Year 1 Self-Report towards defining mission fulfillment in "meaningful, assessable, and verifiable indicators of achievement" (1.B.2). The collection, analysis, and communication of relevant data among key offices and programs on campus has allowed the IAC to begin more effectively evaluating MSU-Northern's progress toward its Core Themes objectives and to recommend changes based on the data collected. The creation of a clear timeline, as presented in Table 3, is a significant step towards increasing the long-term sustainability of the process of assessing mission fulfillment.

Response to Recommendation 2

Revised Recommendation 2: General Education

The Evaluation Committee recommends that MSUN continue to refine its processes for general education assessment, to clearly document the identified course outcomes, the thresholds for achieving these outcomes, and the assessment of achievement of each of the stated outcomes as stated in Recommendation 2 of the Fall, 2013 Peer Evaluation.

2.C.10 General Education
The institution demonstrates that the General Education components of its baccalaureate degree programs (if offered) and transfer associate degree programs (if offered) have identifiable and assessable learning outcomes that are stated in relation to the institution's mission and learning outcomes for those programs.

Response

General Education Mission Statement
General Education adopted a mission statement in 2018-2019 that is reflective of the university's Mission and Core Themes emphasis on preparing students for successful careers and productive lives:

> MSU-Northern's General Education Core provides students with breadth and depth in their education in order to enrich the specialized knowledge developed in a major field. These requirements are intended to foster **critical thinking skills**, **support integrative learning**, widen **social and cultural perspectives**, and aid students in developing into **well-rounded, civically engaged** professionals.

General Education Program Assessment
The General Education Committee, a sub-committee of the Academic Senate,[3] is charged with the development and implementation of an assessment system. The tool used for data collection was an Excel database. Faculty teaching General Education courses were responsible for entering data on the percent of students achieving the general education outcomes' thresholds. The management of the database was the elected Chair of the General Education Committee.

An Interim Dean of Arts, Sciences and Education was appointed in January 2019. She was given the charge to review General Education, in light of the NCCUW's Fall 2013 Peer - Evaluation. The Interim Dean and the 2017-2018 General Education Committee Chair met during that spring semester and reviewed general education documents and processes. Documents reviewed included faculty generated data such as which General Education courses were offered each semester, the assessments used (e.g. quizzes, tests, essays), number of students in each course, and percent of students meeting the threshold for the respective general education learning outcomes.

Following the General Education Committee's recommendations to include General Education in Taskstream (General Education Committee meeting minutes, April 5, 2018), a Task Stream program shell was created late spring and summer 2019 for General Education. The Taskstream

system holds the General Education's program mission statement, in addition to the 7 general education categories' learning goals and outcomes, assessment plans and findings entered for academic years 2015-2016, 2016-2017, and 2017-2018.

In the process of developing the General Education program for the Taskstream assessment system, deficiencies in General Education's assessments plans were realized and pointed to the need for meaningful understanding and deliberate investigation for General Education. The following narrative presents the review findings along with action plans targeted to meet Standard 2.C.10 General Education by having "identifiable and assessable learning outcomes that are stated in relation to the institution's mission and learning outcomes for those programs."

Program Review for Current General Education Program Assessment
Using Recommendations for Standard 2.C.10 as benchmarks for the General Education Program, the following represent the findings in current practice and action plans for the Revised Recommendation 2: General Education. (See Action Plan for General Education in Table 4.)

Refine processes for general education assessment
Findings and Action Plans - Refining the process for General Education assessment

Finding 1: With the adoption of the Mission Statement, the current 7 categories in the General Education program lack alignment with educational foundations of general education (skills, knowledge, habits of mind, and values) as outlined in the Mission Statement:
- Critical Thinking
- Integrative Learning
- Social and Cultural Perspectives
- Well-rounded, Civically Engaged

Action Plan: The Provost will convene the General Education Committee and Curriculum Committee to jointly establish a working model for general education competency areas that reflect the educational foundations of General Education's mission statement. The tasks will include:
a. Rubrics for evaluation the General Education Assessment process will be developed (e.g., "General Education Rubric" [4]).
b. A refined core curriculum, as a set of general education course requirements, that aligns more consistently with the University and General Education mission statements.
c. Rubrics will be created for each General Education Course Assessment to provide reliable and valid measurements of related learning outcomes. (See VALUE Rubrics[5]).

Finding 2: No evidence was found to support faculty inter-rater reliability in the assessment of categories' learning outcomes, student outcomes, and the related performance measurements for evaluation tools used for General Education courses.

Action Plan: The Office of Teaching and Learning Excellence (OTLE) will facilitate a series of seminars to develop faculty's knowledge and skills in assessment, development and use of rubrics, and inter-rater reliability training.

Clearly document the identified course outcomes
Findings and Action Plan -- Clearly document the identified course outcomes

Findings: Within the current General Education courses, learning outcomes lack clear documentation of alignment to the General Education learning outcomes in the respective categories.

Action Plan: General Education courses will contain learning outcomes with clear documentation of alignment to General Education learning outcomes.

Thresholds for achieving these outcomes
Findings and Action Plan -- Thresholds for achieving these outcomes

Findings: General Education course data were inconsistently entered into the database. There were no data which were reliable for establishing a threshold for achieving outcomes. While a threshold level for proficiency was identified for categories, courses within a category did not use common rubrics to assess general education's learning outcomes; thus, data provided for assessing learning outcomes across categories were not valid, reliable or accurate.

Action Plan: Rubrics will be developed; faculty will be provided professional development for writing measurable learning outcomes, use of rubrics, and inter-rater reliability.

Assessment of achievement of each of the stated outcomes
Findings and Action Plan -- Assessment of achievement of each of the stated outcomes

Findings: Although thresholds for achievement were identified for each category (percent of students achieving learning outcome indicator) and courses approved for General Education were required to reflect at least 60 to 80 percent of the category's learning outcomes, there was no evidence course assessments were aligned with categories' learning outcomes.

Action Plan: The General Education Program will establish thresholds for assessment of achievement for each stated outcome and use valid and reliable tools and processes.

Please see Table 4 below for an overview of the proposed timeline for the phases defined for the General Education action plan.

No.	Task	By when or over what time frame?	Responsible Party	Accountable Party	Resources
	Table 4: Action Plan for General Education				
1	Convene General Education and Curriculum Committee	November 2019	Academic Senate, Deans, & Provost	Academic Senate, Deans, Provost	
2	Appoint working committee members	November 2019	College Deans	Academic Senate, Deans, Provost	Stipends
3	Research general education programs; convene meeting with other state institutions' general education programs	January – May, 2020	Working Committee	Academic Senate, Deans, & Provost	
4	Working committee review core curriculum for general education	Summer-Fall, 2020	Working Committee	Academic Senate, Deans, Provost	Summer stipends
5	Meet with General Education faculty to discuss alignment of educational foundations with General Education program	October 2020 retreat	Working Committee and Deans	Academic Senate, Deans, Provost	
6	General Education core curriculum presented to CORE	November 2020 CORE meeting	Working Committee	Academic Senate, Deans, Provost	
7	Establish General Education New Assessment Process	Spring 2021	Working Committee	Academic Senate, Deans, Provost	
8	Develop rubric for General Education Process/procedures	Spring 2021	Working Committee	Academic Senate, Deans, Provost	
9	Develop measurable learning outcomes for General Education core curriculum in each General Education course	Spring– Summer 2021	Working Committee and faculty	Academic Senate, Deans, Provost	Summer Stipends; Outside consultant
10	Training for assessment rubrics and inter-rater reliability	Spring 2021	OTLE	Provost	
11	Develop rubrics for assessing General Education educational core foundations	Spring--Summer 2021	Working Committee and faculty	Academic Senate; Deans, Provost	Summer Stipends; Outside consultant
12	Trial (alpha) test selected courses	End of fall semester 2021	Working committee	Academic Senate, Deans	
13	Expand to faculty to test with selected courses	End of spring semester 2022	General Education faculty	Deans, Provost	
14	Working committee analyze data; recommendations to refine and modify	Summer 2022	Working committee	Academic Senate, Deans, Provost	Summer Stipends
15	Workshops to launch General Education assessment plan	Fall 2022	Academic Senate, Deans & Provost	Academic Senate, Deans, Provost	
16	Close the assessment loop in General Education Program	Fall 2022	General Education Committee	Academic Senate, Deans, Provost	

Response to Recommendation 3

Revised Recommendation 3: Financial Resources

The evaluation team recommends the University continue to carefully monitor its financial environment to ensure short term solvency and anticipate long term obligations. Furthermore, it is recommended that the institution establish by institutional policy, budgetary and long term reserve levels that are within industry guidelines (2.F.1, 2.F.3).

2.F.1 The institution demonstrates financial stability with sufficient cash flow and reserves to support its programs and services. Financial planning reflects available funds, realistic development of financial resources, and appropriate risk management to ensure short-term solvency and anticipate long-term obligations, including payment of future liabilities.
2.F.3 The institution clearly defines and follows its policies, guidelines, and processes for financial planning and budget development that include appropriate opportunities for participation by its constituencies.

Response

Montana State University-Northern builds a reserve budget into our current unrestricted budget each year. The reserve is based on seven percent of budgeted tuition. The reserve is broken out over the following programs:

Program 01 - Instruction	50%
Program 04 - Academic Support	10%
Program 05 - Student Support	10%
Program 06 - Institutional Support	10%
Program 07 - Operation & Maintenance of Plant	10%
Program 08 - Scholarships & Fellowships	10%

Tuition revenue is reviewed throughout the fiscal year to determine if funding has been met for the reserve accounts. If tuition amounts fall below budget then nothing is spent from these accounts. It allows for a 7% drop in tuition without adjusting any other budgets. If tuition meets the budget projections then it allows for these reserve amounts to be spent either on special projects, one-time-only funding or assisting other areas that may have overspent. These funds are not allowed to be carried over into the next fiscal year unless they are transferred into a BOR (Board of Regents) reserve account. (2.F.1)

[Montana Board of Regents of Higher Education policy](#)[6] allows the Montana University System campuses to establish the following reserve accounts:

Reserve Revolving Account ([BOR Policy 901.15](#)[7]) – For managing and mitigating the impact of unanticipated revenue shortfalls and/or unanticipated and unavoidable increases in expenditures.

Retirement Costs Revolving Accounts ([BOR Policy 901.10](#)[8]) – For managing the General Operating Subfund costs of employee retirement payouts.

Scholarship and Stipend ([BOR Policy 901.13](#)[9]) – To fund the costs of certain scholarships and stipend expenditures recorded in the General Operating Subfund.

MSU-Northern utilizes all three of the BOR reserve accounts. If we anticipate that there are going to be remaining current unrestricted funds at the end of the fiscal year the decision can be made to transfer funds to these accounts. We have made transfers to the Reserve Revolving Account to help budget for projected tuition shortfalls in the following fiscal year. We are limited to the amount that we can carry in this particular reserve account, as BOR policy states that the balance may not exceed 5% of the prior year revenue.

MSU-Northern has a Budget Advisory Committee (MSUN Policy 306[10]) that assists in the financial planning and budget development processes. (2.F.3)

Response to Recommendation 4

Recommendation 4: Educational Resources

The evaluation team recommends that MSU-Northern should more visibly and consistently provide expected course, program and degree student learning outcomes to enrolled students in written form (2.C.2).

2.C.2: The institution identifies and publishes expected course, program, and degree learning outcomes. Expected student learning outcomes for courses, wherever offered and however delivered, are provided in written form to enrolled students.

Response

Ensuring the visibility of course learning outcomes

All instructors teaching courses at MSU-Northern are required to provide students with a course syllabus that includes corresponding course-level learning outcomes. Syllabi are made available to students, at the very least, in electronic form in the corresponding course area in Brightspace (our learning management system). Each College's administrator collects course syllabi from all courses taught through that College each semester to ensure that course outcomes are communicated to students. These syllabi are saved in the Registrar's files.

Moreover, MSU-Northern participates in the Common Course Numbering (CCN) System at the Montana University System (MUS) level. The CCN System houses course-level learning outcomes in an [online course guide](#).[11] This site allows users to quickly view all undergraduate courses available in the MUS system as well as corresponding course-level learning outcomes at each campus. The courses that are offered at multiple institutions are outcomes-aligned with one another to ensure credit transferability across institutions.

MSU-Northern's CCN liaison is the Registrar. Each semester, the Registrar's office collects all course syllabi and updates MSU-Northern's course outcomes on the CCN website. A CCN audit in May 2019 by the Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education showed MSU-Northern to be in 100 percent compliance with the CCN System.

Ensuring the visibility of program and degree learning outcomes

Over the course of AY 2018-2019, MSU-Northern's assessment committee worked with the academic degree and certificate programs on campus to update their program learning outcomes indicated in our assessment management system, Taskstream. These updated outcomes, listed by degree option, are now also reflected in the AY 2019-2020 Catalog. They appear under the "Overview" tab of each academic program's section of the catalog. See "Response to Recommendation 6: Effectiveness and Improvement" for specific details about progress made towards establishing and communicating clear program learning outcomes across campus.

Response to Recommendation 5

Recommendation 5: Institutional Planning

The evaluators found evidence of a tremendous amount of focused and purposeful activity concerning comprehensive planning. However, the evaluators recommend that the emerging comprehensive plan be informed by the collection of appropriately defined data and documented so that it can be more systematic, better integrated, and more widely available to appropriate constituencies for input (3.A).

3.A Institutional Planning

3.A.1 The institution engages in ongoing, purposeful, systematic, integrated, and comprehensive planning that leads to fulfillment of its mission. Its plans are implemented and made available to appropriate constituencies.

3.A.2 The institution's comprehensive planning process is broad-based and offers opportunities for input by appropriate constituencies.

3.A.3 The institution's comprehensive planning process is informed by the collection of appropriately defined data that are analyzed and used to evaluate fulfillment of its mission.

3.A.4 The institution's comprehensive plan articulates priorities and guides decisions on resource allocation and application of institutional capacity.

3.A.5 The institution's planning includes emergency preparedness and contingency planning for continuity and recovery of operations should catastrophic events significantly interrupt normal institutional operations.

Response

MSU-Northern's Institutional Strategic Plan is published on the MSU-Northern website,[12] along with the Mission and Core Themes.[13] The Chancellor's office shares the Strategic Plan and progress toward meeting Strategic Plan Goals with the campus in the following ways:

- Distributes the Strategic Plan and updates toward progress in meeting the Strategic Goals at the annual staff and faculty orientation in August.
- Presents updates toward progress in meeting Strategic Goals at the "State of the University" address in January each year.
- Discusses progress with leadership teams and program departments regularly:
    - Core Leadership (Chancellor's Cabinet) – weekly;
    - Strategic Advancement Team (Policy and Strategic Planning Team) – monthly;
    - University Advisory Council (policy approval council) – as needed, up to once a month;
    - Chancellor's Turf meetings (department meetings across campus), which focus on input and strategies implemented that align departmental level goals with the Institutional Strategic Plan – each academic year.

There are multiple forums within the university in which the Core Themes and the Comprehensive Plan Goals (see Table 5 below) are intentionally reviewed. Within these reviews, data analyses by programs (academic and non-academic) and the respective colleges are conducted. These processes allow the institution to ascertain the thresholds achieved by the

Strategic Plan at multiple levels, resulting in a more systematic and better integrated institutional planning process with shared ownership.

Table 5: Alignment of Institutional Comprehensive Plan Goals and Core Themes		
Comprehensive Plan Goals		**Core Themes**
STRATEGIC GOAL 1 **Stability** Establish a new enrollment baseline of 1500 students	**STRATEGIC GOAL 2** **Quality and Efficiency** Provide practical, high-quality educational experiences in a timely manner	**CORE THEME 1** **Comprehensive Programs** Provide liberal arts, professional and technical programs that serve a diverse student population
	STRATEGIC GOAL 3 **Engagement** Strengthen students' sense of belonging	**CORE THEME 2** **Student Success** Promote a student centered and culturally enriched environment that fosters student success
	STRATEGIC GOAL 4 **Collaboration** Expand industry and alumni engagement	**CORE THEME 3** **Inclusive Partnerships** Partner with external entities to enhance and expand learning experiences

In addition, MSU-Northern's annual process for assessing mission fulfillment is carried out by the Institutional Assessment Committee (IAC), which falls under the purview of the Office of the Provost/Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs and is co-chaired by the three academic deans. The committee consists of both faculty and staff and meets regularly during the academic year. APPENDIX 2 outlines the makeup of the IAC, including its executive committee.

Since the Year One Self-Evaluation Report submitted in 2017, the IAC instituted practices to promote broader participation and to establish sound institutional communication strategies, including an Annual Review Cycle Timeline for Mission and Core Themes Fulfillment (See Table 3 on page 4). Furthermore, evidence of the collection of appropriately defined and documented data is illustrated in APPENDIX 3: Mission Fulfillment Indicators.

 Findings and recommendations moving forward

The explicit alignment of the Institutional Strategic Plan goals with those of our Core Themes ensures that planning, reporting, and assessment efforts are more systematic, better integrated, and more widely available to appropriate constituencies for input and continuous improvement. The institutional assessment system provides data-driven decision-making to realize and articulate priorities, and it informs "decisions on resource allocation and application of institutional capacity" (3.A.4). Our Institutional Comprehensive Plan ensures that the institution provides adequate resources to meet our Strategic Goals and mission fulfillment.

Several examples of resource reallocation, institutional restructuring, and programmatic expansion are a direct outcome from these planning and assessment efforts. To date,

the university has restructured our recruiting and retention offices (Student Support Services, Admissions, the Registrar's Office, Financial Aid, the Business Office, and the Career Center) to better meet our recruiting metrics, retention, and graduation rates both at the university and academic program level. The restructuring was initiated in response to a lack of progress toward Strategic Goal 1 of the Institutional Strategic Plan (Stability - 1500 students), aligned Core Theme 2 (Student Success) and Strategic Goal 3 (Engagement), and aligned Core Theme 3 (Inclusive Partnerships) with Strategic Goal 4 (Collaboration). The restructuring was undertaken over a four-month process that included input from faculty, advisors, staff, and students. To date, we have seen positive impacts that include a slight increase in enrollments and retention rates, and far better communication among the personnel in these functional areas.

Another example addresses student success (Core Theme 2 and Strategic Goal 3). The Tutoring Oversight Committee was established to align and consolidate multiple tutoring centers. Faculty, professional tutors, deans, chairs, and the directors of the Little River Institute and Student Support Services worked to build a more comprehensive faculty-led tutoring structure (Tutoring Central) to better address Core Theme 2 – Student Success. This involved collaboration across multiple functional areas of the campus and the pooling of resources.

As MSU-Northern moves toward the Year Seven Review, the IAC will further refine the specific metrics used to measure both the baseline and the targets for Core Themes. This is an ongoing process and is directly linked to meeting the Institutional Strategic Plan Goals. These efforts will further inform planning, assessment and budgeting allocations to address progress toward mission fulfillment.

Response to Recommendation 6

Recommendation 6: Effectiveness and Improvement

As program assessment capacity is systematized and developed, the institution should incorporate more evidence of student learning outcome assessment, and assessment-informed improvement efforts throughout the educational experience, including services as well as academic degrees, programs and certificates (4.A, 4.B).

4.A Assessment
4.A.1 The institution engages in ongoing systematic collection and analysis of meaningful, assessable, and verifiable data, quantitative and/or qualitative, as appropriate to its indicators of achievement, as the basis for evaluating the accomplishment of its core theme objectives.
4.A.2 The institution engages in an effective system of evaluation of its programs and services, wherever offered and however delivered, to evaluate achievement of clearly identified program goals or intended outcomes. Faculty have a primary role in the evaluation of educational programs and services.
4.A.3 The institution documents, through an effective, regular, and comprehensive system of assessment of student achievement, that students who complete its educational courses, programs, and degrees, wherever offered and however delivered, achieve identified course, program, and degree learning outcomes. Faculty with teaching responsibilities are responsible for evaluating student achievement of clearly identified learning outcomes.
4.A.4 The institution evaluates holistically the alignment, correlation, and integration of programs and services with respect to accomplishment of core theme objectives.
4.A.5 The institution evaluates holistically the alignment, correlation, and integration of planning, resources, capacity, practices, and assessment with respect to the achievement of the goals or intended outcomes of its programs or services, wherever offered and however delivered.
4.A.6 The institution regularly reviews its assessment processes to ensure they appraise authentic achievements and yield meaningful results that lead to improvement.

4.B Improvement
4.B.1 Results of core theme assessments and results of assessments of programs and services are: a) based on meaningful institutionally identified indicators of achievement; b) used for improvement by informing planning, decision making, and allocation of resources and capacity; and c) made available to appropriate constituencies in a timely manner.
4.B.2 The institution uses the results of its assessment of student learning to inform academic and learning-support planning and practices that lead to enhancement of student learning achievements. Results of student learning assessments are made available to appropriate constituencies in a timely manner.

Response

Systematization and development of program assessment capacity

Since the Year One Self-Evaluation Report, MSU-Northern has undertaken significant efforts to systematize and strengthen its assessment process for academic programs and services, and to begin using the data collected more effectively to make strategic decisions about improvement efforts on campus. The following describes the program assessment process that has been

developed and refined during this time. This description of the process is published on the Provost's website under the "Assessment" tab so that all parties responsible for assessment (faculty and staff) have access to information pertaining to the assessment process at MSU-Northern.

Assessment of programs and services at MSU-Northern

Assessment is overseen by the Provost and guided by the Institutional Assessment Committee (IAC), which consists of staff and faculty. The committee communicates the assessment cycle's process and timeline to the institution and collaborates with the Office of Teaching and Learning Excellence (OTLE) to provide training to faculty and staff as they participate in the assessment of their respective programs.

Table 6: Assessment Timeline
August 15-20   Refresher trainings during orientation week (IAC)
September 30   Reports on prior year's assessment activities due
October 15   Current year's assessment plan due
November 15   IAC reviews of findings & current year plans due
By December 1   Findings discussed at College meeting or with supervisor; then at Core
By December 15   Feedback incorporated and current year's plan finalized
By December 15   IAC decides on adjustments to assessment process

Since 2012, MSU-Northern has used a dual assessment framework based on Maki's book *Assessing for Learning: Building a Sustainable Commitment Across the Institution* (2010).[14] Under Maki's framework, academic programs (e.g., degrees, certificates, minors) use the Student Learning Assessment Plan (SLAP) assessment model, and non-academic (services) programs (e.g., Business Office, Registrar, OTLE) use the Unit Continuous Improvement Plan (UCIP) assessment model.

In 2016, MSU-Northern adopted the assessment management system "Taskstream" in an effort to centralize and streamline assessment tracking and assessment review. Taskstream allows users to map anticipated outcomes to the Core Themes to which they correspond (Standard 4.A.1, 4.A.4). Program faculty assess student learning goals and outcomes for their respective academic programs (4.A.2, 4.A.3); directors of non-academic (services) programs assess the operational objectives and outcomes of their respective units. Within the Taskstream platform, those program faculty and services staff responsible for assessment are expected to perform the following steps:

Initial Stage: Identify and Map Outcomes
1. Articulate a mission statement for the program.
2. Determine program learning goals (SLAP) or operational objectives (UCIP).
3. Identify measurable student learning outcomes (SLAP) or operational outcomes (UCIP) that address each goal/objective.
4. Ensure alignment by mapping each outcome to relevant institutional core themes.
5. Identify where outcomes are measured (e.g., curriculum maps for academic programs).

Annual Assessment Plan
1. Review mission, goals, outcomes, and core themes alignment, in light of prior year's findings, to ensure that they are still accurate.
2. Select outcomes to be measured for the upcoming cycle year.
3. Determine appropriate measures and target performance levels for each outcome.
4. Identify parties responsible for collecting, evaluating, and reporting data.
5. Establish a timeline for data collection and evaluation.
6. Implement plan according to timeline.

Annual Assessment Findings Process
1. Collect assessment data and enter in Taskstream.
2. Evaluate data and make recommendations for improvement.
3. Submit plan, findings, and recommendations to the Assessment Committee for review.
4. Discuss findings at College meeting (academic programs) or with supervisor (non-academic/services), to be shared with Core Leadership Team.
5. Pursue recommended actions/adjustments. ("Close the loop.")
6. Initiate a new assessment cycle plan.

Review of assessment plans

As Table 6 above indicates, IAC members review each program's assessment findings and new plan by November 15th each year to ensure various criteria for the Initial Stage, Annual Plan, and Annual Findings are met, with an emphasis on closing the loop. The review process is currently built into Taskstream with the rubric scheme indicated in Table 7 below. Feedback is recorded in Taskstream for users to view and use. Once reviews are complete and findings are reported, the IAC also reviews the assessment process and makes any necessary changes to the process to improve quality, efficiency, and sustainability (4.A.6).

Table 7: Scoring Rubric for Assessment Plan Review in Taskstream	
SCORING	Met = 1 Not Met = 0
Mission Statement Review	
Mission statement is complete and aligns with institutional mission.	
Outcomes Review	
Each Outcome supports the overarching Goal/Objective and is mapped to Core Themes.	
FOR ACADEMIC: Each outcome is written from the student learning perspective ("Students will ..."). FOR NON-ACADEMIC/SERVICES: Each outcome is descriptive of what that office/position does.	
Each Outcome is SMART: S: Specific - specifies what is to be achieved, M: Measurable - measurable/verifiable, A: Achievable, R: Realistic, T: Time - has appropriate time frame.	

Assessment Plan Review	
FOR EACH MEASUREMENT IN THE PLAN: Measurement is aligned to outcome, with enough detail.	
Expected level of performance is indicated.	
Schedule for assessment activity is set.	
Assessment Findings Review	
Findings are entered for each measurement.	
Recommendations for improvement are entered in either: 1) individual Findings areas, 2) "Overall Recommendations" area at the bottom, or 3) "Reflections" area at the bottom.	
Points (entered at each review stage):	
Comments (entered at each review stage):	

Assessment Participation and Progress

Program assessment data has been tracked to some extent for over a decade at MSU-Northern. Those programs that have external accrediting bodies, such as Civil Engineering Technology (ABET), Nursing (ACEN), Education (OPI) and Automotive (NATEF) tend to have better systems for collecting and reporting data and making meaningful change based on that data. However, a number of programs originally identified departmental outcomes and targets (e.g., enrollment, retention, and graduation rates) or instructional outcomes (e.g., "Demonstrate effective instruction of technology") rather than specific student learning outcomes for their individual degree and certificate programs. Some programs are therefore still in the process of moving toward the articulation of meaningful and measurable program learning outcomes, and much of the IAC's effort over the past two years has focused on continuous improvement in that area.

Moreover, an assessment management software system, Taskstream, was selected and implemented in 2016 in order to streamline the process and create a central location for data. This has added a technological learning curve that has proved challenging for some users. The Dean of the College of Technical Sciences and Chair of the College of Education, Arts, Sciences, and Nursing, who were originally trained to administer the software, both left MSU-Northern in July 2018. This left a knowledge gap that has since been filled by the Director of Institutional Research and Curriculum Developer, both of whom serve on the IAC executive committee.

Much of our attention over the past year and a half has therefore been focused on building technological capacity and on more thoroughly educating assessment participants (both faculty and staff) on a) formulating and appropriate student learning outcomes and identifying appropriate measures and b) using the Taskstream software.

Nonetheless, Table 8 below reflects an increasing degree of program assessment participation at MSU-Northern, including student learning assessment for academic programs and continuous

improvement assessment for non-academic (services) programs. Incremental benchmarks have been set so that we are on target with all programs reporting for the Year Seven Review.

Table 8: Assessment Participation and Targets (T) for Improvement							
Academic Programs	AY 16-17	AY 17-18	AY 18-19	AY 19-20	AY 20-21	AY 21-22	AY 22-23
Total academic program areas identified	**58**	**58**	***48**	**48**	**(48)**	**(48)**	**(48)**
# of academic programs/degrees/minors with Outcomes listed	**not tracked	**not tracked	42	***TBD T: 48	T: 48	T: 48	T: 48
# of academic programs/degrees/minors with Assessment Plans (Outcomes, Measures, Targets)	34	41	44	TBD T: 43	T: 45	T: 48	T: 48
# of academic programs/degrees/minors with Assessment Findings	15	27	TBD T: 32	T: 37	T: 42	T: 47	T: 48
Non-Academic (Services) Programs	AY 16-17	AY 17-18	AY 18-19	AY 19-20	AY 20-21	AY 21-22	AY 22-23
Total non-academic programs identified	**43**	**43**	**44**	**44**	**(44)**	**(44)**	**(44)**
# of non-academic offices with Outcomes listed	**not tracked	**not tracked	30	TBD T: 34	T: 38	T: 42	T: 44
# of non-academic programs with Assessment Plans (Outcomes, Measures, Targets)	18	25	28	TBD T: 33	T: 38	T: 42	T: 44
# of non-academic programs with Assessment Findings	13	23	TBD T: 27	T: 32	T: 37	T: 41	T: 44
* Separate program options for both Diesel and Education were consolidated in Taskstream into one "Core" program outcome set with additional outcomes for concentration options. ** This was mapped differently in Taskstream previous to AY 18-19. *** TBD = to be determined (October 15th)							

Assessment-informed improvement efforts

Because the IAC has focused over the past few years on capacity building and systematization, the reporting of assessment-informed improvement efforts and the collection of those "stories" at the institution level has been lacking. Many of the changes implemented reflect small shifts in curriculum or pedagogy rather than large initiatives. However, these smaller shifts can and often do have a large impact when followed and acted upon over time (4.B.2). The main body of the Mid-Cycle Self-Evaluation report contains two examples of fairly substantial assessment-informed changes that are very visible across the institution and have a direct bearing on Core Themes indicators.

Noted below are a handful of smaller examples of assessment-driven change at the program level:

Psychology minor
After receiving feedback about textbook costs presenting barriers to student success, a psychology faculty member took steps to make her Intro to Psychology class more accessible to students by eliminating textbook costs. After researching numerous textbook options for Intro to Psychology, she located a free, customizable textbook through NOBA (www.nobaproject.com). She customized the text to include the topics included in mainstream published textbooks to ensure the students were not losing any content by switching to the free textbook. NOBA then provided the free digital textbook online and as a PDF, alongside the option for students to easily purchase a paperback copy for around $20. In response to this change in course materials, students expressed positive feedback with regard to cost savings as well as accessibility online. The faculty member has found no decrease in student performance, and in fact the Spring 2019 face-to-face Intro to Psychology class was the first class in which all students passed with at least a C- since she began teaching full-time at MSUN in Fall 2015. The faculty member has since also adopted textbooks for Developmental Psychology, Victimology, and Multicultural Psychology that could be easily rented from www.amazon.com or from other online textbook vendors for under $35. Students were made aware of this cost saving strategy repeatedly. Several students expressed that they appreciated the efforts to save them money. The faculty member (the only full-time faculty member in the psychology program) will continue to track achievement levels throughout her program to evaluate the impact of this initiative on student success.

Diesel Technology programs
During academic year 2018-2019, the Diesel Technology program, which includes CAS, AAS, BS and minor options, revisited and reformulated their program outcomes. As industry advisory board input has continued to emphasize soft skills development (safety, professionalism, and communication) in the diesel technology students, program faculty added outcomes accordingly. One example of these outcomes, "Use written communication to convey technical information in a clear, concise, and professional manner," is being assessed by using a writing skills rubric that can be used across the program to evaluate students' writing in their service reports and other assignments with written components. Program faculty are tracking achievement levels to evaluate the impact of this initiative on student learning in their programs.

Office of Teaching and Learning Excellence (OTLE)
The Office of Teaching and Learning Excellence is responsible for administering the Brightspace

learning management platform, as well as providing training for faculty on education technology and evidence-based pedagogy. OTLE administers surveys each semester to collect faculty input about what kinds of training they feel is lacking. Upon receiving feedback that faculty desired more training on certain non-pedagogical duties (e.g., student advising, student mental health intervention), OTLE has arranged for experts in those areas to collaborate with their office to provide faculty the requested training. OTLE is tracking faculty satisfaction with these trainings and seeking out ways in which they might evaluate the impact of these initiatives on student success over the long term.

Findings and recommendations moving forward

The main areas of improvement still remaining as we move toward the Year Seven Review lie in Standard 4.B.1, particularly parts b and c, which state that assessment efforts should "b) used for improvement by informing planning, decision making, and allocation of resources and capacity; and c) made available to appropriate constituencies in a timely manner." Our recommendations primarily revolve around strengthened communication:

1. MSU-Northern's IAC needs to continue strengthening the systematization of the assessment process by working towards the benchmarks outlined in Table 3 on page 4. As we move towards more meaningful and regularly occurring program assessment, the IAC needs to ensure that participants are reporting out assessment findings and data-driven decisions for improvement at the college and institution levels. This is an important step toward ensuring a) that participants continue to believe in the value of their own program assessment and corresponding improvement efforts, b) that resources can be allocated accordingly, and c) that evidence of assessment-driven improvement can be documented as we move toward the Year Seven Review.

2. Greater efforts need to be made to explicitly connect more of our academic programs' student learning goals and outcomes to Core Themes and Strategic Plan objectives and indicators. Currently the main overlap between academic programs and Mission Fulfillment indicators is reflected in the tracking of credentialing exam pass rates (limited to Nursing, Civil Engineering Technology, and Education). The IAC should find more ways to ensure that mechanisms exist to encourage better communication about student learning assessment data and success stories from the program faculty to the college and institution levels. This would also allow programs to learn from the others' experiences. One solution being considered is a shift in the Program Review process (which historically has focused more on program sustainability numbers and state workforce alignment) to focus more deeply on learning outcomes assessment and using assessment data for continuous improvement. This shift would also make our Mission Fulfillment indicator that tracks Program Review scores more meaningful and more explicitly oriented towards student learning.

Response to Recommendation 7

Recommendation 7: Core Theme Planning

The evaluation team recommends that planning for core themes, and decisions and resource allocations concerning core theme programs and services, be consistent with the University's comprehensive plan and informed by the evaluation of the accomplishment of core theme objectives (3.B, 4.B, 5.A).

3.B Core Theme Planning
3.B.1 Planning for each core theme is consistent with the institution's comprehensive plan and guides the selection of programs and services to ensure they are aligned with and contribute to accomplishment of the core theme's objectives.
3.B.2 Planning for core theme programs and services guides the selection of contributing components of those programs and services to ensure they are aligned with and contribute to achievement of the goals or intended outcomes of the respective programs and services.
3.B.3 Core theme planning is informed by the collection of appropriately defined data that are analyzed and used to evaluate accomplishment of core theme objectives. Planning for programs and services is informed by the collection of appropriately defined data that are used to evaluate achievement of the goals or intended outcomes of those programs and services.

4.B Improvement
4.B.1 Results of core theme assessments and results of assessments of programs and services are: a) based on meaningful institutionally identified indicators of achievement; b) used for improvement by informing planning, decision making, and allocation of resources and capacity; and c) made available to appropriate constituencies in a timely manner.
4.B.2 The institution uses the results of its assessment of student learning to inform academic and learning-support planning and practices that lead to enhancement of student learning achievements. Results of student learning assessments are made available to appropriate constituencies in a timely manner.

5.A Mission Fulfillment
5.A.1 The institution engages in regular, systematic, participatory, self-reflective, and evidence based assessment of its accomplishments.
5.A.2 Based on its definition of mission fulfillment, the institution uses assessment results to make determinations of quality, effectiveness, and mission fulfillment and communicates its conclusions to appropriate constituencies and the public.

Response

MSU-Northern's Core Themes were approved by the Montana Board of Regents[15] in November 2011. The Mission Statement was revised and approved in July 2016. Both are clearly displayed on the MSU-Northern website,[16] in the academic catalog and academic guide, in the student handbook, and across campus to reflect their centrality to our institution.

MSU-Northern's Institutional Strategic Plan (see APPENDIX 1) is published on the MSU-Northern website,[17] along with the Mission and Core Themes.[18] The Chancellor's office shares the Strategic Plan and progress toward meeting Strategic Plan Goals with the campus in the following ways:

- Distributes the Strategic Plan and progress updates in meeting the Strategic Goals at the annual staff and faculty orientation in August.
- Presents progress updates in meeting Strategic Goals at the "State of the University" address in January each year.
- Discusses progress with leadership teams and program departments regularly:
  - Core Leadership (Chancellor's Cabinet) – weekly;
  - Strategic Advancement Team (Policy and Strategic Planning Team) – monthly;
  - University Advisory Council (policy approval council) – as needed, up to once a month;
  - Chancellor's Turf meetings (department meetings across campus), which focus on input and strategies implemented that align departmental level goals with the Institutional Strategic Plan – each academic year.

Our Mission Statement, Vision Statement, three Core Themes, and four Comprehensive Plan Goals (see Table 1 on page 2) reflect our institution's unique purpose as the only comprehensive university in Montana's expansive and diverse northern frontier region. Because MSU-Northern is an open-enrollment institution and serves a relatively high percentage of low-income, first-generation, minority, and non-traditional students, we are guided by a dedication to 1) offering high-quality programs that support the academic needs of students with diverse backgrounds and diverse goals, 2) providing a student-centered and culturally enriched environment that fosters belonging, and 3) maintaining strong partnerships that help connect students with real-world skills and career opportunities.

As Table 1 on page 2 demonstrates, MSU-Northern's Core Themes and Strategic Goals are closely aligned and operate in tandem with one another to promote cohesion and shared goals among administration, faculty, staff, students, and alumni. Strategic Goal 1 unites all of the remaining Strategic Goals and the Core Themes with an overarching enrollment goal of 1500 that would provide increased financial stability and thus open doors for deeper capacity-building in each of the other areas. (3.B.1, 3.B.2)

Defining and Assessing Mission Fulfillment

MSU-Northern's annual process for assessing mission fulfillment is carried out by the Institutional Assessment Committee (IAC), which falls under the purview of the Office of the Provost/Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs and is co-chaired by the three academic deans. The

committee consists of both faculty and staff and meets regularly during the academic year. APPENDIX 2 outlines the makeup of the IAC, including its executive committee.

Since the Year One Self-Evaluation Report submitted in 2017, the IAC has initiated a number of revisions to the annual review process in order to promote broader participation and shared responsibility among various campus constituencies as well as clearer institutional communication surrounding the process. These revisions are displayed in APPENDIX 3 and include:

- The establishment of two to four specific, numbered indicators for each of the eight Core Theme objectives. Indicators also identify key reference documents and responsible parties involved in data reporting. (3.B.3)
- Benchmarks for each indicator for each reporting period to guide incremental change.
- A definition of acceptable achievement at 75% or above the current benchmark.
- A visual system of categorization to communicate the level of action needed at three different performance indicator achievement levels: Meeting/Exceeding Target, Approaching Target, Moving Away from Target. (4.B.1)

MSU-Northern defines Mission Fulfillment as "Meeting/Exceeding the target" (green level) or "Approaching the target" (yellow level) for ≥ 75% of the indicators for each of its Core Themes objectives. Because averages can mask individual areas of underperformance, we do not average achievement indicator levels within the categories. (5.A.1)

As is evident in APPENDIX 3, all of our Core Themes objectives currently reach the "Meeting/Exceeding" or "Approaching" level with ≥ 75% of their corresponding indicators.

Timeline for Assessing Mission Fulfillment

The above revisions to the annual assessment process have helped shift MSU-Northern's institutional assessment process toward a "regular, systematic, participatory, self-reflective, and evidence-based" mechanism for data-driven planning and action (5.A.1). The articulation of specific Core Themes indicators and benchmarks, and the creation of a system for monitoring and evaluating progress towards the Core Themes objectives have also allowed the IAC to implement a regular timeline for its annual review cycle, as outlined in Table 3 on page 4.

Sustainability of Annual Review Process and Mission Fulfillment

As is reflected in the Core Theme Indicators chart in APPENDIX 3, the Institutional Assessment Committee at MSU-Northern has made significant progress since the Year 1 Self-Report towards defining mission fulfillment in "regular, systematic, participatory, self-reflective, and evidence based assessment" (5.A.1). The collection, analysis, and communication of relevant data among key offices and programs on campus has allowed the IAC to begin more effectively evaluating MSU-Northern's progress toward its Core Themes objectives and to recommend changes based on the data collected. The creation of a clear timeline, as presented in Table 3, is a significant step towards increasing the long-term sustainability of the process of assessing mission fulfillment.

The explicit integration of the Institutional Strategic Plan goals with those of our Mission and Core Theme planning, reporting and assessment efforts ensure that all of the campus is informed by the collection of appropriately defined data and documented so that it can be more systematic, better integrated, and more widely available to appropriate constituencies for input. This ensures that the institution provides adequate resources to meeting our strategic goals. There are multiple examples of resource allocation, institutional restructuring, and programmatic expansion that are a direct outcome from these planning and assessment efforts.

Findings and recommendations moving forward

The explicit alignment of the Institutional Strategic Plan goals with those of our Core Themes ensures that planning, reporting, and assessment efforts are more systematic, better integrated, and more widely available to appropriate constituencies for input and continuous improvement. The institutional assessment system provides data-driven decision-making to realize and articulate priorities, and it informs "decisions on resource allocation and application of institutional capacity" (3.A.4). Our Institutional Comprehensive Plan ensures that the institution provides adequate resources to meet our Strategic Goals and mission fulfillment.

Several examples of resource reallocation, institutional restructuring, and programmatic expansion are a direct outcome from these planning and assessment efforts. To date, the university has restructured our recruiting and retention offices (Student Support Services, Admissions, the Registrar's Office, Financial Aid, the Business Office, and the Career Center) to better meet our recruiting metrics, retention, and graduation rates both at the university and academic program level. The restructuring was initiated in response to a lack of progress toward Strategic Goal 1 of the Institutional Strategic Plan (Stability - 1500 students), aligned Core Theme 2 (Student Success) and Strategic Goal 3 (Engagement), and aligned Core Theme 3 (Inclusive Partnerships) with Strategic Goal 4 (Collaboration). The restructuring was undertaken over a four-month process that included input from faculty, advisors, staff, and students. To date, we have seen positive impacts that include a slight increase in enrollments and retention rates, and far better communication among the personnel in these functional areas.

Another example addresses student success (Core Theme 2 and Strategic Goal 3). The Tutoring Oversight Committee was established to align and consolidate multiple tutoring centers. Faculty, professional tutors, deans, chairs, and the directors of the Little River Institute and Student Support Services worked to build a more comprehensive faculty-led tutoring structure (Tutoring Central) to better address Core Theme 2 – Student Success. This involved collaboration across multiple functional areas of the campus and the pooling of resources. (4.B.2)

As MSU-Northern moves toward the Year Seven Review, the IAC will further refine the specific metrics used to measure both the baseline and the targets for Core Themes. This is an ongoing process and is directly linked to meeting the Institutional Strategic Plan Goals. These efforts will further inform planning, assessment and budgeting allocations to address progress toward mission fulfillment.
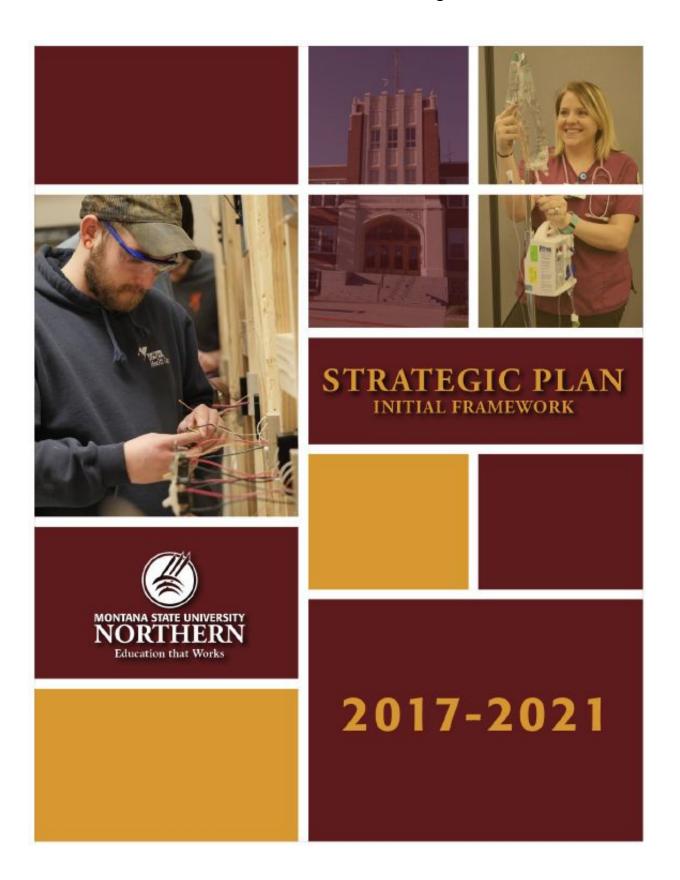
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18. https://www.msun.edu/aboutmsun/mission.aspx

APPENDIX 1: Institutional Strategic Plan

Goal 1: STABILITY

Establish a new enrollment baseline of 1500 students.

MSU-Northern is proud to be ranked the #1 school in Montana for economic mobility, and #15 in the nation. A significant number of Northern's graduates start college in the bottom 20 percent of income distribution, and go on to reach the top 20 percent. MSU-Northern graduates also have better workforce outcomes right out of college than graduates from other four-year colleges in the state. Northern provides an Education that Works.

Even so, over the past five years MSU-Northern has experienced a decline in enrollment, a trend that is consistent with enrollment trends in higher education across the nation. The drop in Montana is attributed in part to a drop in high school enrollment across the state, which has been on a decline for the past five years and is not projected to increase until 2025.

This decline has created significant challenges for the university. For each year that enrollment has remained low, the campus has striven to maintain its quality programs and facilities with less funding, fewer staff, and even fewer faculty.

MSU-Northern is determined to overcome these trends. We are focused on educating a broader pool of prospective students about the value of the Northern degree, especially those who may not consider themselves "college ready." The university is also committed to helping students complete college by providing excellent support services across the entire campus.

Objective 1: Widely communicate the university brand and value
- Use website analytics to identify and target new recruiting territories
- Provide accurate and relevant information on academic web pages
- Drive target audiences to admissions web pages through media engagement

Objective 2: Maximize the capacity of MSU-Northern's programs
- Engage faculty in setting and meeting conversion of application goals for academic programs
- Engage faculty in setting and meeting retention goals for each year of each academic program
- Develop efficient course scheduling

Objective 3: Provide student centered services across campus
- Simplify registration process
- Improve Change of Major process
- Streamline bill-paying
- Increase positive student interactions
- Increase frequency of meetings with academic advisors

Objective 4: Support students through program completion Initial Strategies
- Provide early intervention and on-going support to at-risk students
- Increase effectiveness of First Year Experience course
- Provide aligned tutoring services across campus
- Provide aligned advising services across campus
- Increase engagement with faculty and staff advisors

Goal 2: QUALITY & EFFICIENCY

Provide practical, high-quality educational experiences in a timely manner.

Core Theme 1 - Comprehensive Programs: Provide liberal arts, professional and technical programs that serve a diverse student population

The staff and faculty of MSU-Northern work tirelessly to ensure that every program we offer provides value to our students. That commitment pays off: 100% of MSUN graduates are placed in their field, and the majority in Montana. On average, MSUN graduates out-earn graduates of all other Montana four-year institutions in their first year out of college.

One way MSUN ensures quality is by continually seeking rigorous outside input from accrediting bodies and the industries that employ our graduates. MSUN is proud to have university accreditation from the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU), as well as program accreditations including Nursing (ACEN), Education (BPE), and Civil Engineering (ABET). Going forward, the university also intends to expand its program review process by inviting external reviewers to compare each MSUN program to others being offered all across the country.

Due to the high demand for MSUN's graduates, the university is also committed to getting more students to graduation in a timely manner. MSUN will be diligently focused on improved advising and developing four-year plans that students can confidently follow to graduate on time.

Objective 1: Restructure general education and remedial offerings in order to meet programmatic needs every semester (Practical)
- Determine skills needed within programs, tie to Gen Ed requirements and offerings
- Define Gen Ed components
- Practical, quality, timely delivery
- Review co-curricular offerings

Objective 2: Provide quality educational spaces (Quality)
- Develop master planning guidelines
- Develop updated needs assessment
- Signature classrooms for every program

Objective 3: Invest in well-trained faculty
- Increase training opportunities through OTLE
- Develop sabbatical and research opportunities
- Plan faculty-led study abroad programs
- Hiring process

Objective 4: Systematically review academic programs for relevance, student enrichment, and meeting industry expectations
- Program and course outcomes align with industry needs
- Develop academic minors that enhance current programs
- Engagement of advisory boards

Objective 5: Students graduate in a time appropriate to their degree (Timely)
- Develop plans of study for each degree program
- Optimize course enrollment and streamline class sched-uling
- Conduct Degree audits
- Offer stackable credentials
- Embed/integrate industry-specific credentials

Goal 3: ENGAGEMENT

Strengthen students' sense of belonging.

Core Theme 2 - Student Success: Promote a student centered and culturally enriched environment that fosters student success

Since 1929. MSU-Northern has been providing access to higher education for students in northern Montana. Over the last several decades, the university's reach has expanded, and MSUN now attracts a significant number of out of state students as well. These changing demographics make it imperative that MSUN stays focused on providing all students with both an Education that Works and a place to belong.

To that end, MSUN has made significant progress in positioning the university to serve the four Native American reservations within its service area. The Little River Institute (LRI) was launched at MSU-Northern in 2015, designed to increase American Indian retention and program completion rates by correcting cultural misalignment through increased academic and social engagement opportunities while creating a sense of place and community that is culturally responsive. In the first two years, MSUN has already seen double-digit increases in fall to fall retention 2016 (24%) and 2017 (16%).

LRI has identified the best practices that have resulted in these astounding success rates. MSU-Northern will work to implement those practices across the entire university to ensure that every student can identify Northern as a place to belong.

Objective 1: Students report that they are engaged in campus life (Engagement Score)
- Academic Engagement
- Social Engagement
- General Engagement

Objective 2: Students are satisfied with auxiliary services, facilities and staff (Satisfaction Score)
- Food Service Satisfaction
- Facilities Satisfaction
- Professional Staff Satisfaction

Objective 3: Northern's environment is inclusive of diverse cultures (Diversity Score)
- Sense of Belonging
- Respect
- Fair and just community
- Diversity and inclusiveness
- Safety

Goal 4: COLLABORATION

Expand industry and alumni engagement.
Core Theme 3 - Inclusive Partnerships: Partner with external entities to enhance and expand learning experiences

MSU-Northern has a long, proud history of developing industry partnerships that stand the test of time. MSUN actively engages industry leaders on program advisory boards, which directly correlates to robust curriculum and healthy retention rates. These same engaged industry members have provided testimony to the Montana legislature on the value of MSUN's programs, made significant financial and equipment contributions, and have even partnered with MSUN to recruit new students.

MSU-Northern is focused on expanding these best practices that have been implemented primarily by our signature programs and applying them across the entire university. Each program will have an established and active advisory board with representation from across the region.

MSU-Northern will also seek to more actively engage with our alumni population by focusing on "affinity groups," based around how they engaged with the university as a student. Reunions and events for clubs, athletic teams, and programs will be modeled after the highly successful football reunion organized by the MSUN Alumni Foundation over Homecoming in 2018.

These efforts will be instrumental in building a culture that demonstrates and celebrates success at MSU-Northern.

Objective 1: Ensure relevancy in all academic programs by increasing meaningful industry engagement
- Increase quantity and quality of advisory boards
- Recruit alumni to serve on advisory boards

Objective 2: Graduates are prepared to enter the work-force in a field related to their degree
- Survey employers who are members of advisory boards
- Survey graduates
- Monitor placement rates by program

Objective 3: Develop more opportunities for engagement on campus, off campus, and online
- Increase student participation in cooperative education
- Provide industry mentoring
- Engage alumni in supporting the academic mission
- Enhance quality of engagement offerings

VISION STATEMENT

Montana State University-Northern will be known for its supportive, student-centered environment in which a unique mix of academic programs are responsive to local, regional, and state workforce needs, offered in an atmosphere that promotes student access.

MISSION STATEMENT

MSU-Northern provides higher education to students for professional and technical careers through an in-stitution dedicated to teaching and the pursuit of knowledge.

VALUES

We value the natural inclinations of our students to actively engage in their educational experience. As a practical, hands-on institution, we seek to provide a safe environment where students can pursue their aca-demic interests in both technical and professional programs, engage with new ideas and points of view, and explore a world through life-changing experiences. We are proud to provide our students with an asset that no one can take from them: an Education that Works. Montanan State University-Northern is in a position of leadership on the frontier. As such, we aspire to do the following:

We challenge:
- the assumption that there is only "one track" to success
- our students to define fulfilling careers for themselves

- ourselves to provide innovative educational experiences

We advocate:
- for the pursuit of meaningful work
- for the needs of the "at-risk" student
- for high-quality spaces and campus infrastructure for all students

We embrace:
- diverse worldviews and opinions
- a small school experience
- putting education to work and seeing its impact on the world

STRATEGY

MSU-Northern will continue to be a vital contributor to the economic stability of Montana and beyond by providing students with the skills and education they need to pursue fulfilling careers. Northern will establish itself as the school of choice for students in the region, as well as attract students from across the country, by strategically promoting our unique programs; giving every student the opportunity to graduate on time; providing an engaging student experience; and facilitating relationships with strategic partners in students' career fields.

APPENDIX 2: MSUN Institutional Assessment Committee Members

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Dr. David Krueger, Dean, College of Technical Sciences‡*

Dr. Darlene Sellers, Interim Dean, College of Arts, Sciences, and Education‡*

Ms. Jaime Duke, Interim Dean of the College of Health Sciences‡*

Mr. Jay Howland, Director of Institutional Research*

Dr. Lindsey Brandt-Bennett, Curriculum Developer*

Mr. Chris Wendland, Controller*

Dr. Steven Wise, Dean of Students*

Ms. Alisha Schroeder, Registrar*

Ms. Maura Gatch, Executive Director of Enrollment Management*

Dr. Margarett Campbell, Director of Indian Education

Ms. Marianne Hoppe, Interim Chief Information Officer

Ms. Suzanne Hunger, Human Resources Director

Mr. Dan Ulmen, Director of Facilities

Mr. Steven Don, Chair, College of Technical Sciences

Dr. Valerie Guyant, Chair, College of Arts, Sciences, and Education

Dr. Cristy Ozburn, Assistant Professor, Psychology

Mr. Joshua Meyer, Associate Professor, Automotive/Diesel Technology

‡Committee Co-Chairs
*Executive Committee Members

APPENDIX 3: Mission Fulfillment Indicators and Data

Table 9: Levels of Achievement for Performance Indicator Results	Fulfillment Progress	# of achievement result levels in each performance category (1 result pending)
Meeting or exceeding the target (100% or above target). Continued effort required to maintain acceptable performance.	★	13/30
Approaching the target (75-99% of target). Continued monitoring and interventions required to reach acceptable performance.	⬆	14/30
Moving away from the target (less than 75% of target). Immediate action required to reach acceptable performance.	⬇	2/30

MISSION FULFILLMENT INDICATORS

Core Theme #1 – Comprehensive Programs: Provide liberal arts, professional and technical programs that serve a diverse student population

#	Indicator - See next sheet for description of measure.	Responsible Party	Key Source Documents	AY 16-17 FA16	AY 16-17 SP17	AY 17-18 FA17	AY 17-18 SP18	AY 18-19 FA18	AY 18-19 SP19	Benchmark Description	Current Benchmark	Time Period for Current Results	Current Results	Fulfillment Progress
	Objective 1.1 – Provide excellent academic programs													
1.1.1	Number of academic programs with external programmatic accreditation	Provost, College Deans	Catalog	4		4		4		maintain	4	AY 18-19	4	★
1.1.2	Percent of reviewed academic programs that receive a "recommendation to retain and grow" decision through Board of Regents' Program Review	Provost	BOR Program Review documents	100%		100%		100%		maintain	100%	AY 18-19	100%	★
1.1.3a	First-time pass rate of students who sit for professional credentialing exams (NCLEX)	Provost, College Deans	Exam score reports	-	81.82%	N/A (Teachout phase for new state curriculum)		-	82.6% (to date)	national pass rate	TBD (5-yr avg 84.6%)	AY 18-19	82.6%	←
1.1.3b	First-time pass rate of students and recent graduates who sit for professional credentialing exams (FE)	Provost, College Deans	Exam score reports	50%		42.9%		66.7%		ABET comparator	38%	AY 18-19	66.7%	★
1.1.3c	Pass rate of students who sit for professional credentialing exams (Praxis II prior to program completion)	Provost, College Deans	Exam score reports	77%		67%		100%		Dept of Ed requirement	80%	AY 18-19	100%	★
1.1.4	Total enrollment (census headcount)	OIR	IRVM	1232	1182	1154	1119	1082	1111	3% increase each fall	1269	Fall 2018	1112	←
										Total indicators in acceptable range			5/5	100%
	Objective 1.2 – Cultivate teaching and learning excellence													
1.2.1	Percent of full-time faculty who attend at least one training with Office of Teaching & Learning Excellence	OTLE	Attendance log	N/A		61.8% (34/55)		74.5% (38/51)		100%	100%	AY 18-19	74.5%	←
1.2.2	Percent of full-time faculty receiving support from professional development fund in the last 3 years	Provost	Provost's Report	31% (18/58)		23.6% (13/55)		31.4% (16/51)		50%	50%	AY 18-19	31.4%	→
1.2.3	First-year student rating of MSUN in areas of Academic Challenge, Learning with Peers, Experiences with Faculty, Campus Environment (NSSE Engagement: % of categories on par with or above performance of other Rocky Mountain public colleges)	OIR	NSSE Report	90% (9/10)		N/A - to be completed in 2019		N/A - to be completed in 2019		100%	100%	AY 16-17	90%	←
1.2.4	Senior student rating of MSUN in areas of Academic Challenge, Learning with Peers, Experiences with Faculty, Campus Environment (NSSE Engagement: % of categories on par with or above performance of other Rocky Mountain public colleges)	OIR	NSSE Report	90% (9/10)		N/A - to be completed in 2019		N/A - to be completed in 2019		100%	100%	AY 16-17	90%	←
										Total indicators in acceptable range			3/4	75%

Core Theme #2 – Student Success: Promote a student centered and a culturally enriched environment that fosters student success

#	Indicator	Responsible Party	Key Documents	AY 16-17 FA16	AY 16-17 SP17	AY 17-18 FA17	AY 17-18 SP18	AY 18-19 FA18	AY 18-19 SP19	Benchmark Description	Current Benchmark	Time Period for Current Results	Current Results	Fulfillment Progress
				Objective 2.1 – Prepare students for careers in their chosen field										
2.1.1	Graduation rate of full-time, first-time degree/certificate-seeking undergraduates within 150% of normal time to program completion	OIR	IPEDS	26% (2010 cohort)		33% (2011 cohort)		TBD		3% increase each year	26.8%	AY 17–18	33%	★
2.1.2	Percent of students who participate in Career Fair	Career Center	Career Fair Report	47.2% (581/1232)		44.4% (513/1154)		54.9% (594/1082)		3% increase each year	50.7%	AY 18–19	54.9%	★
2.1.3	Percent of students enrolled in cooperative education (co-ops)	Career Center, Registrar	Banner	14.7% (181/1232)		15.3% (176/1154)		15.2% (164/1082)		3% increase each year	15.6%	AY 18–19	15.2%	←
2.1.4	Percent of surveyed recent graduates working in a related field to their major	Career Center	Graduate Survey Report	89%		89%		TBD		100%	100%	AY 17–18	89%	←
										Total indicators in acceptable range			4/4	100%
				Objective 2.2 – Provide a student centered environment conducive to success										
2.2.1	Retention rate, fall to fall (bachelor, first-time, full-time)	OIR	IPEDS	59% (2015 cohort)		60% (2016 cohort)		66% (2017 cohort)		3% increase each year	62.6%	AY 18–19	66%	★
2.2.2	Student Social Engagement aggregate score (scale of 4)	Dean of Students	Student Life Survey (Dean of Students)	2.79	2.85	2.89	2.82	2.92	2.87	1.5% increase each semester	3.01	Spring 2019	2.87	←
2.2.3	Student Satisfaction with Academics aggregate score (scale of 4)	Dean of Students	Student Life Survey (Dean of Students)	2.78	2.71	3.10	3.12	3.22	3.16	1.5% increase each semester	2.99	Spring 2019	3.16	★
2.2.4	Percent of students who used tutoring services through Tutoring Central	SSS, LRI	Tutoring Central log	no centralized data		no centralized data		9.5% (103/1082)	7.2% (80/1111)	10%	10%	SP 2019	7.2%	→
										Total indicators in acceptable range			3/4	75%
				Objective 2.3 – Promote a culturally enriched environment										
2.3.1	Percentage of underrepresented minority students enrolled at MSUN (to reflect Hill County)	OIR	OIR Report	24.4%	-	23.1%	-	25.8%	-	28.8%	28.8%	FA 2018	25.8%	←
2.3.2	Number of cultural awareness activities, events, and trainings offered through Little River Institute	LRI	Governor's Tribal Relations Report	N/A		9		20		1 per month during AY (10 months)	10	AY 18–19	20	★
2.3.3	Students' average agreement with the statement that "MSUN is dedicated to diversity and inclusiveness."	Dean of Students	Student Life Survey (Dean of Students)	N/A		3.04/4.00		3.03/4.00		4.00/4.00	4.00/4.00	AY 18–19	3.03/4.00	←
										Total indicators in acceptable range			3/3	100%

Core Theme #3 – Inclusive Partnerships: Partner with external entities to enhance and expand learning experiences

#	Indicator	Responsible Party	Key Documents	AY 16-17 FA16	AY 16-17 SP17	AY 17-18 FA17	AY 17-18 SP18	AY 18-19 FA18	AY 18-19 SP19	Benchmark Description	Current Benchmark	Time Period for Current Results	Current Results	Fulfillment Progress
				Objective 3.1 – Use external partnership input to develop or enhance programs/disciplines										
3.1.1	Number of academic program areas with an industry advisory board	Provost, College Deans	Provost's Report	6		7		8		Increase each year	8	AY 18-19	8	★
3.1.2	Number of employers represented at Career Fairs	Career Center	Career Fair Report	78		83		86		Increase each year	84	AY 18-19	86	★
3.1.3	Percent of co-op students who receive "very good" score or higher by employers on overall performance	Career Center	Co-op Employer Survey	94%		87%		94%		100%	100%	AY 18-19	94%	↑
										Total indicators in acceptable range			3/3	100%
				Objective 3.2 – Expand students' collaborative/external learning experiences										
3.2.1	Percent of program areas with required co-op, field experience, research, or capstone course	Provost, College Deans	Provost's Report	100%		100%		100%		maintain	100%	AY 18-19	100%	★
3.2.2	Percent of seniors who report participating in 2+ high-impact learning practices (NSSE)	OIR	NSSE Report	68%		N/A - to be completed in 2019		N/A - to be completed in 2019		80%	80%	AY 16-17	68%	↑
3.2.4	Percent of students enrolled in cooperative education (same as 2.1.2)	Career Center, Registrar	Banner	14.7% (181/1232)		15.3% (176/1154)		15.2% (164/1082)		3% increase each year	15.6%	AY 18-19	15.2%	↑
										Total indicators in acceptable range			3/3	100%
				Objective 3.3 – Through partnerships stimulate economic development of our region										
3.3.1	Percent of graduates with MT residency who found employment in MT for all 4 quarters of the next year	OIR, MUS, DLI	MUS Data Warehouse; MT DLI	66.41% (n=262)		TBD		TBD		maintain	66%	Results pending	-	Results pending
3.3.2	Northern Alumni Foundation endowment	NAF	NAF Annual Report	$6,227,129		$6,336,351		TBD		3% increase each year	$6,413,943	FY 17-18	$6,336,351	↑
3.3.3	Scholarship dollars awarded by NAF	NAF	NAF Annual Report	$426,107		$452,131		TBD		3% increase each year	$452,056	FY 17-18	$452,131	★
										Total indicators in acceptable range			2/2	100%