

**The University of Montana – Helena
College of Technology**

FOCUSED INTERIM REPORT
SPRING 2007

Submitted March 7, 2007

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Introduction

In correspondence dated July 5, 2005, the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU) requested that The University of Montana – Helena College of Technology (UM-Helena) prepare a focused interim report and host a Commission representative in spring 2007 to address Recommendations 1 and 2 of the spring 2005 Regular Interim Evaluation Report. According to NWCCU's July 5, 2005 correspondence, the Commission found that Recommendations 1 and 2 of the spring 2005 Regular Interim Evaluation Report were areas where UM-Helena was substantially in compliance with criteria but in need of improvement. In response to NWCCU's request, The University of Montana—Helena College of Technology respectfully submits this Focused Interim Report.

I. Response to Recommendation #1

“It is recommended that the College continue its efforts to refine and consistently implement its evaluation and planning processes in a manner that clearly links evaluation information/data to the steps of subsequent planning and decision making. Efforts must be focused on completing all the steps in the College’s Plan for assessment of institutional effectiveness and restarting the cycle according to the timeframes prescribed in that Plan. Systems need to be created and maintained that will effectively track the activities associated with each step in the UM-HCT Assessment Plan as the College moves through subsequent assessment and planning cycles (Standard 1.B).”

In response to Recommendation #1, UM-Helena has implemented the following actions:

A. **Restructuring of the Program Assessment Committee**

The Associate Dean of Academic Affairs and the Assistant Dean of Student Services have been placed on the Program Assessment Committee as full members. The purpose of this restructure was to provide the Leadership Team (the Dean/CEO and Associate/Assistant Deans) with a direct connection to the Program Assessment Committee’s activities and use the Leadership Team as a means to hold programs and individuals accountable to the Committee’s requests.

B. **Revision of the Assessment Plan**

An assessment matrix has been developed and implemented to provide a uniform method of reporting to the campus. A copy of the matrix is attached (Appendix A). This matrix has assisted the campus by clarifying the type and the format of information to be submitted.

A new schematic has also been designed and implemented to illustrate the cyclical nature of the assessment process and the manner in which the evaluation information and data are to be used in subsequent planning and decision making. A copy of the schematic is attached (Appendix B).

C. **Integration of the Assessment Plan**

UM-Helena has integrated three main administrative processes to assist with the planning and management of the campus. The Assessment Plan, Budget Process, and Strategic Plan for Institutional Advancement have integrated their duties and outcomes in order to strengthen each individual process. Each individual program and division is required to create goals based upon the institutional initiatives as stated in the Strategic Plan (see Appendix C). Those goals are then used to develop the budget request for the next year. All line items must be tied to program goals, which are then tied to institutional initiatives. Those goals are also used as the measurable outcome for assessment. At the end of the academic year and following the completion of program assessment, those goals are then reevaluated, and new goals are developed for the following academic year.

D. Development of Time Line

An explicit time line with specified dates for each step of the assessment plan has been created for each academic year. This time line allows the programs to plan for the information requested, along with the ability of the Leadership Team and the Program Assessment Committee to track compliance and participation.

E. Communication to the Campus

The Program Assessment Committee has developed and implemented new modes of communicating processes and procedures to the campus at large. Information is available via the following methods: dates are published on the Institutional Calendar; dates, forms, and processes are available on UM-Helena's web site (see Appendix D) and are sent via campus-wide email. The Library has also created a reserve collection on assessment that can be accessed via the internet on UM-Helena's web site. Due to the new emphasis placed upon communication, our response rate for information requested has greatly improved; our fall goal resulted in a 100% rate of on-time information received.

F. Training

Each campus division receives ongoing training from the Program Assessment Committee and others. Topics include general theory and philosophy behind assessment; understanding the tools and concepts of assessment; technical assistance with submitting the required forms and information; taking the information and data and using it to develop future goals and directions; and understanding how individual program assessment and development contributes to institutional movement and growth.

II. Response to Recommendation #2

"It is recommended that the College continue efforts to refine and uniformly implement systematic educational program assessment and planning processes. Implementation of the College's Assessment Plan needs to include the complete cycle described in the Plan. These processes need to demonstrate achievement of program level outcomes and the relationship of program assessment data to program planning and actions designed to strengthen educational programs (Standard 2.b; Policy 2.2)."

In addition to the initiatives discussed under Recommendation #1 that have been implemented and address both recommendations, UM-Helena has also taken the following actions:

A. Revision of Time Line

Programs are now required to use their assessment data to revise goals **before** the end of the academic year. In the past, those revisions were made during the following fall semester. However, in order to tighten the cycle and make decisions based upon fresh information, the time line has been changed. This change allows programs to spend the summer developing strategies to work

toward the revised goals instead of waiting until fall semester to do all of the work when schedules are already so busy.

B. Involvement of the Leadership Team

The Deans who sit on the Leadership Team have agreed to specifically state the time line and informational requirements for assessment and hold individuals and individual programs accountable. In the past, accountability has been more sporadic.

C. Training

Educational programs receive ongoing supplemental training regarding how to effectively use the tools provided and how to use their assessment results to strengthen their individual programs.

III. Conclusion

UM-Helena is working aggressively to strengthen and improve its assessment efforts and processes. We are undertaking this through a variety of methods, including providing ongoing training; revising the assessment plan and time line to create a more streamlined circular path; holding programs accountable by the Leadership Team; improving communication; and integrating the Assessment Plan with the Budget Process and Institutional Advancement. Finally, while UM-Helena is pleased with the campus' efforts to date, we realize this will be an ongoing process as we grow and as new techniques and technologies evolve.

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Program:

MISSION: (Clearly state the mission of the program)

Educational Objectives: (What are you teaching? -- List the education objectives as defined by the program)

Outcomes: (What are students learning? -- List the measurable outcomes of the students of the program)

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Program:

Assessment Plan

Outcome #1: *Example: Program students will have relevant work experience prior to graduation.*

Mission Basis: *Example: Learning environment that stresses practical, hands on experiences and internships.*

IDENTIFY Methods used to achieve the outcome.	When are students assessed: yearly, end of program, etc	DEVELOP Tools and processes to measure the outcome.	APPLY a standard to be achieved.	EVALUATE whether or not the outcome was achieved.	List actions to be taken in the next year to IMPROVE the outcomes.
<i>Example: Career Services, Internships, Placement, Specific Courses</i>	<i>Example: end of each semester</i>	<i>Example: Internship Evaluations, Program Advisory Boards</i>	<i>Example: 80% with relevant work experience prior to graduation.</i>	<i>Example: Did you meet the goal or not? Was the outcome what you were looking for?</i>	<i>Example: Review data for explanation of results. Re-evaluate the goal and/or the action plan.</i>
	<i>each spring</i>	<i>Graduate Placement Survey, Survey of seniors, Capstone Courses, Internship Survey</i>			

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Program:

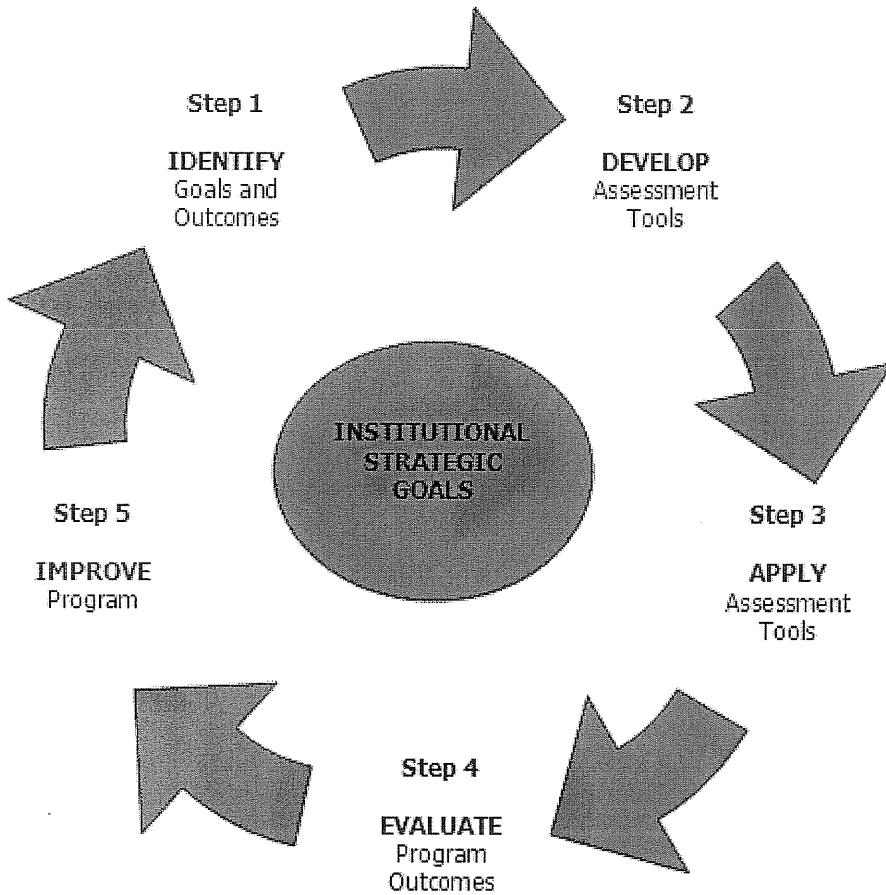
Outcome #2 Example: Program students will
Mission Basis: Example: Learning environment

IDENTIFY Methods used to achieve the outcome.	When are students assessed: yearly, end of program, etc	DEVELOP Tools and processes to measure the outcome.	APPLY a standard to be achieved.	EVALUATE whether or not the outcome was achieved.	List actions to be taken in the next year to IMPROVE the outcomes.
<i>Example:</i> Career Services, Internships, Placement, Specific Courses	<i>Example:</i> end of each semester each spring	<i>Example:</i> Internship Evaluations, Program Advisory Boards Graduate Placement Survey, Survey of seniors, Capstone Courses, Internship Survey	<i>Example:</i> 80% with relevant work experience prior to graduation.	<i>Example:</i> Did you meet the goal or not? Was the outcome what you were looking for?	<i>Example:</i> Review data for explanation of results. Re-evaluate the goal and/or the action plan.

Narrative: Provide additional information available to further clarify the program assessment, i.e. methodologies or assessment strategies. Supportive documentation should be archived in the program/department office.

At UM-Helena the entire College community is involved in assessment as an ongoing process to improve student learning.

Following the direction set by the institutional Mission Statement and Strategic Plan, all programs identify explicit goals and outcomes, develop and apply tools to measure outcomes, evaluate how well performance has met the stated expectations, and uses this information to improve learning.



The Program Assessment Committee oversees and directs the various aspects of the assessment process as outlined in the UM-Helena Assessment Plan.

The University of Montana-Helena College of Technology Strategic Plan

As the only public institution of higher education in Montana's capital city, The University of Montana-Helena College of Technology is keenly aware of its role in providing access to learning opportunities for the citizens of Helena and the entire State of Montana. The directions and priorities set forth in this plan are intended to reaffirm UM-Helena's commitment to its mission as a comprehensive technical college, providing high-quality programs and services in workforce training, university transfer preparation, and lifelong learning.

This strategic plan establishes a road map for the College's growth and development over the next five years. The directions and priorities set forth in this plan were developed through a participatory process led by a team of students, faculty, and staff members. The planning process included an analysis of strengths and strategic opportunities, periodic interactions with college departments and committees, the surrounding community, and the entire college community. Taken together, this input shaped the definition of four strategic directions, each representing an area where the College would benefit from focused attention over the coming five years. Priorities for action further support each of the strategic directions by identifying specific tasks for the College to address. This framework will be brought to life by operational initiatives developed annually by the departments and programs throughout the college. A standing committee of staff and faculty members will coordinate an annual review of progress and make recommendations for any adjustments to the plan that may be needed.

This revision of the UM-Helena strategic plan is but one component of a continuous process of planning, action, assessment, and evaluation. These ongoing activities will help UM-Helena remain focused on fulfilling its mission and help the college thrive in the face of challenges. Meeting the needs of the communities it serves, keeping pace with economic and demographic changes and rising expectations, and serving our students well will all translate into transforming lives.

Strategic Directions and Priorities, 2006-2011

Student Success

Direction: UM-Helena develops and offers instructional programs and student services that help students succeed in reaching their goals.

Priorities for action:

- Assist students in balancing life and school demands.
- Provide transition services for students from application through graduation.
- Develop and evaluate quality educational programs.
- Increase access to student resource areas for the varying student populations.

Connect with the Community

Direction: UM-Helena builds connections with a broad range of groups to respond to the diverse needs of the communities we serve.

Priorities for action:

- Work collaboratively with business and industry, local and state governments, community organizations, and educational partners to accomplish common goals for statewide economic development.
- Create communication avenues with the surrounding community.
- Fully develop internships and service learning opportunities for students.
- Identify and incorporate community interests/ business and industry needs in future planning.
- Foster faculty, staff, and student involvement in community organizations and events.

Create Access

Direction: UM-Helena makes access to higher education possible for the communities we serve.

Priorities for action

- Develop alternative delivery methods for courses and degree obtainment including distance learning, evening and weekend offerings and collaboration with other educational institutions to enhance access to higher education.
- Lessen the financial burden of higher education through the development and marketing of scholarship opportunities.
- Improve access and services to people with disabilities.

Develop Resources

Directions: UM-Helena proactively develops its fiscal, capital, technological and human resources to ensure the effective, efficient management of quality programs and services.

Priorities for action

- Improve technological infrastructure and services including electronic mail, wireless networks, and computers.
- Develop criteria for managing enrollment to sustain the quality of our programs and services including marketing and development.
- Develop staffing and salary structure plans.
- Expand the college's fiscal resource base through grants, private funding, and entrepreneurial activities that support college priorities.
- Develop public/private partnerships and corporate sponsorship and in-kind donations.
- Promote legislative awareness and support.
- Support the excellence and growth of college faculty and staff members through professional development programs.

“Department chairs and program directors of all educational and support programs submit a report of their assessment results and subsequent program changes annually to the Program Assessment Committee. The Program Assessment Committee compiles program reports into an institutional annual report that is disseminated to college constituencies.”^[1]

The following dates are set to facilitate the timely completion of the assessment process.

November 17, 2006	Program Goals Due*
January 17-19, 2007	IR Days in-service and assistance in using assessment matrix
March 16, 2007	Preliminary Program Assessment Plans Due*
May 4, 2007	Final Program Assessment Reports Due*
May 18, 2007	Revised Program Goals Due*
June 1, 2007	Institutional Annual Assessment Report to Leadership Team Due

* All reports are to be submitted to respective Deans electronic format.

^[1] “The Assessment Plan for the University of Montana – Helena College of Technology.” UM-Helena Program Assessment Committee, Fall 2006.