

Situational Analysis: Student Recruitment and Admissions

Strategic Enrollment Planning

Introduction

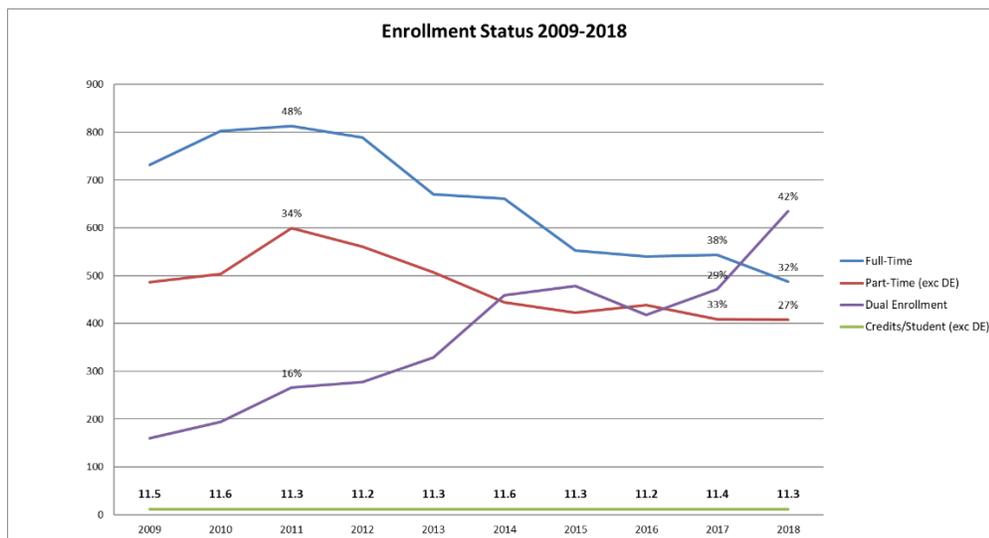
Under Core Themes of “Student Access and Success” and “Community Enrichment,” Helena College strives to increase enrollment in credit-bearing programs and to respond to local industry needs. To remain competitive, Helena College must analyze past trends and project future developments. After reviewing five years of past data and future projections, we will focus on the following key performance indicators (KPIs) for strategic enrollment planning:

- Enrollment Trends
 - Enrollment by student type (traditional, non-tradition, full-time, part-time)
 - Enrollment by program
- Market Penetration and Market Share
- Student Shape (race, first generation, disabilities, veteran, age, and income)

Enrollment Trends

Of the 731 students graduating high school in 2017 in the tri-county area, 326 attended college. Helena College captured 102 (31%) of those students. Capturing nearly one third of the college-bound population demonstrates that we are well-positioned in our market area; however, actively targeting the 405 students who chose not to go to college creates an ideal opportunity for growth.

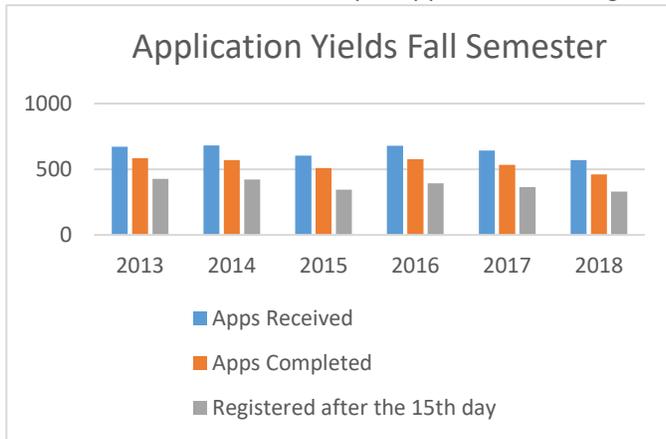
Of our total population, 38% are traditional students, compared to 27% non-traditional students. While overall enrollment is down over five years, non-traditional freshmen have declined the most, with Fall enrollment down by 61%, from 51 students in 2014 to 25 in 2018; and down 52% spring to spring. During the same period, traditional freshmen have declined from 186 in 2014 to 157 for Fall 2018, down



13% in five years; and in the spring, down 34% during those five years.

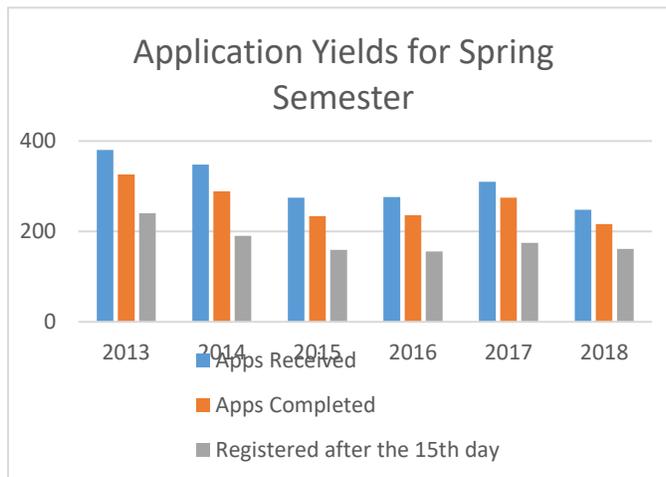
The Enrollment Status graph shows a ten-year trend, showing highest enrollment in 2011 and lowest in 2018; and a flat line for credits per student.

The decrease in non-traditional students may be attributed to a low unemployment rate (2.6%) in our area. However, there are ample opportunities for growth in this non-traditional segment. According to a



study of Lewis & Clark County in 2016, there were approximately 47,137 residents over the age of 25. Among this population segment approximately 49% had a high school diploma and some college, but no degree. This may indicate that non-traditional students are less likely to seek a degree.

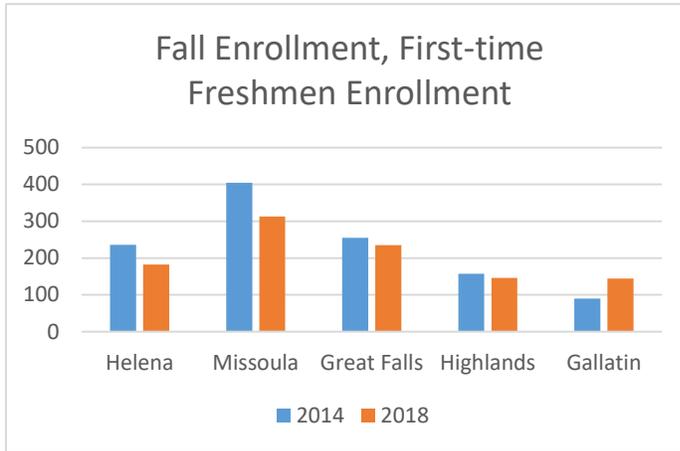
The percentage of applications completed, indicating students ready to register, has gone down from 87% to 81% over the past 5 years in the fall. The overall yield rate (completed applications to enrollment) has ranged from a high of 74% to a low of 68% from fall of 14 to fall of 18. The downward completion trend aligns with our participation in College Application Week, which allows Montana High School students to apply for free to any college in the state. These applications tend to have a 25% to 30% overall yield rate.



Helena College admits students in the categories of transfer, degree-seeking, full-time and part-time students, including high school students in Dual Enrollment. The number of applications received for the fall

semester decreased by 15% from 2013 to 2018 and by 35% for the spring semester. Transfer student enrollments are down slightly over five years. New degree-seeking students, who constitute 17% of total headcount in 2018, are down 22% since 2014. First-time full-time enrollment was down 30% from fall 2014 to fall 2018 and for spring to spring enrollment, down 49%.

First-time freshman enrollment (full and part-time), compared to two-year colleges within a 100-mile radius shows most campuses also experiencing declines (MUS Dashboard). Part-time enrollment was down 14% from fall 2014 to 2018 and down 36% spring 2014 to 2018.



In contrast to those negative trends, concurrent enrollment (in the high school setting) is up 128% in the past five years; and on-campus dual enrollment is up 38%. This increase could be the result of the Governor’s Office, the Office of Public Instruction, and the Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education working hard to increase dual enrollment statewide during this five-year period, through marketing and supporting Pathways Coordinators at every two-year campus.

Pathways Coordinators were tasked with increasing Dual Enrollment in Career & Technical courses, in particular. As a result, participation in Dual-Enrolled CTE courses increased from 71 enrollments in 2016-17 to 108 enrollments in 2017-18.

In 2013 there were 240 concurrent enrollment students and in 2018, 548 students. There were 13 on-campus dual credit students in fall 2013 and in 2018, 18 students. Spring semester saw an increase of 3.3%, from 240 students to 248. On-campus dual enrollment grew from 14 (in 2013) to 19 students (36%) in spring semester of 2018. Some of these students are already thinking of a career pathway, most are not. Converting just 5.1% of these dual enrolled students into full-time freshmen would erase the decline in traditional student admissions. Because three of the 17 unique pathways published by Helena College are 2+2 programs and all others point to C.A.S. and A.A.S. programs, this goal may be achievable.

Program Enrollment in Relation to Job Market

Over the next ten years, demand for trained workers in Montana is projected to exceed the supply. The top five industries facing shortages are listed in the table below.

Program	Montana Job Projections 2017-2027 Estimated Annual Openings	Average Annual Headcount Enrollment 2013-2018	Helena College Retention	Helena College Completion
Office Technology	1801	54	50%	78%
Accounting & Business	990	119	48%	57%
Registered Nursing	765	36	88%	100%
Automotive Technology	369	25	52%	25%
Computer Technology	261	88	59%	32%

These Career and Technical fields are and will continue to be in high demand, which may lure working people back to school to learn higher-level skills. However, with the exception of Nursing and Computer Technology (up 19%), new enrollment in these programs has declined. In fact, looking at new enrollment by program, our largest decreases appear to be in programs with high demand: Automotive Technology is down by 90%; Office Technology down 50%; and Accounting & Business down 43% in a five-year period. Another program with fluctuating demand is Welding Technology, which has seen new enrollment drop 53%. One-year and two-year programs not in this data set include Construction, Interior Design, Water Resources, and Mental Health Direct Care. These programs were closed during

the past five years. Because of the growing demand for skilled labor in the construction trades (see CEWD report), reviving some kind of program(s) in construction may attract more students. Costs could be minimal because a construction lab sits vacant at Helena College.

Another data set is headcount in these programs (which is influenced by retention and transfer in the context of a two-year program). Annual headcount in Auto was down 30.8%; Office Technology down 62.8%; Accounting & Business down 34.2%; and Computer Technology down 31.4%.

High market demand with falling enrollment in a career field indicate a puzzling incongruity. Some of these programs, such as Office Technology, may benefit from rebranding in order to more clearly represent this in-demand career field. With low completion rates in Automotive and Computer Technology programs, students may not see value in the degree. Many students report leaving the auto program before completion because employers do not require the degree and beginning pay is low. In order to address these issues, a new Automotive Technology program will incorporate summer apprenticeships for all students who enroll in the automotive courses, which may increase new enrollments.

At the same time, Computer-Aided Manufacturing has increased new enrollments by 88% in the five-year period, with the addition of a night program. Aviation Maintenance is up 40% and Diesel Technology is up by 7%, although these programs have seen dips in the five-year period. These are also degrees with high market demand.

A December 2018 Helena Workforce Innovation Networks survey of 14 industries in Lewis and Clark, Broadwater, and Jefferson counties revealed that 94% of respondents hired a new employee in the past year and 80% had difficulty finding qualified applicants. The most difficult “employability skills” to find were critical thinking, problem solving, and decision-making: skills that a college education should develop.

Helena serves as a major hub for employment in both the state and federal government sectors. As the upper-level government employee population enters retirement, an opportunity may exist to train their mid- to entry-level employees for succession. While 49% of the population over age 25 does not hold a college degree, many employers require at least a two-year degree for management level positions.

Market Penetration

Market penetration trend data and web analytics are in the fledgling state at this time. The lack of an integrated CRM prohibits personalized, comprehensive communication to prospective students. In addition, our website has been revamped in the past year creating a deficiency in our analytics. The web analytics we were able to review from October 1, 2018 – November 29, 2018 show that 52% of our web users originated outside Montana.

Region ?	Acquisition			Behavior		
	Users ? ↓	New Users ?	Sessions ?	Bounce Rate ?	Pages / Session ?	Avg. Session Duration ?
	24,272 <small>% of Total: 93.23% (26,034)</small>	20,980 <small>% of Total: 92.50% (22,680)</small>	70,140 <small>% of Total: 97.29% (72,095)</small>	37.65% <small>Avg for View: 38.63% (-2.55%)</small>	2.56 <small>Avg for View: 2.54 (0.89%)</small>	00:02:49 <small>Avg for View: 00:02:46 (1.79%)</small>
1. Montana	12,600 (48.24%)	9,340 (44.52%)	49,557 (70.65%)	28.74%	2.78	00:03:24
2. California	1,952 (7.47%)	1,873 (8.93%)	2,301 (3.28%)	82.40%	1.48	00:00:51
3. Utah	1,732 (6.63%)	1,038 (4.95%)	4,591 (6.55%)	34.72%	2.55	00:01:55
4. Florida	1,618 (6.20%)	1,594 (7.60%)	1,766 (2.52%)	92.13%	1.19	00:00:23
5. Texas	1,041 (3.99%)	853 (4.07%)	1,741 (2.48%)	54.16%	2.07	00:01:29
6. Colorado	637 (2.44%)	389 (1.85%)	1,567 (2.23%)	34.46%	2.52	00:02:26
7. Washington	589 (2.26%)	489 (2.33%)	1,079 (1.54%)	46.80%	2.43	00:01:39
8. New York	557 (2.13%)	523 (2.49%)	643 (0.92%)	79.00%	1.63	00:00:49
9. (not set)	483 (1.85%)	476 (2.27%)	483 (0.69%)	95.86%	1.05	00:00:06
10. Illinois	406 (1.55%)	369 (1.76%)	507 (0.72%)	66.07%	2.15	00:01:20

The website is a vital recruitment tool. Today’s prospective students use social media and websites to learn about potential colleges and their program offerings. At this time we do not have a dedicated webmaster capable of ensuring relevant and fluid webpage content, search engine optimization and targeting, and general website maintenance.

Market perception data has not been tracked. However, Helena College is still frequently referred to as the Vo-Tech, which may reflect some inaccurate perceptions. Image and perception data needs to be gathered through advisory council, community, and student focus group surveys in order to adequately analyze our current situation.

This committee believes that recruiting new students should be a college-wide effort; however, in the 2018 Employee Engagement and Satisfaction Survey only 17% of respondents ranked “Increase the enrollment of new students” as the first priority among ten Institutional Goals, whereas “Retain more current students to graduate” was highest, with 32.9% ranking it as the top priority.

A review of non-enrolling applicants through the National Student Clearinghouse indicated that about 80% of those individuals did not enroll at another college (2014-18 data). Of the 20% that did enroll elsewhere, 68% enrolled in 4-year institutions primarily located in Montana. The largest number go to MSU-Bozeman. Another 30% are registered at 2-year schools, primarily in Montana, with most (13.7%) enrolling at Great Falls College. A small percentage attend online schools (such as Phoenix University).

Student Shape

In Strategic Goal #4, Helena College strives to model and foster equity and inclusion. However, statistics show that Helena College had the largest percentage of students with disabilities and first generation students during the recession years (2008-2014). Both have declined since 2014 and are currently smaller than they were in 2006.

Students disclosing disabilities peaked in 2012 at 14% and fell to 7% in the fall of 2018. However, in any given semester, about 60-120 students actively use disability services, a number which fluctuates drastically and should be tracked more accurately. It should also be noted, the demographic form, which included disclosing disabilities has recently been phased out in new student advising. These disclosures

often included students of whom never sought accommodations. Consequently, this category of students has declined from approximately 30% to 1% over the last 5 years in the overall count.

First generation students have declined from a peak of 42% in 2013 to 31% in fall 2018. This may be a product of more dual enrollment students, who are less likely to be first generation. Pulled from applications when students apply, this data may be inaccurate since many students mark “unsure” to the question “have either of your parents or guardians completed a bachelor’s degree?” To continue receiving the Department of Education TRIO grant, Helena College must grow its first generation student population.

Many first-generation students are minorities. Native American students have represented about 3-5% of the student body for the last 12 years. With the Montana University System prioritizing their success, Helena College should consider more actively recruiting Native students. However, this may prove to be a difficult task as Montana’s largest Native American populations reside in closer approximation to tribal and other 2-year colleges versus Helena. The local Lewis & Clark County population for Native Americans constitutes 3%, which is the same percentage of Helena College’s population.

The data shows a small but steady decrease, over five years, of veteran enrollment as a “percent of special populations.” The difference is only 1 or 2%, so it could easily be that veteran enrollment is decreasing because of the same factors that decrease enrollment across the board and not because of any influence particular to that group.

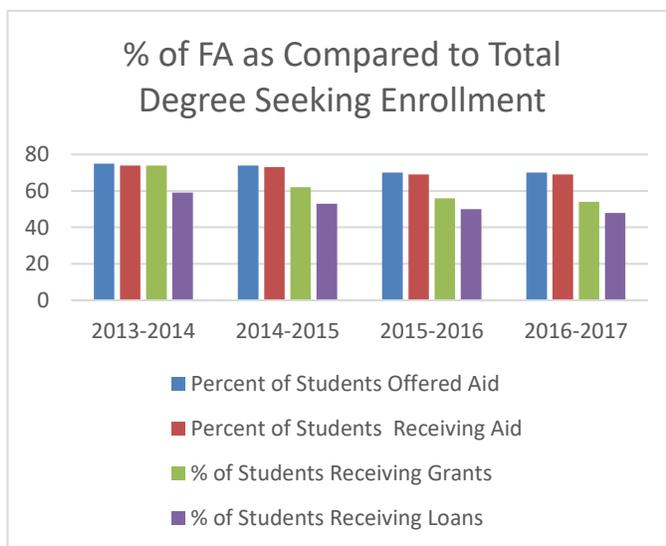
Financial Aid

Approximately 70% of Helena College students receive some type of financial aid. This has decreased from 74% in the 1314 AY due to fewer students taking out loans and completing the FAFSA. The lack of state aid starting in 2015-16, as well as students’ decreased borrowing affected average Financial Aid Awards.

In particular, note in the graph “% of FA Compared to Total Degree Seeking Enrollment” that the percentage of students receiving loans has dropped 11% since 2013-14. This can be seen as a positive and may be the result of better financial literacy, as well as the low cost of education at Helena College.

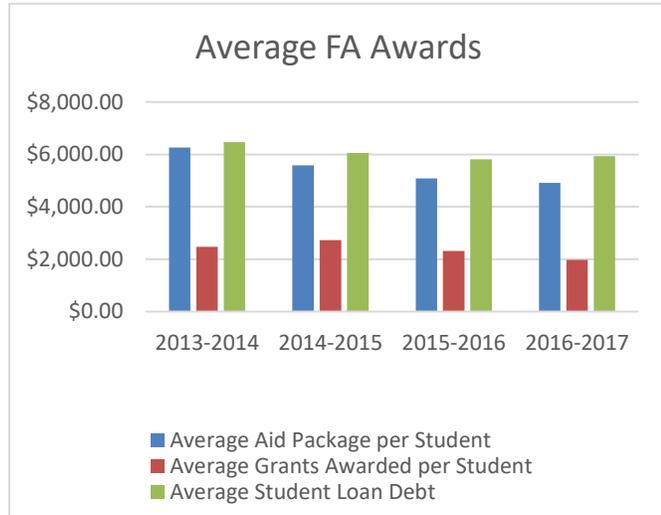
How this impacts recruitment and admissions is unknown. However, Helena College recruiters are not able to offer students generous aid packages.

Starting in 2017-18, Congress changed the law to allow students to submit their FAFSA beginning in October the year prior to entering college. Regardless of this change, there continues to be a spike in FAFSAs submitted during August and January – the start of the terms. These late filers may be non-traditional students who have been out of high school for a while. With financial aid being a main driver



for students to matriculate, it would behoove the college to attempt to have students file their FAFSAs earlier versus right at the start of the term.

One concerning point is the number of FAFSA filers who were not admitted into the college. This means they submitted their FAFSA to HC, but possibly did not apply for admission or had an incomplete application. This number had remained 0 for several years; there was 1 in the 1617 AY, but 244 in the 1718 AY. The large discrepancy clearly began when the FAFSA filing date moved up to October 1 versus January 1. Area high school counselors have recently been encouraging students to include Helena College on their FAFSA as a back-up school. Regardless, this may be a point of opportunity for more intensive recruiting, explaining the cost effectiveness of attending Helena College, and the expanding pathway and transfer opportunities available.



The number of requests for adjustments (Professional Judgements) has increased dramatically even with the decrease in student enrollment. This speaks to the financial volatility our students experience from year to year. This can be discerned by the new law utilizing taxes from 2 years prior versus 1 year that became effective in the 1718 AY. It also indicates there most likely is a larger need for financial literacy.

Summary

Returning to the Core Themes of “Student Access and Success” and “Community Enrichment,” our data indicates that Helena College must recruit and admit more students into its degree programs and that by doing so, Helena College will further enrich this community by meeting its industry needs. Recruiting dual-enrolled students as freshmen and non-traditional students to enhance their job skills may be keys to increasing enrollment. Marketing our ability to prepare students for the demands of the workforce and stressing our low cost, coupled with financial aid, may entice students to our programs.

SWOT Analysis Follows

	Findings	Data Source	Further Considerations
Strengths	Programs are offered for industries projecting most shortages: Office Tech, Accounting & Business, Nursing, Auto Tech, IT; and in other high-demand fields (CAM, welding, diesel, fire).	HC Academic Program Profile 2013-18	We should market these programs in relation to employer needs and industry growth; and to employers as professional development opportunities for skills improvement and career succession planning.
	Offerings provide a diverse range of programs, reflecting employer demand and/or pathways to four-year transfer, some allowing students to complete in Helena.	Enrollment history, Academic Program Profile, Catalog	Advertise these opportunities to DE students and community. Determine how many students are in articulation agreements and if they are a recruiting tool. Attempt to stabilize enrollment through employer partnerships.
	Dual Credit students increase head count and revenue; Introduce many students to Helena College and pathways advising.	Institutional research MT Career Pathways Grant Reporting	We should track where DE students go and whether on-campus and online DE experiences motivate students to come to Helena College.
	Programs (such as nursing, trades) produce students with high certification pass rates	Departmental announcements	This is helps generate high rankings of programs. Can we capitalize on this when marketing HC to prospective students? Does it increase employability?
	Tuition is lowest in state (\$3,349 compared to state average of MUS of \$4,264.50 AY 2018-19)	MUS.edu Tuition and fees for 2-yr in-state	We should advertise low cost of attendance.
	Helena area HS counselors encourage students to include Helena College as their back-up school on FAFSA.	FAFSA statistics	Continue to educate HS counselors regarding quality of education and cost benefits.
	Student loan borrowing has continually decreased over last 5 years.	FA Averages	This may be result of low tuition and fees.
	Helena College captured one third of college-bound area graduates	Regional HS Grad & Capture rates	Can we capture more?
	Current students have access to new technology, equipment and funded student support services	TAAACCT, Perkins, TRIO grant programs	Are new students attracted to equipment and services? Will we be able to keep up with new innovations and technologies (such as health care simulation labs).
Weaknesses	Most Dual-Enrolled students plan to attend a four-year university and 76% take general education courses. (Fewer than 10% of high school students plan to attend a two-year college.)	MCP Grant Reports	Can more students be encouraged to see the value of finishing a pathway at Helena College?
	Programs are not diverse enough to meet the local economic need (no cyber security, insurance training, retail, construction, or hospitality)	Programs and Services work group data.	Do we have the resources and faculty to expand our program offerings? Do we have space limitations that prevent new program development?
	Enrollment has declined drastically, with full-time enrollment showing sharpest decline (down 32% since 2009)	Institutional Research	Enrollment trends must be reversed to keep Helena College viable.
	Diversity decreasing with lower percentages of first-generation, veteran, and students with disabilities. Students with disabilities has decreased from 30% to 1%.		Determine if HC is not catering to these populations; if this is a trend across all MT 2-year institutions; or, if because we're no longer using demographic form, we no longer identify those with disabilities who may have sought services.
	We do not have a Customer Relationship Management system.		We don't have the ability to track prospective students as they enter the enrollment process.
	Only 17% of employees ranked enrollment as a priority.	2018 Employee engagement survey	Enrollment is everyone's business.
	Two months of web analytics shows significant site traffic but need more consistent data to develop a trend Helena College has no webmaster which delays updates to website.	Google	Analytics can help develop a target market and be better able to reach prospective students.

Opportunities	Government is the largest sector in our region (60% of workforce is gov't) and will be facing shortages as boomers retire	Helena Chamber trends report 2018	Helena College could help with filling shortages and planning for succession.
	Helena WINS	N/A	Increases partnerships within the community
	Collaborations/Articulations	N/A	Collaborations and articulations with 4 year institutions are mutually beneficial. Students have more flexibility in seeking their degree and we have defined pathways for transfer./get completion for 2 year.
	Community/regional partnerships	HC Academic Program Profile 2013-18	Demand for trained workers will exceed the supply. Partner with local/regional business for training opportunities
	Non-traditional students	ACS Educational Attain LC County	49% of the population over 25 doesn't hold a college degree yet employers want supervisors/managers to hold at least an AA/AS
	With increasing numbers of students taking Dual Enrollment CTE courses and Gen Ed courses in pathways to Helena College, these students can be targeted for recruitment.	Institutional Data	Recruit dual enrollment through 1,2, FREE Program to become regular college student. Market growing number of pathways and 2+2 scholarship availability in order to demonstrate financial benefits.
	We have a construction lab; construction is the fastest growing industry in area	DOL	We could design targeted construction skills programs to fill employer needs; perhaps with apprenticeships
Threats	2.2% unemployment rate means adults are not incentivized to seek training.	DLI	How do we entice people to come back to school when unemployment is so low? Peak enrollment during recession
	High demand fields like accounting, office tech., auto, and computer tech have seen steep enrollment declines.	HC Academic Program Profile 2013-18	Is this due to declining non-traditional students or on-the-job training?
	Employers don't require completion in some fields of study	Student self-reporting	Partner with employers to show the value of program completion.
	An alarming number of grads are not college ready based on test scores. (Only 21% of the 2018 graduating class are college-ready in all four areas of math, writing, reading, and science.)	ACT studies	There is a need for remedial offerings.
	Gen Z may not value higher education; Gen Z may rather enter the workforce or obtain an online only education.	N/A	Need to emphasize the value proposition of coming to college. They have to be convinced that higher education holds something for them that they can't get elsewhere.
	1/3 of Helena College enrollment is dual enrollment; if current trends continue DE students will outnumber all others, reducing on-campus enrollments in General Education.	Pathways data Institutional Research	1, 2, FREE Program – may only be funded for 1 to 2 years; which could create negativity about DE. Need to convert DE students to full-time students.
	TRiO program may be discontinued because number of eligible students is declining.		
	Limited state financial aid may have decreased enrollment and increased student loan borrowing.	MUS-BOR Presentations	MT Legislature and Governor may increase need-based aid.
	Requests for adjustments to financial aids indicate increasing needs.	FA statistics	Indicates financial volatility of student population.