

# Helena College Non-Academic Program Review

Year: 2022-23

Review: Business Office 2022-23

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Status: Published

## Section 1: Mission, Goals, Objectives

### Narrative:

The business office provides an array of financial services to the institution including, budgets, tuition and fee inventory, fiscal management, forecasting, accounts payable and receivable, and student accounts.

### Mission:

The mission of the business office is to provide responsible planning, allocation and oversight of financial resources in response to the needs of students, faculty, staff, and community while maintaining the highest level of integrity over the assets and financial records.

Student accounts sets learners up for success by guiding them through all aspects of the payment process. We assist with finalizing bills, book and tool vouchers, advances on financial aid, and payment plans.

### Recommendations:

The business office has not been through a review so there are no prior recommendations.

### Strategic Goals:

Many of the goals for the business office revolve around training, service, and education. With turnover in the positions of accounts payable, Director, and the Assistant Dean of Administrative Affairs there has not been as much time to dedicate to training other departments as we were busy learning our own roles.

It is a priority to create training modules for systems used by multiple departments. We are frequently asked how to run reports and how to interpret. We believe that developing short user guides will help reduce the time spent by business office staff running reports and explaining them to other departments.

We continue educating our students on the importance of finalizing their bills earlier in order to receive book vouchers but we still have too many bills being finalized at the last minute. We have changed the way we communicate with students and will continue to look for ways to reduce the drop rate.

### Strengths:

Procurement - The business office is well versed in both state and university policy regarding procurement, travel, and spending authority. We are able to advise departments on proper spending and assist with the development and maintenance of departmental budgets.

Communication - We have worked to improve communication between departments and have built a solid working relationship with financial aid.

### Successes:

One of our biggest successes during this time period was the administration of COVID funding. We received over \$2.8 million in institutional aid which had a significant impact on the workload in the Business Office. The additional compliance, distribution, and accounting of CARES money was equal to 2 fiscal years operating budget. condensed The guidelines changed very frequently, often every 2 weeks in the first few months. We had to stay abreast of all federal guidelines regarding spending and reporting for these dollars. To date we have not had any negative findings on our purchases.

Another of our successes was developing better working relationships between us and other departments. The relationship between the business office and financial aid has been tenuous at best for many years. Over the past 2 years both directors have made it a point to develop a solid working relationship and bring our two departments together, Most everything we do impacts the other department and negative interactions tend to impact our students.

Reconciliations, particularly of Pell and Direct Loan funds, has been an immense struggle. The business office and financial aid have worked together to test new things and improve the process. We now have a way to properly reconcile our funds, correct errors, and maintain proper reporting standards. We have seen a decrease in the use of HC scholarship funds to correct over awards.

### Challenges:

One of the most significant challenges our department faced during this time was turnover in leadership. We had three Dean/CEO's, we also lost our CFO of 12 years and our fiscal manager of 5 years. Following the CFO's departure we had consultants step in to review our books and help prepare budgets until we could hire a new CFO. The CFO position was turned into a shared role with UM Western and their current CFO was appointed to Helena College as well. Unfortunately, that was short lived as he became the new Chancellor at Western. For nearly 3 years Helena College did not have a full-time, permanent CFO. This made it extremely challenging to effectively budget and manage departments. It also exacerbated the issue of getting departments to follow policy as they felt the rules were in constant flux with changing leadership.

Another significant challenge we face is lack of understanding by other departments. We are bound by many policies and laws that govern how we do our jobs. We don't always like the rules, and they can be difficult to follow, however we are obligated to adhere to them. A lack of understanding as to why we do, or don't do, things leads other departments to ask forgiveness rather than permission. It has been very difficult to flip this mentality and get people to act within the given policies.

Another challenge has been long range forecasting and planning. Ideally departments should be planning 3-5 years ahead when budgeting and planning for unexpected necessities to arise. Instead we are often tasked to find significant amounts of funding in a matter of weeks for 'emergency' situations. While business office staff understand the importance of forecasting and creating master plans for replacement we struggle to make others see the value in it. There is a culture of "what's in it for me?" General fund policies limit our ability to return funds to departments, or to allow them to carry funds over from year to year, creating little incentive for departments to complete the necessary work to plan ahead or surplus outdated equipment.

## Section 2: Procedure for Operation

### Procedures:

The business office has significant written procedures located in our share drive. The cashier and accounts receivable procedures are updated on an ongoing basis. Accounts payable has written procedures but they are still specific to Banner 8 rather than Banner 9. The differences are minor but should still be updated. Student accounts and the Director have the least amount of written procedures. Time is always a barrier to getting these done.

The business office has written procedures for employees to reference in regards to our forms and policies. These are located in the standard operating procedure manual and/or on the business services web page. We provide instructions for completing travel, purchase forms, procard, and limited solicitation documents. We also provide a common list of account codes, indexes by designated signer, and for certain areas an in depth look at account codes and what they are to be used for.

We predominantly follow either UM or State of Montana MOM policies to guide our work. Those policies frequently change so we refer to their respective websites rather than keep local copies of the policies.

Forms are updated in response to changes in policy. Policy changes occur due to audits, BOR, and legislation. Updates to these pages are currently in progress.

## Section 3: Staff Profile

### Staff:

Name	Title	FTE	Years	Highest Education		
Candice Miller	Accounts Receivable	0	0			
Cari Schwen	Director of Business and Retail Services /Conroller	1.00	3.00	Bachelors		
Beau Howard	Accounting Associate IV	1.00	2.00	Associate		
Laura Gifreda	Cashier	1.00	0	None		
Amanda Zigan	Accounting Associate III/Accounts Receivable	1.00	4.00	Associate		

### Changes in Staffing Needs:

Beau is new to accounts payable in the last three years. Over the next three years I would like to explore restructuring the Business Office to improve efficiency.

### Staff Professional Development:

Candice Miller

Cari Schwen

Kognito 01.25.2023

Statewide Procurement Symposium 10.17-18.2022

Gracious Spaces Training part 1 06.17.2022

Gracious Spaces Training part 2 10.04.2022

Creating a Culture of Inclusion 10.12.2022

Beau Howard

Federal Grant Management Dec 2022

Laura Gifreda

Amanda Zigan

Managing Customer Service - 07.10.22

First Aid, CPR, AED Online Portion - 10.16.19

Basics of Vaccines - 04.08.21

Drivers Safety for Campuses - 06.20.22

## Section 4: Organization context and Impact

### Collaborations & Dependencies:

The Helena College business office constantly collaborates with the University of Montana for policies and procedures. We are dependent on UM for procurement involving limited solicitation or formal bids.

We also collaborate with most divisions on campus regularly. For example:

- Financial aid - disbursements, draws, and recons,
- Advising - Student billing
- Registrar - Fee tables, billing
- Academics - Purchasing
- All departments - budgeting

### New Collaboration:

I would like to see more collaboration with Institutional Research. I believe there is significant overlap of information in reporting. I also believe IR could be instrumental in helping the BO create quantitative/qualitative data for measuring outcomes. As a start IR data could be beneficial in the budgeting process. Using enrollment/completion data can help develop an ROI for budgeted funds.

## Section 5: Stakeholders, Data, and Assessment

### Primary customers/stakeholders:

The primary stakeholders/customers of the business office are students and their parents, vendors, and all campus departments. Our stakeholders also include the University of Montana, and the State of Montana and its tax payers.

### Service to stakeholders/customers:

Assessment is something we have struggled with. Our department struggles with measuring our outcomes and would appreciate some help with this. Some thoughts that have come up are: using the employee satisfaction survey regarding budgets, create short training modules or courses and ask for feedback on them, use Microsoft Forms to create a feedback form for completion after a training, ask for ways to improve training, what worked, what didn't, and potentially track the number of purchase forms returned for corrections.

### Decision Making Support:

We do not do this well at this time. When we prepare budgets or tuition and fee tables we distribute spreadsheets or forms to departments for their input. The forms are collected by a specific date and used to establish, or modify, budgets and fees.

## Section 6: Budget and Efficiencies

### Changes in revenue and expenses:

Our budget has decreased by 32% from FY20 to FY22. We stayed within budget in FY20 and FY21 and were overspent in FY22. Our personnel budget was reduced due to the lack of a full time CFO. Now that we are splitting that position and funding our personnel budget should be reevaluated.

**Improved Efficiency:**

We have switched to more electronic notifications to students rather than strictly using paper mailings. We have also begun sending more generic email blasts that can go to personal email accounts as well as student email accounts to increase our response rate. This also helps reduce our labor and postage costs.

**Resource Needs:**

**Budget** - We need to have an increase in our personnel budget to cover current costs.

**Storage** - We need a dedicated storage space for our records. We are required by state law to maintain 3 years of records in our offices and 3 years of records on-site. The 6 years includes the current fiscal year and 5 previous fiscal years. We are audited on past files and must have ready access to them. We are also frequently tasked with pulling up old files to research expenditures for departments or to look into contract history. Having the files available locally allows us to retrieve them quickly and efficiently. Ideally we would begin moving our files to electronic storage but we do not have the program or the personnel to make this happen.

**Section 7: Recommendations and Preliminary Implementation Plan**

Rec #	Title	Recommendations
1	Budget & master plan	<p><b>Recommendation:</b> Overhaul the budget process to include creating a master plan for replacing outdated or unsafe equipment.</p> <p><b>Rationale:</b> Budgets should be allocated based upon a demonstrated need and ROI rather than just historical allocations and expenditures. The budgets should also focus on forecasting the needs of departments over several years to help eliminate the need for emergency funding requests.</p> <p><b>Success Target:</b> Budgets that utilize strategic planning help the college achieve its goals. A process that allows for employees to have input into how funds are allocated. A new process should create a reduction in emergency requests for funding and better forecasting of future needs.</p> <p><b>Success Strategy:</b> Rework the master spreadsheet file used to develop budgets to include enrollment data at the course level.,</p> <p><b>Success Resource:</b> Time and planning. We will need significant input from campus leaders, BMT, and faculty into how we can make this a user friendly process that brings us back to aligning funding with goals.</p> <p><b>Resp. Party:</b> Fiscal Services</p> <p><b>Cabinet Feedback:</b> Excellent recommendation to address a problem that has existed for a long time at Helena College. We recognize that this will be a major undertaking that will take time. Recommend developing a project plan before embarking on the inventory and having a staff person assigned as the project owner. Training from the Business Office to the departments will be critical to ensuring the success of the projects.</p>

<p>2</p>	<p>Training &amp; On boarding</p>	<p>Recommendation: Create a library of on-boarding training videos and other resources for key Business Office functions.</p> <p>Rationale: Departmental training and on boarding; to include training new employees and refreshers for existing employees. This takes us away from our core duties for significant amounts of time. It takes several hours of training for new employees to learn our processes and it can be overwhelming. A training library would allow them to learn at their own pace and refer back as often as needed.</p> <p>Success Target: Departments will feel empowered to learn for themselves and have more confidence in monitoring their budgets. New employees will receive the training they need when starting their roles.</p> <p>Success could be measured by asking employees to complete a survey after utilizing the training module.</p> <p>Success Strategy: Short videos will be recorded covering a variety of topics relevant to campus employees. Topics would include: how to complete a purchase order, how to run reports in UMDW, how to interpret the reports after running them, how to prepare travel documentation, etc. The videos could be stored either on the business office webpage or a Moodle shell accessible by all employees.</p> <p>Success Resource: Time is always a factor. Access to a Moodle shell would be helpful. This would allow us to create modules where videos and documents could be stored and readily accessed by employees. Moodle would also allow us to monitor who is accessing the training, what materials are being used, and how many views training videos receive. This information would provide us assessment data points.</p> <p>Resp. Party: Fiscal Services</p> <p>Cabinet Feedback: Very needed! This is a major project that will take time so our comment is to think through which areas are most important and recognize this may take a few years to complete. Thoughts: a. Is there anything we can use that UM has already created to save some work for the BO staff? b. In addition to Screencastomatic, Renderforest is an easy to use tool that may be helpful in the process. c. In addition to videos, we believe a face-to-face training needs to be developed for new employees. This should cover the basics for all employees (things like the fact we are state funded so have to be careful how/what we buy) and then be adjusted for specific positions (directors need more purchasing, for example).</p>
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3	Restructuring	<p><b>Recommendation:</b> Explore restructuring the business office to improve efficiency</p> <p><b>Rationale:</b> The structure of our business office does not match any of the other affiliate campuses. As we are all being asked to do more with less I need to ensure that business office staff have the proper skill set to accomplish our goals in the changing environment.</p> <p><b>Success Target:</b> Tasks will be completed in a more timely manner and I will have staff that can be cross trained in multiple functions.</p> <p><b>Success Strategy:</b> Work with leadership to determine the best way to move forward.</p> <p><b>Success Resource:</b> Positions may need to be rewritten or reclassified which could lead to increased wages. If this is the case the business office would seek an increase in personnel budget. Professional development or training may also be a needed resource.</p> <p><b>Resp. Party:</b> Fiscal Services</p> <p><b>Cabinet Feedback:</b> Fully support this as top priority and an important need for the office. Working on this restructuring will be instrumental in the ability to carry out the other two recommendations. Suggestions and comments from the cabinet as you plan for the restructuring:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Very good approach to prioritize cross training and broaden the job descriptions to create a deeper bench for the functions of the office.</li> <li>b. Fully support your focus on improvements in the student accounts process. This gives you a perfect opportunity to think through the systems and processes. One suggestion is to make sure the staff understand how interconnected their work is with other areas of student services. Communication with campus about what is happening in student accounts is very important. For example – if advisors know bills are going out, they can reinforce messaging with their students.</li> <li>c. This also creates a good opportunity to think through the way things are done. Recommend thinking about which functions could be moved from paper to electronic processes. Microsoft Forms has great workflow functionality that could be helpful. As this is done, we just need to make sure we update any policies and procedures if necessary.</li> <li>d. Another idea to help with workflow and give you a way to assess the workload of the office is to create a ticketing system for employees to use when they have questions and/or need help from the business office. Also, recommend having staff using Microsoft Bookings to block off time when available for meetings, but preserve time for other duties.</li> <li>e. Recommend taking 1-2 days each semester where office is closed to be used for staff PD and/or planning for the office.</li> </ul>
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### Cabinet

**Cabinet Overall Feedback:**

We agree with the areas of strength and the challenges identified in the program review. Kudos to the team for handling the transitions in staffing for so long and keeping things running as smoothly as possible! Also, the Business Office needs to be commended for managing the purchasing and reporting associated with all of the COVID relief funds over the past few years. That work is largely invisible to many people on campus, but was an enormous undertaking that needs to be recognized. We also recognize the frustration the Business Office staff feel from pushback that comes from campus around spending and procurement procedures. We all have a role in educating our employees about the fact that we are enforcing federal, state, and/or university system rules.

### File Attachments

Attachment #	Attachment Title	Attachment URL
52	3 yr op stmt BO.pdf	<a href="http://hc-curriculum.helenacollege.edu/ViewAttachment.aspx?id=52">http://hc-curriculum.helenacollege.edu/ViewAttachment.aspx?id=52</a>
53	AWP 3-Year Summary Business Office.xlsx	<a href="http://hc-curriculum.helenacollege.edu/ViewAttachment.aspx?id=53">http://hc-curriculum.helenacollege.edu/ViewAttachment.aspx?id=53</a>

Area: Business Office

Years: AY 2019-20, AY 2020-21, AY 2021-22

Plan Developer	Year	Goal #	SGO	Goal Status	Action Item	Indicator	Results	Future Actions
Schwen, Cari	2019-20	1	SG5.1	Ongoing	Ensure transparent processes and reporting to assure efficient and proper use of taxpayer funding.		The business office has changed the budgeting process to allow budget managers greater understanding of how resources allocated and how they are managed. The business office has also changed the way major purchases, in excess of \$5,000, are completed. These purchases are now processed through Grizmart ensuring the most effective and efficient use of funds. This process also increases or transparency with regards to taxpayer funding as it generates reports visible to the citizens of Montana.	Continue developing processes that allow for more participation and inclusion from campus stakeholders.
Schwen, Cari	2019-20	2	SG5.1	Ongoing	Provide UMDW staff and faculty training that will allow every budget manager to monitor and maintain its annual budget.	Under-spent budgets, less journal entries to correct mistakes.	This is still a work in progress. Due to COVID and staff turnover we were unable to host any in-person spring trainings. We did add training manuals and videos to the Helena College website employee portal. Several of the trades budgets were overspent in FY20, however, I did see an increase in departments running their own budget reports and reading them.	Develop campus specific training videos that will be more relevant to employees. The videos will target specific operations and how to interpret the UMDW reports.
Schwen, Cari	2019-20	3	SG5.1	Ongoing	Business Office will work with students, faculty, staff and community to provide access to facilitate support of high quality lifelong educational opportunities for our diverse community.	Great customer service and friendly communications with our students, staff, faculty, and community members.	Staff were able to take advantage of free continuing education courses in customer service to help improve their skills. I saw marked improvement in at least one employee spring term.	We will continue to work on improving our communications with both internal and external customers. We will strive to send regular communications to our students in a more timely fashion.
Schwen, Cari	2020-21	1	SG5.1	Ongoing	Ensure transparent processes and reporting to assure efficient and proper use of taxpayer funding. This includes proper use of HEERF and CRF awards.	Budget status reports will be delivered monthly for review by budget managers. Quarterly updates will be given to campus concerning HEERF spending.	We met our HEERF reporting goals and I feel we were able to maintain transparency in spending. We provided a complete breakdown of how the CARES funds were spent in total, by project, and by campus during the year end state of the college.	We will continue to provide regular budget reports and updates on spending.
Schwen, Cari	2020-21	2	SG5.1	Ongoing	Provide UMDW training to relevant staff and faculty.	The training will provide employees with the skills necessary to effectively monitor their budgets. This can be measured through fewer correcting entries and budget amendments.	We provided UMDW training as needed. There were still a lot of remote workers which it made training more difficult. We were unable to provide live training.	Continue to provide UMDW tips and tricks to help employees gain a better understanding of how the system works.
Schwen, Cari	2020-21	3	SG5.1	Ongoing	Business Office will work with students, faculty, staff and community to provide access to facilitate support of high quality, lifelong educational opportunities for our diverse community. We will work with both internal and external customers to create clear pathways for students to finalize and pay their bills.	Fewer students who are committed and not finalized by the 15th day of classes.	We increased communication with students regarding the importance of finalizing their bills. We increased our email communications and revamped the flyers that are sent out with schedule bills. As a result we made fewer robocalls prior to the drop period.	We will continue to look for ways to increase awareness of student processes.



Area: Business Office

Years: AY 2019-20, AY 2020-21, AY 2021-22

Plan Developer	Year	Goal #	SGO	Goal Status	Action Item	Indicator	Results	Future Actions
Schwen, Cari	2021-22	1	SG5.1	Ongoing	Provide transparent processes and reporting to assure efficient and proper use of taxpayer funding.	Budget status reports will be delivered monthly for review by budget managers.	There were many systems issues this year that made it more difficult for departments to remain abreast of their budgets. UMDW failed to refresh regularly and the JGROEXP reports were offline for several months.	We will continue this going into the next year. It always important to provide transparency and even more so given that we have quite a few new directors starting in FY23.
Schwen, Cari	2021-22	2	SG5.1	In Progress	Provide UMDW training to relevant staff and faculty.	The training will provide employees with the skills necessary to effectively monitor their budgets. This can be measured through fewer correcting entries and budget amendments.	We have continued providing training to new hires and existing staff on UMDW.	I would like to keep this ongoing and change the nature of the training. I would like to start putting together FAQ's or reference guides that people can use instead of having to ask all the time. Should this be a new goal rather than a continuing goal?
Schwen, Cari	2021-22	3	SG5.1	Ongoing	Business Office will work with students, faculty, staff and community to provide access to facilitate support of high quality, lifelong educational opportunities for our diverse community. We will work with both internal and external customers to create clear pathways for students to finalize and pay their bills.	Fewer students who are committed and not finalized by the 15th day of classes.	We have partnered more with other departments to help spread the word on the importance of finalizing bills. We are emailing students as soon as bills are ready and including step by step instructions on how to finalize. We also setup a list serve email so that more people in the office see student inquiries and can respond.	Continue outreach through email, including more generic emails sent to personal email accounts, and through short animated videos.
Schwen, Cari	2021-22	4	SG1.1	In Progress	Review and study federal regulations regarding HEERF and CRF funds.	Ensure HEERF and CRF funds are allocated in accordance with Federal Regulations to ensure students, faculty and staff are getting the benefits intended for these funds	We received an extension of time for our HEERF funding. This was to be completed by May of 2022 but has been extended to May of 2023. We have met all of our reporting requirements and have kept up with the all the guidelines.	We hope to have expended all of our funds by December 31, 2022 so we can wrap up with our annual report.
Schwen, Cari	2021-22	5	SG5.1	Ongoing	Have appropriate Business Office staff familiar with the new Axiom Budget System.	Appropriately trained Business Office Staff will be able to provide accurate information to the campus regarding budgets.	Both the Assistant Dean of Finance and the Director of Business Services are proficient in the budget model of Axiom the reporting model is taking longer. At this time only the ADAA has access to the reporting function.	Ideally the Director of Business will also be granted access to the reporting feature and be trained on how to query and recommend additional queries.

Count of SGO	Column Labels		
Row Labels	In Progress	Ongoing	Grand Total
SG1.1	1		1
SG5.1	1	9	10
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>11</b>

