MONTANA TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY

MONTANA TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY SPRING 2026 AD HOC REPORT

Submitted by Chancellor Johnny MacLean
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Introduction

Montana Technological University underwent its Year 7 accreditation review by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU) in the 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 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 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

The institution submitted an Ad Hoc Report addressing Recommendations 1 and 6 on February 28th, 2025. The University received notification in August of 2025 that Recommendations 1 and 6 were fulfilled.

Progress on Recommendations

Recommendation 2

The Commission recommends that Montana Technological University implement a systematic evaluation and planning process to inform and refine its effectiveness and assign resources. (1.B.1;1.B.3)

During the year seven visit, peer evaluators noted that the institution was in the middle of the strategic planning process. Consequently, resource allocation had not yet been aligned with the new strategic plan. Montana Tech has since completed the Strategic Plan. The following section describes how the Strategic Plan has been integrated into the planning and evaluation processes across the institution. Montana Tech has four primary groups responsible for planning and resource allocation: Chancellor's Cabinet, Dean's Council, Budget Committee, and Executive Budget Committee. The responsibilities of each group and links to the website for each group are provided in this graphic.

Master Planning Process

Montana Tech began a Comprehensive Master Planning process in September 2024. The Master Plan was published in September of 2025. In the first two phases of the planning process, the steering committee and contracted architects met with a variety of constituencies on campus, including: faculty members, student government, student life, information technology, athletics, and the research office.

In addition, the master planning team provided two opportunities for members of the Butte-Silver Bow community to provide comments through an open house held on the Montana Tech campus. The first open house was held in November of 2024, and the second was held in February of 2025. Before each open house, Montana Tech publicized the event through advertisements in the local newspaper, posts on campus social media channels, and advertisements on local radio stations. Local television stations covered both open houses. Comments and feedback were solicited from attendees at each event as well as through an online open comment period two weeks after each event.

The steering committee, in consultation with the executive committee, created a set of Driving Principles and Goals connected to the Strategic Plan. In the planning process, the following institutional data were considered:

- Current enrollment and enrollment trends
- Dining hall utilization
- Classroom and computer lab utilization
- Research expenditures and square footage relative to peer institutions
- Data on programmatic needs collected from campus listening sessions

The steering committee, in consultation with the executive committee, used this data to identify immediate, near-term, mid-term, and long-term priorities for campus improvements tied to the Strategic Plan.

Long-Term Priorities for Chancellor’s Cabinet

On June 1st, 2025, Dr. Johnny MacLean became the 13th Chancellor of Montana Tech. The Chancellor committed to 125 Days of Dialogue with staff, faculty, students, alumni, and community members. During the summer months, the Chancellor focused on meeting with the Staff Senate, individual staff members, community groups, industry partners, and alumni. Once the fall semester began, the Chancellor met with student groups and faculty groups, including a meeting with every academic department and the Faculty and Student Senates.

The Chancellor’s Cabinet is responsible for overseeing the university's highest priorities and governance processes to ensure alignment with the institution's mission, strategic goals, and operational needs. From conversations with various stakeholders, the Chancellor identified themes and set his Cabinet’s strategic priorities for the campus. At the end of these first 125 days, the Chancellor made a public presentation to the campus describing those priorities. The Cabinet’s Long-Term Priorities and the connection between these priorities and the Montana Tech Strategic Plan are described below.

Academic Affairs

The Provost, along with the deans, department heads, and faculty members, will create an Academic Road Map aligned with a 4-Lane Highway model that prioritizes four focus areas: Natural Resources, Infrastructure, Health/Wellbeing, and Leadership/Workforce. The Academic Road Map will define goals in each of the four focus areas and a plan to accomplish these goals. The Academic Road Map will be completed by the end of the 25-26 Academic Year. The Academic Road Map is linked to Goal 2 from the Strategic Plan.

Research and the Graduate School

The Vice Chancellor for Research and Dean of the Graduate School, along with the Office of Sponsored Programs, the Graduate School, and research-active faculty, will create a Research Road Map aligned with the focus areas described in the 4-Lane Highway. The Research Road Map will define goals in each of the four focus areas and detail a plan to accomplish these goals. The Research Road Map will be completed by the end of the 25-26 academic year. The Research Road Map is linked to Goal 2 from the Strategic Plan.

Student Affairs and Athletics

The Vice Provost for Student Success and Dean of Students, the Athletic Director, and staff members from Student Affairs and Athletics will embed leadership training in the Student Affairs Programs and Athletic Programs. Leadership programming is connected to Goal 1 from the Strategic Plan.

Administration and Finance

The Vice Chancellor of Administration and Finance, alongside staff members from Human Resources, Facility Services, and Business Services, will, over the next few years, align the human, physical, and financial resources with the 4-Lane Highway and the Strategic Plan. The physical and financial alignment is connected to Goal 3 of the Strategic Plan and the Master Plan. The Executive Budget Committee allocated $175,000 for strategic initiatives during the 25-26 academic year. Midway through the academic year, after 125 Days of Dialogue with faculty, staff, students, community leaders, and alumni, campus priorities for the use of this strategic funding emerged. After input from constituents, the Chancellor and Vice Chancellors agreed to allocate this year's strategic initiative funding towards goals and plans that were set to be included in the Academic Road Map and Research Road Map, such as exploring the possibility of adding a nuclear program. This approach is aligned with numerous conversations that have occurred during the 125 Days of Dialogue and discussions with industry, community, and governmental partners.

The goal is to include another round of strategic initiative funding in the 26-27 academic year's budget. That funding, plus any unused academic initiative funding from the 25-26 academic year, will be allocated to accomplish the goals and plans set forth in the Academic Road Map and the Research Road Map, both of which will be completed by May 2026.

Refined Measures for Assessing Institutional Effectiveness

In the previously submitted Ad Hoc Report, the institution selected objectives, indicators, and benchmarks to define our mission fulfillment. The Chancellor charged the Institutional Effectiveness Committee with the task of collecting the data for the indicators and benchmarks. When the committee met to discuss the data collection, the discussions revealed that some of the benchmarks and indicators required revisions to clarify the needed data and ensure that the data collected could be used to make meaningful decisions. There was significant overlap between the Institutional Effectiveness Committee, the Data Committee, and the NWCCU Steering Committee. The decision was made to merge the three committees. The new merged committee continued to revise the benchmarks and indicators throughout the fall semester.

Next Steps for Recommendation 2

Reform the Space Committee

The institution is in the process of reforming the Space Committee. The Space Committee is charged with evaluating current space usage, engaging stakeholders, and soliciting and reviewing proposals for space allocation. The committee co-chairs are the Vice Chancellor for Administration and Finance and the Provost and Executive Vice Chancellor. The membership of the committee includes: the three academic deans, the Vice Chancellor for Research and Dean of the Graduate School, the Director of Facilities, the Vice Provost for Student Success and Dean of Students, the Registrar, the Director of the Montana Bureau of Mining and Geology, the Director of Information Technology, the Associate Director of Athletics, and representatives from the Faculty, Staff, and Student Senates. The committee will convene in the spring of 2026. The committee will create a process for soliciting and reviewing proposals and evaluate the current space usage in the Library, Student Union Building, Mill Building, and the Student Success Center.

Report on Benchmarks and Indicators related to the Strategic Plan

The Accreditation Liaison Officer (ALO) and ALO Delegate, in collaboration with the Institutional Effectiveness Committee, will prepare an Institutional Effectiveness Report by August of 2026. This report will be shared with the campus community during the Welcome Week at the beginning of the Fall 2026 semester. The data in the report will be utilized by the Chancellor's Cabinet, Dean's Council, and the Executive Budget Committee.

Refocus Foundation Capital Campaign around 4-Lane Highway

The Montana Tech Foundation is currently in the silent phase of a comprehensive capital campaign. The public phase of the campaign is planned to launch in the spring of 2027. The "Digging Deep" comprehensive philanthropic campaign began with the pillars of *Dig*, *Build*, and *Ignite*.

The *Dig* pillar invests in people through endowed faculty positions and renewable scholarships that prepare the next generation of leaders. The *Build* pillar seeks to modernize and strengthen the facilities that support world-class learning and discovery. The *Ignite* pillar seeks to elevate research and innovation in energy, critical materials, and emerging fields, including healthcare, ensuring Montana Tech is recognized not only for the strength of its graduates but for its role in solving the world's most complex challenges.

The Foundation is currently redrafting the "Digging Deep" campaign before the public phase of the campaign is launched in order to align the campaign pillars with the Chancellor's 4-Lane Highway. The redrafted campaign will align resources derived from the Capital Campaign with the strategic priorities of the campus.

Recommendation 3

The Commission recommends that Montana Technological University implement an effective system of assessment to evaluate the quality of learning in all programs. (1.C.5)

During the year seven visit, peer evaluators noted several issues with Montana Tech's program review process. This year, Montana Tech has undergone a revision of our program review process and program review forms to address the following issues:

- The quality of the program reviews varies widely across programs
- Programs receive limited feedback on their program reviews
- Results from program assessments are not tied to resource allocation

In addition to the concerns raised by peer evaluators, concerns were raised by faculty members relating to the cumbersome nature of the Academic Program Review form and the lack of consistent feedback from the deans. The institution used three main initiatives described below to address the concerns raised by the peer reviewers and faculty members.

Revision of Academic Program Review Form

A substantial number of Montana Tech's academic programs are accredited by external bodies (e.g., ABET). These external accrediting bodies sometimes have specific requirements and formats for both assessment plans and results of those assessments. The faculty members in the externally accredited programs expressed a preference for a form that would not require data to be reformatted. The programs without external accreditation, however, requested that templates be provided, particularly for assessment results. The ALO, in consultation with the academic deans and the Provost, revised the program review templates in the fall semester of 2025.

Criticisms raised by faculty members about the previous program review form were considered by the academic deans and the Provost during the revision process. These concerns are enumerated below, along with a description of how the revised form addresses these concerns.

- The previous form included tables that programs were required to complete. Programs with external accrediting bodies (e.g. ABET) had to reformat their data to fit the provided templates. Modifying the provided templates in MS-Word also presented challenges. The revised form specifies the data that must be provided by the program for each section. However, programs may provide that data in any format. Programs with external accreditations may use the format required by their specific accreditor. Templates are still provided; however, these templates are provided in MS-Excel. Programs can more easily modify these templates in Excel. The completed templates can then be copied into the Program Review form.
- Faculty noted that the previous form had several redundancies. Faculty were required to provide the same information in multiple sections of the form. The form was revised to eliminate these redundancies.

Additionally, the form was revised to ensure that reviews are of consistent quality across programs and clearly tie results from assessment to allocation of resources. These revisions are enumerated below.

- All programs will be required to provide Curriculum Maps. These Curriculum Maps will tie specific courses in the curriculum to Program Learning Outcomes. Curriculum Maps will require programs to explicitly indicate which courses will be used to introduce and reinforce each Program Learning Outcome (PLO) and to specify where each Program Learning Outcome will be assessed. Curriculum Maps will help programs make explicit connections between courses in the program and the Program Learning Outcomes. The ALO will host workshops to train faculty members in the creation of Curriculum Maps for Academic Programs at the end of February 2026.
- All programs will be required to create Action Plans to address any outcome below the target benchmark. These action plans will require programs to describe the intervention planned, how that intervention will be assessed, and what resources will be required to satisfactorily complete the intervention.

The draft templates were shared with the faculty through presentations to the Faculty Senate and academic department heads in January of 2026. A Qualtrics survey was provided to collect comments and feedback on the new Program Review template from faculty members with program assessment responsibilities. Faculty members were asked to complete the surveys by February 1st, 2026.

Revision of Academic Program Review Process

All degree programs will be reviewed every three years. During the review process, two academic deans will review each program using a rubric. The rubric asks the deans to evaluate the following for each program:

- Program Learning Outcomes
- Curriculum Maps
- Performance Indicators/Metrics
- Action Plans

The rubrics will ensure that programs receive uniform and constructive feedback from the academic deans. The completed rubrics will be returned to the academic program. The Program Reviews, including the Action Plans, will be discussed by the Dean's Council.

Campus-wide Training on Program Assessment

We identified the lack of regular university-wide training as a significant obstacle for some academic programs. An examination of academic program reviews by the ALO, Provost, and academic deans, from previous cycles revealed that the academic programs with the lowest quality reviews were the programs not accredited by external bodies (e.g. ABET). The faculty members in these programs often had limited experience with program-level assessment. The ALO created a training course in the campus Learning Management System (Canvas) to provide faculty members with training on the following topics:

- Writing Program Learning Outcomes
- Creating curriculum maps for academic programs
- Writing assessment plans and streamlining data collection for assessment

The ALO also scheduled live workshops on these topics throughout the spring semester of 2026. The live workshops are recorded and shared with faculty via the Canvas course.

Revision of Non-Academic Program Review Templates and Process

Although the criticisms from the peer evaluators focused on the Academic Program Review process and templates, we also revised the Non-Academic Program Review Process and Templates. The ALO, in consultation with the Vice Provost for Student Success and Dean of Students and the Associate Dean of Students and Executive Director of Student Success, revised the Non-Academic Program Review form to mirror the Academic Program Review template. The goal of the revision was to simplify and reduce redundancies in the form.

The Non-Academic Program Review process was also revised. The goal of the revision was to change the timing of the assessments to coordinate with the administration of the Student Satisfaction Inventory (SSI). This change in timing will allow the use of data from the SSI in the assessment and evaluation of the non-academic programs. Non-Academic Program Reviews will be submitted in August

2026 and reviewed by both the Vice Provost for Student Success and Dean of Students and the ALO. Feedback will be provided via a rubric that mirrors the rubric for Academic Program Reviews.

Next Steps for Recommendation 3

Continue Training for Academic Program Assessment

In the fall semester of 2026, we will continue to offer workshops on PLOs, curriculum maps, and assessment plans. An additional workshop for writing Action Plans will be scheduled for August 2026.

Complete Revision of Academic Program Review Templates

Feedback collected from the Faculty Survey will be used to finalize the Academic Program Review templates for the 26-27 assessment cycle. After the assessment cycle is complete, feedback will be collected from the academic deans and faculty. This feedback will be used to further revise the templates before the next Program Evaluation cycle.

Provide Training for Non-Academic Program Reviews

During April of 2026, the ALO will present workshops on PLOs and assessment plans for the non-academic programs. Recordings of the workshops and materials from the workshops will be provided via a Canvas site to all staff members who complete Non-Academic Program Reviews.

Review all Non-Academic Programs in AY 2026-2027

All non-academic programs will be reviewed during the 26-27 academic year. Program Reviews will be due to the Vice Provost for Student Success on August 1st, 2026. Feedback on Program Reviews will be provided by December 1st, 2026. After this cycle, all non-academic programs will be reviewed in the fall following the academic year in which the SSI is administered.

Review all Academic Programs in AY 2026-2027

All academic programs will be reviewed during the 26-27 academic year. Program Reviews will be due to academic deans on October 1st, 2026. Feedback on Program Reviews will be provided by January 1st, 2027.

Revise Schedule for Academic Program Review

After this cycle of Academic Program Reviews is complete, the academic deans and the Provost will determine the schedule for future evaluation cycles. During the revision discussions for the Academic Program Review Template, the academic deans discussed two options for Program Evaluation cycles. The first option would be to assess every academic program on campus on the same cycle. The second option would be to assess a portion of the academic programs each year. The academic deans noted positives and negatives for both approaches. The academic deans decided to complete the Academic Program Review next year before finalizing the Program Review Cycle. All academic programs will be reviewed at least twice during each seven-year evaluation cycle.

Recommendation 5

The Commission recommends that Montana Technological University make available disaggregated student achievement data and document how the institution uses these data to inform, implement, and develop strategies and allocate resources. (1.D.4)

As required by the Higher Education Act Disclosure, Montana Tech and Highlands College, the attached two-year college, publish retention rates by campus and 150% of normal time completion rates disaggregated by gender, race/ethnicity, Federal Pell Grant recipients, recipients of a subsidized Stafford Loan (but not a Pell Grant), and students who received neither a Pell Grant nor a subsidized Stafford Loan as reported to the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS).

The institution leverages student achievement data to guide, implement, and allocate resources for strategies that are state-directed, campus-led, or a combination of both. Many initiatives begin as pilots with short-term funding. The Budget Guidelines provide a process for requesting additional budgetary resources. Examples of how student achievement data have been used in planning and allocating resources are provided below.

Montana University System (MUS) Student Success Initiatives

As part of the MUS Strategic Plan Success Agenda, dual enrollment, retention, and time to completion are primary measures, guiding both strategies and allocated resources. When the MUS funding models for statewide initiatives change, the changes are considered by the Executive Budget Committee. Two examples of MUS initiatives and the process for allocating resources to those initiatives are described below.

The Montana Board of Regents' signature student success initiative, Montana 10, was implemented on campus in Fall 2023 with "*a set of ten evidence-based support strategies, real-time data analytics, and system-level policy to dramatically increase college completion and narrow equity gaps for Montana's low-income, American Indian, rural, and other underserved students.*" Since the initial implementation, Montana Tech's Montana 10 program has been funded annually (See Table 1).

TABLE 1: BUDGET ALLOCATION MONTANA 10

	FY23	FY24	FY25	FY26
Montana 10	$ 232,969	$ 266,688	$ 256,478	$ 222,034

Through the leadership of the Associate Dean of Students and Executive Director of Student Success and Institute for Educational Opportunities, disaggregated student success data and student feedback have helped inform improvements in programming, staffing, and resource allocation. The Montana 10 model supporting Pell-eligible students includes financial assistance in the form of a scholarship, textbook stipend, and monthly incentives. In FY26, the funds to cover Montana 10 scholarships were shifted to campus responsibility by MUS, and the Executive Budget Committee was notified.

12Free is a state initiative to provide funding for all high school students to take 6 free dual enrollment credits. Launched as a pilot in August 2018, the two most recent biennial budgets (FY24 & FY25 and FY26 & FY27) included funding by the legislature for 12Free. Dual enrollment is a component of the 2-year school performance-based funding model. Highlands College dual enrollment has remained steady or increased. The dual enrollment program has adapted the course offerings, modality of those courses, and high schools offering courses. These changes are aligned with the campus's special focus and MUS Operational Guidelines. The progression of dual enrollment students to degree-seeking students is disaggregated by high school and reviewed annually by the appropriate dean and the Executive Director of Admissions and Enrollment. Through the campus position budget proposal process in FY26, the Dean of Highlands College proposed increasing the state funding of the dual enrollment coordinator to 0.5FTE. The request was approved by the Executive Budget Committee. This proposal was directly linked to the MUS success agenda metrics and performance-based funding.

Resource Allocation for Student Success Initiatives

The campus process to utilize student success information, implement strategies, and provide resources is held by the Dean's Council. The process to propose strategies to the Dean's Council can originate at any point and follows the appropriate reporting structure. As an example, an academic proposal could begin with a faculty member. The proposal would then progress to the department head, dean, and Dean's Council. Initial pilots may be funded through a dean's discretionary fund; however, budget line items must go through the Executive Budget Committee for consideration. Examples of programs utilizing student success data at various phases in the process follow.

The summer bridge program, Supporting High Achievement, Retention and Persistence (SHARP), first implemented in the summer of 2024, was proposed by the Writing Department after a needs analysis by the department faculty. The Co-requisite class, WRIT 100, in Fall 2023 had expanded to 5 sections with more than 50 students, and faculty identified post-pandemic gaps in student preparation. The Associate Dean of Students and Executive Director of Student Success, writing faculty, and math faculty coordinated the pilot program of 30 students with resource commitment by the CLSPS Dean, the Academic Center for Excellence (ACE), and the Institute for Educational Opportunities. Retention disaggregated by math and writing placement was used to identify the target student population and prioritize applicants. In the summer of 2025, 25 students participated in the program. The program was supported in FY 26 by the Montana Tech Foundation. Moving forward to FY27, SHARP leadership is considering future funding models. One possible funding approach under consideration is a proposal to the Executive Budget Committee.

From FY23 to FY25, the Montana Tech current unrestricted budget for graduate teaching assistants (GTA) has remained $315,000. In preparation for the FY26 budget, the Dean of the Graduate School submitted a request to the Executive Budget Committee to increase funding for GTAs by $80,000. The request to increase funding was in direct response to the campus initiatives to recruit, fund, and retain graduate students while supporting undergraduate laboratory instruction.

As noted in the Evaluation of Institutional Effectiveness report, the campus purchased both Mantra Health and Navigate360 to systematically support student wellness and coordinate academic advising. Mantra Health was purchased to enhance existing counseling services and provide students with 24/7 crisis support. Navigate360 is a student success management system designed to support both quality advising and student retention. These were both purchased to directly address the needs of students post-COVID; however, the long-term funding of these programs was not identified. In FY26, a proposal to fund both the student support tools was made to the Executive Budget Committee, noting the utilization disaggregated by student campus and the gap analysis without these tools. The proposal was approved, and line items for each tool were added to the budget.

Next Steps for Recommendation 5

As part of the revised program review template, both academic and non-academic programs will be asked to provide Action Plans. These Action Plans will provide a link between the assessment of program outcomes and requests for resources. After the program review process is complete, the Action Plans will be considered by the Dean's Council. Requests for additional resources will then follow the appropriate process for space, staffing, and/or budgetary requests.