



July 21, 2023

Dr. Sandy Bauman
Acting Dean/CEO
Helena College University of Montana
1115 North Roberts Street
Helena, MT 59601

Dear Dr. Bauman:

Attached please find the Spring 2023 Policies, Regulations, and Financial Review (PRFR) Evaluation Committee's review of Helena College University of Montana. The attached review documents areas where the institution was found to be in compliance with the NWCCU Standards for Accreditation and where additional opportunities for improvement exist. Please note that the Year Seven Evaluation of Institutional Effectiveness (EIE) Evaluation Team will receive a copy of this report, as will the NWCCU Board of Commissioners at your EIE evaluation by the Commission in roughly one year's time.

Please address any areas of needed improvement that the PRFR Evaluation Committee has noted as findings in this report in your EIE self-evaluation. Please feel free to reach out to your NWCCU Staff Liaison if you have further questions.

Findings: None

Future Evaluations

- Year 7 - Evaluation of Institutional Effectiveness Spring 2024
 - Recommendation 4: Spring 2020 Ad Hoc Report

Thank you for your commitment to the process of peer evaluation and continuous quality improvement. If you have questions about any of the information in this letter, please contact your staff liaison, Dr. Selena Grace, at sgrace@nwccu.org.

Sincerely,

Ron Larsen
Senior Vice President

cc: Mrs. Jessie Pate, Director of Institutional Research & Effectiveness
Ms. Joyce Dombrowski, BOR Chair
Mr. Clayton Christian, Commissioner of Education, Montana University System



Peer Evaluation for: Helena College University of Montana

Standard 2: Governance, Resources, and Capacity

The institution articulates its commitment to a structure of governance that is inclusive in its planning and decision-making. Through its planning, operational activities, and allocation of resources, the institution demonstrates a commitment to student learning and achievement in an environment respectful of meaningful discourse.

Standard 2.A.1

The institution demonstrates an effective governance structure, with a board(s) or other governing body(ies) composed predominantly of members with no contractual, employment relationship, or personal financial interest with the institution. Such members shall also possess clearly defined authority, roles, and responsibilities. Institutions that are part of a complex system with multiple boards, a centralized board, or related entities shall have, with respect to such boards, written and clearly defined contractual authority, roles, and responsibilities for all entities. In addition, authority and responsibility between the system and the institution is clearly delineated in a written contract, described on its website and in its public documents, and provides the NWCCU accredited institution with sufficient autonomy to fulfill its mission.

Team Verification: Compliant

Evidence:

- Institutional governance policies and procedures **_Y_**
- System governance policies and procedures (if applicable) **_Y_**
- Multiple board governing policies and procedures (if applicable) **_Y_**
- Board's calendar for reviewing institutional and board policies and procedures **_Y_**
- Bylaws and Articles of Incorporation referencing governance structure **_Y_**

Rationale:

Helena College's governance authority is established through Montana Code Annotated (MCA) 20-25-301. Board Policies appear to be reviewed and revised regularly. The Board of Regents meeting schedule is clearly listed on the Montana system's website. Board Bylaws and Articles of Incorporation are readily available and clearly identify HC governance structure.

Standard 2.A.2

The institution has an effective system of leadership, staffed by qualified administrators, with appropriate levels of authority, responsibility, and accountability who are charged with planning, organizing, and managing the institution and assessing its achievements and effectiveness.

Team Verification: Compliant

Evidence:

- Leadership organizational chart **_Y_**
- Curriculum vitae of executive leadership **_Y_**

Rationale:

An organizational chart outlining the college's structure has been provided. Staff CV's were readily available and well presented in the document.

Standard 2.A.3

The institution employs an appropriately qualified chief executive officer with full-time responsibility to the institution. The chief executive may serve as an ex officio member of the governing board(s) but may not serve as its chair.

Team Verification: Compliant

Evidence:

- Curriculum vitae of President/CEO **_Y_**

Rationale:

The CEO's CV was readily available in attachments.

Standard 2.A.4

The institution's decision-making structures and processes, which are documented and publicly available, must include provisions for the consideration of the views of faculty, staff, administrators, and students on matters in which each has a direct and reasonable interest.

Team Verification: Compliant

Evidence:

- Institutional governance policies and procedures (see 2.A.1) **_Y_**



Rationale:

HC clearly demonstrates effective decision-making processes with clear shared governance principles with eight standing committees and appropriate Ad Hoc committees established. HC's shared governance structure is supported by institutional policies and procedures.

Standard 2.B.1

Within the context of its mission and values, the institution adheres to the principles of academic freedom and independence that protect its constituencies from inappropriate internal and external influences, pressures, and harassment.

Team Verification: Compliant

Evidence:

- Academic freedom policies and procedures (evidence could include samples of negotiated agreements with faculty and/or staff, where appropriate) **_Y_**
- Evidence that the students also have academic freedom **_Y_**

Rationale:

Compliance with 2.B.1 is established through BOR Policy 302: Academic Freedom. Additional supporting evidence is found in the Faculty Handbook and Collective Bargaining Agreement(s). Evidence for student academic freedom is provided through the HC Student Handbook as well.

Standard 2.B.2

Within the context of its mission and values, the institution defines and actively promotes an environment that supports independent thought in the pursuit and dissemination of knowledge. It affirms the freedom of faculty, staff, administrators, and students to share their scholarship and reasoned conclusions with others. While the institution and individuals within the institution may hold to a particular personal, social, or religious philosophy, its constituencies are intellectually free to test and examine all knowledge and theories, thought, reason, and perspectives of truth. Individuals within the institution allow others the freedom to do the same.

Team Verification: Compliant

Rationale:

Evidence supporting Freedom of expression is established through HC Policy 100.3 as well as University of Montana Policy 250. Further, expressive freedom is supported through the HC Student Handbook, specifically page 35.

Standard 2.C.1

The institution's transfer-of-credit policy maintains the integrity of its programs and facilitates the efficient mobility of students desirous of the completion of their educational credits, credentials, or degrees in furtherance of their academic goals.

Team Verification: Compliant

Evidence:

- Transfer of credit policies and procedures **_Y_**

Rationale:

HC has very clearly identified transfer policies established through Montana Board of Regents Policy 301.5 and clearly identifies available transfer institutions in the supporting documentation. This information can also be found on the HC Admissions and Enrollment website.

Standard 2.C.2

The institution's policies and procedures related to student rights and responsibilities should include, but not be limited to, provisions related to academic honesty, conduct, appeals, grievances, and accommodations for persons with disabilities.

Team Verification: Compliant

Evidence:

Documentation of student's rights and responsibilities policies and procedures, which include:

- Academic honesty **_Y_**
- Conduct **_Y_**
- Appeals, grievances **_Y_**
- Accommodations for persons with disabilities **_Y_**

Rationale:

HC has demonstrated compliance with 2.C.2 through their academic catalog and HC Student Handbook. Policies 100.3 and 300.2 address grievance procedures and FERPA compliance respectively. Further, accommodations considerations are addressed through Policy 300.3 and the college's Disability Resource website.

Standard 2.C.3

The institution's academic and administrative policies and procedures should include admission and placement policies that guide the enrollment of students in courses and programs through an evaluation of prerequisite knowledge, skills, and abilities to ensure a reasonable probability of



student success at a level commensurate with the institution's expectations. Such policies should also include a policy regarding continuation in and termination from its educational programs, including its appeal and re-admission policy.

Team Verification: Compliant

Evidence:

- Policies and procedures for recruiting, admitting, and placing students **_Y_**
- Policies/procedures related to continuation and termination from educational programs including appeal process and readmission policies/procedures **_Y_**

Rationale:

HC demonstrates compliance through multiple resources including their Admissions and Enrollment web page as well as their academic catalog. At the system level, Montana Board of Regence Policies 301.8 and 301.9 address continuation and termination policies respectively. HC readmission process is outlined in their academic catalog and HC is looking to update their procedures in 2023.

Standard 2.C.4

The institution's policies and procedures regarding the secure retention of student records must include provisions related to confidentiality, release, and the reliable backup and retrievability of such records.

Team Verification: Compliant

Evidence:

- Policies/procedures regarding secure retention of student records, (i.e., back-up, confidentiality, release, protection from cybersecurity issues or other emergencies) **_Y_**

Rationale:

HC operates under Montana Board of Regence Policy 1300.1 that establishes the system standard for data security. Further, HC policy 700.2 establishes the minimum standard for network connected devices. HC also follows the Montana University System General Record Retention Schedule for retention and destruction schedules.

Standard 2.D.1

The institution represents itself clearly, accurately, and consistently through its announcements, statements, and publications. It communicates its academic intentions, programs, and services to students and to the public and demonstrates that its academic programs can be completed in a timely fashion. It regularly reviews its publications to ensure accuracy and integrity in all representations about its mission, programs, and services.

Team Verification: Compliant

Evidence:

- Policies/procedures for reviewing published materials (print or websites) that assures institutional integrity **_N_**

Rationale:

HC has established a well-developed brand standard that ensures consistency of image. While the college's Campus marketing Toolkit and the Director of Marketing works with Division Directors to ensure accuracy of the Student Handbook and academic catalog.

The Year Seven team should review related policy/procedures on site and confirm institutional processes.

Standard 2.D.2

The institution advocates, subscribes to, and exemplifies high ethical standards in its management and operations, including in its dealings with the public, NWCCU, and external organizations, including the fair and equitable treatment of students, faculty, administrators, staff, and other stakeholders and constituencies. The institution ensures that complaints and grievances are addressed in a fair, equitable, and timely manner.

Team Verification: Compliant

Evidence:

- Policies/procedures for reviewing internal and external complaints and grievances **_Y_**

Rationale:

As addressed prior, HC provides adequate resources to students seeking resolution through their Student Concerns & Complaint website and is supported through Montana Board of Regence policy 221. Further supporting this process is HC policy 100.3. Grievance procedures are found in Appendix A of policy 100.3.

Standard 2.D.3

The institution adheres to clearly defined policies that prohibit conflicts of interest on the part of members of the governing board(s), administration, faculty, and staff.

Team Verification: Compliant

Evidence:

- Policies/procedures prohibiting conflict of interests among employees and board members **_Y_**



Rationale:

HC policy 400.1 clearly identifies the college's conflict of interest policies and supports the policy with appropriate procedures. Further, UM Policy 703 and Board of Regents policy 770 as well as BOR policy 760 address conflict of interest expectations for Board members.

Standard 2.E.1

The institution utilizes relevant audit processes and regular reporting to demonstrate financial stability, including sufficient cash flow and reserves to achieve and fulfill its mission

Team Verification: Compliant

Evidence:

- Policies/procedures that articulate the oversight and management of financial resources **_Y_**
- Latest external financial audit including management letter **_Y_**
- Cash flow balance sheets **_Y_**
- Audited financial statements **_Y_**
- Tuition and fees, educational, and auxiliary revenue for undergraduate and graduate enrollments **_Y_**
- Significant contracts/grants **_Y_**
- Endowment and giving reports **_Y_**
- Investment revenue **_Y_**

Rationale:

HC, as part of the UM System, includes their financials into an annual consolidated financial statement with other system colleges. The last UM System financial audit was performed in March 2022. Appropriate policies and procedures are in place to ensure fiscal oversight of HC through MCA 17-1-102, BOR Policies, 970.1, 210, 901.15, 901.13, and 901.10.

Standard 2.E.2

Financial planning includes meaningful opportunities for participation by stakeholders and ensures appropriate available funds, realistic development of financial resources, and comprehensive risk management to ensure short term financial health and long-term financial stability and sustainability.

Team Verification: Compliant

Evidence:

- Policies / procedures for planning and monitoring of operating and capital budgets, reserves, investments, fundraising, cash management, debt management, transfers and borrowing between funds **_Y_**
- Sample of meeting agendas, minutes, and/or other documentation as evidence of meaningful opportunities for participation by stakeholders **_N_**

Rationale:

The HC Budget Management Team (BMT) ensures appropriate employee participation and shared governance with representation from across campus employee groups and campus stakeholders. The BMT agenda and minutes are readily available on the HC website.

Standard 2.E.3

Financial resources are managed transparently in accordance with policies approved by the institution's governing board(s), governance structure(s), and applicable state and federal laws.

Team Verification: Compliant

Evidence:

- Description of internal financial controls **_Y_**
- Board approved financial policies, state financial policies, or system financial policies **_Y_**

Rationale:

HC follows statewide spending regulations outlined in the Montana Operations Manual and follows the related purchasing guidelines. Further, financial management at HC is governed by the Uniform Accounting, System and Control law (MCA 17-1-102). This information is further documented on HC's Business Services website.

Standard 2.F.1

Faculty, staff, and administrators are apprised of their conditions of employment, work assignments, rights and responsibilities, and criteria and procedures for evaluation, retention, promotion, and termination.

Team Verification: Compliant

Evidence:

- Human resource policies / procedures **_Y_**
- Policies/procedures related to teaching, scholarship, service, and artistic creation **_Y_**



- Policies/procedures for apprising employees of working conditions, rights and responsibilities, evaluation, retention, promotion, and termination _Y_

Rationale:

HC has well documented HR policies (400 series) and procedures that are supplemented by the Montana Board of Regence and University of Montana personnel policies, as outlined in HC policy 100.4. Policies and procedures related to scholarship are further supported by appropriate collective bargaining agreements.

Standard 2.F.2

The institution provides faculty, staff, and administrators with appropriate opportunities and support for professional growth and development.

Team Verification: Compliant

Evidence:

- Employee professional development policies/procedures _Y_

Rationale:

Policies and Procedures supporting professional development are detailed through BOR policy 940.13. Shared governance is established and exemplified by the HC Professional Development Committee.

Standard 2.F.3

Consistent with its mission, programs, and services, the institution employs faculty, staff, and administrators sufficient in role, number, and qualifications to achieve its organizational responsibilities, educational objectives, establish and oversee academic policies, and ensure the integrity and continuity of its academic programs.

Team Verification: Compliant

Evidence:

- Documentation about engagement and responsibilities specified for faculty and staff, as appropriate _Y_
- Personnel hiring policy/procedures _Y_
- Academic organizational chart _Y_
- Administrator/staff /faculty evaluation policies/procedures _Y_

Rationale:

HC has established standards of personnel allocation and staffing ratios that ensure sufficient staffing in number to achieve institutional goals and objectives. The HC Academic Organization Chart and HC Hiring Plan support effective oversight of qualifications and roles in HC hiring practices. Supporting documentation can also be found on the HC Human Resources website.

Standard 2.F.4

Faculty, staff, and administrators are evaluated regularly and systematically in alignment with institutional mission and goals, educational objectives, and policies and procedures. Evaluations are based on written criteria that are published, easily accessible, and clearly communicated. Evaluations are applied equitably, fairly, and consistently in relation to responsibilities and duties. Personnel are assessed for effectiveness and are provided feedback and encouragement for improvement.

Team Verification: Compliant

Evidence:

- Administrator/staff/faculty evaluation policies/procedures _Y_

Rationale:

HC evaluation process is well documented through the HC Human Resources webpage with detailed performance review processes provided. First year employees undergo extensive evaluation and assessment. Further, assessment of represented employees is well documented in their respective collective bargaining agreements.

Standard 2.G.1

Consistent with the nature of its educational programs and methods of delivery, and with a particular focus on equity and closure of equity gaps in achievement, the institution creates and maintains effective learning environments with appropriate programs and services to support student learning and success.

Team Verification: Compliant

Evidence:

- Listing of programs and services supporting student learning needs _Y_

Rationale:

HC provides a listing of campus services (Appendix J) as well as detailing their participation in the SSS TRiO program and the Montana 10 initiative.



Standard 2.G.2

The institution publishes in a catalog, or provides in a manner available to students and other stakeholders, current and accurate information that includes: institutional mission; admission requirements and procedures; grading policy; information on academic programs and courses, including degree and program completion requirements, expected learning outcomes, required course sequences, and projected timelines to completion based on normal student progress and the frequency of course offerings; names, titles, degrees held, and conferring institutions for administrators and full-time faculty; rules and regulations for conduct, rights, and responsibilities; tuition, fees, and other program costs; refund policies and procedures for students who withdraw from enrollment; opportunities and requirements for financial aid; and the academic calendar.

Team Verification: Compliant

Evidence:

Catalog (and/or other publications) that provides information regarding:

- Institutional mission **_Y_**
- Admission requirements and procedures **_Y_**
- Grading policy **_Y_**
- Information on academic programs and courses, including degree and program completion requirements, expected learning outcomes, required course sequences, and projected timelines to completion **_Y_**
- Names, titles, degrees held, and conferring institutions for administrators and full-time faculty **_Y_**
- Rules and regulations for conduct, rights, and responsibilities **_Y_**
- Tuition, fees, and other program costs **_Y_**
- Refund policies and procedures for students who withdraw from enrollment **_Y_**
- Opportunities and requirements for financial aid **_Y_**
- The academic calendar **_Y_**

Rationale:

All required information can be found in the HC catalog.

Standard 2.G.3

Publications and other written materials that describe educational programs include accurate information on national and/or state legal eligibility requirements for licensure or entry into an occupation or profession for which education and training are offered. Descriptions of unique requirements for employment and advancement in the occupation or profession shall be included in such materials.

Team Verification: Compliant

Evidence:

Samples of publications and other written materials that describe:

- Accurate information on national and/or state legal eligibility requirements for licensure or entry into an occupation or profession for which education and training are offered **_Y_**
- Descriptions of unique requirements for employment and advancement in the occupation or profession shall be included in such materials **_Y_**

Rationale:

HC provides accurate information regarding legal requirements for certain programs and provides links detailing program requirements for their nursing and Aviation Maintenance program as evidence.

Standard 2.G.4

The institution provides an effective and accountable program of financial aid consistent with its mission, student needs, and institutional resources. Information regarding the categories of financial assistance (such as scholarships, grants, and loans) is published and made available to prospective and enrolled students.

Team Verification: Compliant

Evidence:

- Published financial aid policies/procedures including information about categories of financial assistance **_Y_**
- Information to students regarding repayment obligations **_Y_**
- Policies / procedures for monitoring student loan programs **_Y_**

Rationale:

HC addresses 2.G.4 through their Financial Aid Forms & Policies website, which outlines available financial aid options as well as repayment requirements. The college's website also details financial resources available to students and prospective students.

Standard 2.G.5

Students receiving financial assistance are informed of any repayment obligations. The institution regularly monitors its student loan programs and publicizes the institution's loan default rate on its website.



Team Verification: Compliant

Evidence:

- Published financial aid policies/procedures including information about categories of financial assistance _Y_
- Information to students regarding repayment obligations _Y_
- Policies / procedures for monitoring student loan programs _Y_
- Loan default rate published on website _Y_

Rationale:

Information related to repayment, monitoring and related financial aid information is readily available through the college's financial aid website. Loan default rate can be found on the HC Financial Aid website as well as financial aid policies and procedures.

Standard 2.G.6

The institution designs, maintains, and evaluates a systematic and effective program of academic advisement to support student development and success. Personnel responsible for advising students are knowledgeable of the curriculum, program and graduation requirements, and are adequately prepared to successfully fulfill their responsibilities. Advising requirements and responsibilities of advisors are defined, published, and made available to students.

Team Verification: Compliant

Evidence:

- Description of advising program, staffing, and advising publications (Student handbook or Catalog; links to webpages – please note specific pages or areas) _Y_
- Systematic evaluation of advising _Y_
- Professional development policies / procedures for advisors _Y_

Rationale:

HC uses the CCSSE and SENSE survey tools to regularly collect data on the effectiveness of advising. This is supported by the ED of Enrollment serving as a member of the Academic Standards and Curriculum Committee.

Year Seven team should review advising process evaluation and evidence of appropriate changes as a result of analyzing survey data.

Standard 2.G.7

The institution maintains an effective identity verification process for students, including those enrolled in distance education courses and programs, to establish that the student enrolled in such a course or program is the same person whose achievements are evaluated and credentialed. The institution ensures that the identity verification process for distance education students protects student privacy and that students are informed, in writing at the time of enrollment, of current and projected charges associated with the identity verification process.

Note: Institutions should refer to NWCCU Distance Education Policy for guidance and definitions related to the required evidence.

Team Verification: Compliant

Evidence:

- Policies/procedures for ensuring the student who registers in a distance education course/program is the same student who participates in the course and receives credit _Y_
- Policies/procedures make it clear that these processes protect student privacy _Y_
- Notification to students at the time of registration of any additional charges associated with verification procedures _Y_
- Academic policies/procedures for instructors to implement requirements for *regular and substantive interaction* in distance education courses/programs _Y_

Rationale:

HC is getting ready to deploy multi-factor authentication. Currently, HC provides student ID that serves as their primary identification control. Further, HC uses an online course quality design and accessibility checklist. HC also employs the use of Quality Matters to ensure student success in the online environment.

Standard 2.H.1

Consistent with its mission, the institution employs qualified personnel and provides access to library and information resources with a level of currency, depth, and breadth sufficient to support and sustain the institution's mission, programs, and services.

Team Verification: Compliant

Evidence:

- Procedures for assessing adequacy of library collections _Y_
- Library planning committee and procedures for planning and collection development _Y_
- Library instruction plan; policies/procedures related to the use of library and information resources _Y_



- Library staffing information; policies/procedures that explains faculty/library partnership for assuring library and information resources are integrated into the learning process Y

Rationale:

HC has a detailed Library Management Plan and appropriate staffing that appear to collaborate with college faculty. HC's Library Advisory Council ensures that campus stakeholders can contribute to the library collection through shared governance.

Standard 2.I.1

Consistent with its mission, the institution creates and maintains physical facilities and technology infrastructure that are accessible, safe, secure, and sufficient in quantity and quality to ensure healthful learning and working environments that support and sustain the institution's mission, academic programs, and services.

Team Verification: Compliant

Evidence:

Facilities master plan, including:

- Equipment replacement policies/procedures Y
- Procedures for assessing sufficiency of physical facilities Y
- Policies and procedures for ensuring accessible, safe, and secure facilities Y
- Policies/procedures for the use, storage, and disposal of hazardous waste Y
- Technology master plan and planning processes Y

Rationale:

HC provided evidence of appropriate policies and procedures concerning the adequacy of facilities and equipment. Appropriate replacement and acquisition procedures have been identified as well. HC also has a well-defined long-range capital investment plan. Further, safety and hazardous material policies are in place. Additionally, HC has a detailed IT strategic plan that can be found in Appendix N.

Concluding Comments

Helena College has provided a comprehensive and, in general, an exemplary Policies, Regulations, Finances Review (PRFR) document.