



MONTANA
TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY

**MONTANA TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY
SPRING 2025 AD HOC REPORT**

Submitted by Chancellor Les P. Cook
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INTRODUCTION

Montana Technological University underwent its Year 7 accreditation review by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU) in Spring of 2024. The University submitted its Evaluation of Institutional Effectiveness (EIE) report on March 1, 2024, and the peer evaluation team conducted a campus visit on April 15-16, 2024. The NWCCU Commission accepted the evaluation team's report, which contained four commendations and six recommendations. The University received [affirmation of continued accreditation](#) on July 12, 2024. The following section outlines the timeline for future reports and visits, as well as the University's planned responses to the recommendations.

- Ad Hoc Report Spring 2025
 - Recommendation 1: Spring 2024 Evaluation of Institutional Effectiveness
 - Recommendation 6: Spring 2024 Evaluation of Institutional Effectiveness
- Ad Hoc Report with Visit Spring 2026
 - Recommendation 2: Spring 2024 Evaluation of Institutional Effectiveness
 - Recommendation 3: Spring 2024 Evaluation of Institutional Effectiveness
 - Recommendation 5: Spring 2024 Evaluation of Institutional Effectiveness
- Mid-Cycle Review Spring 2027
 - Recommendation 4: Spring 2024 Evaluation of Institutional Effectiveness
- Year 6 - Standard 2 - Policies, Regulations, and Financial Review Spring 2030
- Year 7 - Evaluation of Institutional Effectiveness Spring 2031

PROGRESS ON RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1:

The Commission recommends that Montana Technological University set and articulate meaningful goals, objectives, and indicators of its goals to define mission fulfillment. (1.B.2)

[Montana Tech's Strategic Plan](#) has three goals: Student Success, Programs of Distinction, and a Healthy and Vibrant Campus Ecosystem. In the 2024 EIE, we noted that objectives and indicators for these goals were in development. At the August 5-6, 2024 [Leadership Team](#) retreat, a two-phase survey strategy to campus constituents was discussed. The first survey, distributed November 11, 2024 via Qualtrics XM, gathered feedback on the four EIE KPIs: enrollment, retention, degree/certification completion, and experiential learning. Campus leadership reviewed this input and defined one objective per goal with 4-6 indicators. Following [Executive Team](#) review, a second Qualtrics XM survey, distributed on January 29, 2025, sought feedback on the revised objectives and indicators within the context of the full strategic plan. This process yielded a finalized plan with measures of institutional effectiveness for the next 7-year cycle. Eight of the fifteen indicators are benchmarked against peer institutions, while the remaining seven are internal metrics for improvement.

GOAL 1: STUDENT SUCCESS

Objective: To ensure that students are academically prepared, supported throughout their academic journey, and successfully transition into professional careers.

Strategic Plan Initiatives

- Build a comprehensive advising structure
- Develop a comprehensive support network for mental health and wellness
- Enrich and expand student employment opportunities
- Enrich opportunities for students to engage in co-curricular programming and community engagement
- Develop focused support for “at-risk” students and historically underserved student populations

1. Enrollment

- **Indicator:** Year-over-year percentage increase in total enrollment
 - **Benchmark:** Meets or exceeds peer institutions

2. Academic Planning and Advising

- **Indicator:** Student satisfaction with experiences with course selections, academic planning, and overall advising.
 - **Benchmark:** Meets or exceeds regional and Carnegie peer comparators included in National Survey of Student Engagement and Student Satisfaction Inventory (RNL)

3. Retention

- **Indicator:** First-to-second-year retention, especially for historically underserved and “at-risk” populations.
 - **Benchmark:** Meets or exceeds regional and national peer comparator retention rates

4. Degree completion

- **Indicator:** Percentage of students graduate within 150% of normal time to completion for 2-year and 4-year programs
 - **Benchmark:** Meets or exceeds the 150% graduation rate compared with regional and national peer institutions

5. Experiential Learning Participation

- **Indicator:** Percentage of students engaged in undergraduate research, internships, co-ops, and other high-impact practices (HIPs)
 - **Benchmark:** Meets or exceeds regional and Carnegie peer comparators

6. Post-Graduation Career Outcomes

- **Indicator:** Employment placement rates and average starting salary for graduates within discipline
 - **Benchmark:** Meets or exceeds averages from National Association of Colleges and Employers

GOAL 2: PROGRAMS OF DISTINCTION

Objective: Build programs that are recognized for their academic rigor, research impact, and transformative student experiences.

Strategic Plan Initiatives:

- Foster innovative approaches to curriculum, teaching, and research.
- Create and support industry partnerships that provide students with transformative learning opportunities.
- Establish centers of excellence in key fields such as energy, technology, and health.

1. Foster Excellence in Instruction

- **Indicator:** Percentage of faculty engaged in evidence-based, active learning approaches that keep pace with modern instructional technologies
 - **Benchmark:** Yearly increases in the percentage of curricula that incorporate new instructional approaches where indicated by academic program reviews, and that integrate active and experiential learning methods that lead to improved achievement of learning outcomes

2. Foster Excellence in Research, Scholarship and Creative Activity

- **Indicator:** Percentage of faculty engaged in research
 - **Benchmark:** Year-over-year growth in research expenditures and scholarly output

3. Industry and Community Partnerships

- **Indicator:** Number of active partnerships with industry, government, and community organizations.
 - **Benchmark:** Comparison with similar institutions in the region and nationally in funding, internships and collaborations

4. Mentoring Programs

- **Indicator:** Impact of peer and faculty mentoring on student success and satisfaction.
 - **Benchmark:** Meets or exceeds regional and Carnegie peers quantitatively through NSSE, and qualitatively through SSI (RNL)

GOAL 3: HEALTHY AND VIBRANT CAMPUS ECOSYSTEM

Objective: To develop a campus environment that supports faculty, staff, and students through comprehensive professional development, a culture of belonging, and sustainable facilities that promote learning and well-being.

Strategic Plan Initiatives

- Develop comprehensive professional development programs for faculty and staff
- Regularly assess, evaluate and improve the campus work environment for all employees
- Develop a robust onboarding and orientation process for faculty, staff, and students
- Adopt a comprehensive campus master plan that supports instruction, research, and student learning needs of the campus

- Provide exceptional facilities that support innovation in education and research
1. **Employee Retention**
 - **Indicator:** Rate of faculty and staff turnover
 - **Benchmark:** Year-over-year percentage decrease in voluntary attrition
 2. **Professional Development Participation**
 - **Indicator:** Percentage of faculty and staff participating in professional development opportunities and/or programs.
 - **Benchmark:** Year-over-year increase in participation and institutional investment in externally and internally offered development and advancement opportunities
 3. **Campus Facilities Upgrades**
 - **Indicator:** Continuous institutional investment in modernizing instructional, research, and office space
 - **Benchmark:** Percentage investment in space upgrades and completion of ongoing long-range building projects and the campus master plan.
 4. **Student-Faculty Interaction and Mentorship**
 - **Indicator:** Student satisfaction with faculty interactions, including mentoring and advising.
 - **Benchmark:** Meets or exceeds regional and Carnegie peers
 5. **Campus Climate and Belonging**
 - **Indicator:** Faculty, staff and student satisfaction with the overall campus climate and sense of belonging.
 - **Benchmark:** Year-over-year increases in percentage of positive responses in internal and externally validated campus surveys

Montana Tech is committed to fulfilling its mission by achieving the objectives within each of its strategic goals. Success in an objective is achieved when at least half of the indicators have been met or exceeded. While we strive for excellence across all areas of our mission and aim to surpass all benchmarks, we have intentionally set ambitious targets by benchmarking against peers, which includes some aspirational institutions. This rigorous approach recognizes that exceeding all benchmarks will present varying levels of challenge across different areas. Therefore, we define mission fulfillment as successfully meeting or exceeding the benchmarks for at least half of the indicators within each objective.

This plan provides a clear roadmap for achieving Montana Tech's [mission](#), with well-defined objectives, indicators, and strategic initiatives. It's designed to drive progress by tracking measurable data and results against [peer institutions](#), as identified by the Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education (OCHE) and reported as national and regional peers in the Annual Report. Resource investments will be strategically guided by these comparative analyses, as needed and where available. Beyond external benchmarking, the plan also incorporates internal metrics to track our progress and identify areas for improvement.

GOALS	NUMBER OF INDICATORS WITHIN EACH OBJECTIVE	NUMBER OF INDICATORS NECESSARY FOR OBJECTIVE TO BE MET
Goal 1: Student Success	6	3
Goal 2: Programs of Distinction	4	2
Goal 3: Healthy & Vibrant Ecosystem	5	3

Recommendation 6:

The Commission recommends that Montana Technological University complete and adopt policies and procedures for reviewing published materials to ensure accuracy and integrity in all representations about its mission, programs, and services. (2.D.1)

This recommendation also was part of the Year 6 PRFR review and July 21, 2023, notification:

The university did not meet this standard. There was a lack of evidence to any policy or procedure regarding a regular review cycle for published materials. It is suggested that the university create the framework and associated evidence before the Year 7 EIE report. It is suggested that the Year 7 EIE team loop back to this standard for review.

In response to the PRFR recommendation and in accordance with [Montana Technological University's Formulation and Issuance of University Policies \(Policy 200.1\)](#), the Admissions, Enrollment, and Public Relations Departments drafted a policy before the 2024 EIE submission in March. The Executive Team reviewed the draft in September of 2024, suggesting edits to include the Graduate School and improve clarity. After incorporating these edits, the draft was submitted to Faculty Senate, which recommended adding a mechanism for reporting concerns about published materials. The revised policy, including this addition, was then approved by the Faculty Senate without further discussion.

After Faculty Senate approval, the draft policy was reviewed by the Leadership Team, which requested minor edits. University of Montana legal counsel subsequently reviewed the policy and provided minor comments, which were also incorporated.

In November, the final document was presented to the Leadership Team, which includes all members of Executive Team. The team recommended the policy to the Chancellor, who approved it on November 11, 2024. The policy took effect on January 1, 2025. The [Review of Published Materials to Assure Institutional Integrity \(Policy 220\)](#) will be reviewed on September 1, 2028, as per University policy.

SUMMARY AND NEXT STEPS

Following the NWCCU peer evaluator site visit and affirmation of accreditation, we finalized our strategic plan, which includes measurable objectives and indicators to guide institutional efforts over the next 7-year cycle. Montana Tech will submit an Ad Hoc report and host a peer evaluator site visit in Spring of 2026. This review will address three recommendations from the Spring 2024 EIE peer evaluation report:

- Recommendation 2 (Standard 1.B.1, Standard 1.B.3): *The evaluation team recommends that the institution: implement a systematic evaluation and planning process to inform and refine its effectiveness and assign resources*
- Recommendation 3 (Standard 1.C.5): *The peer evaluation team recommends that the institution: implement an effective system of assessment to evaluate the quality of learning in all programs*
- Recommendation 5 (Standard 1.D.4): *The evaluation team recommends that the institution: make available disaggregated student achievement data and document how the institution uses these data to inform, implement, and develop strategies and allocate resources*

The strategic plan provides the foundation for building reliable assessment systems, enabling both internal and external validation. This critical step strengthens the institution's ability to use data-informed strategies for resource allocation and goal attainment.

Next year, we will focus on designing strategies for continuous improvement. Specifically, we will determine how internal and external assessment data can inform targeted resource investments and interventions, ensuring both improvement and subsequent evaluation of their effectiveness. To facilitate this, we will formally establish an Institutional Effectiveness Committee comprised of the Director of Institutional Research, Accreditation Liaison Officer, Executive Director of Admissions and Enrollment, Registrar, Vice Chancellor for Administration and Finance, the Academic College Deans, the Associate Dean of Students and Executive Director of Student Success, and the Provost and Executive Vice Chancellor.