



**Montana Board of Regents  
Virtual Meeting  
November 19-20, 2020  
MINUTES**

**Thursday, November 19<sup>th</sup>**

Meeting convened at 12:05pm

Regents Present: Casey Lozar, Chair; Paul Tuss, Vice Chair; Bob Nystuen; Martha Sheehy; Brianne Rogers; Joyce Dombrowski; and Amy Sexton. Ex officio members included: Commissioner of Higher Education Clayton Christian; Ex officio Governor Steve Bullock represented by McCall Flynn, and Ex officio Superintendent Elsie Arntzen.

Comments by Chair Lozar

Chair Lozar welcomed all attendees and extended thanks to Regents for their participation today. He extended thanks to all students, faculty, and staff for making Fall Semester 2020 possible during this extraordinarily challenging time. He expressed the pride associated with the success of our goal of allowing students to pursue their academic goals on campus without interruptions. He provided a brief overview of the meeting agenda, noting that in addition to an update on the system's COVID response, Commissioner Christian will talk about the launch of the Apply Montana central application tool and what's next on the admissions and enrollment front. Chair Lozar discussed the action item on the Bitterroot Valley Community College District, followed by a look at the Final Report from the MUS 2-Year Commission. He noted that, under normal circumstances we would be in Missoula today and asked that President Bodnar start the meeting with a few highlights about how UM faculty and researchers are working beyond their campus borders to help our state meet the challenges of the pandemic.

Approval of Minutes

- September 16, 2020 Board Meeting Minutes

A motion for approval of the September 16, 2020 Board Meeting Minutes was made by Regent Dombrowski; motion passed (7-0).

Welcome by President Bodnar

President Bodnar welcomed all attendees. He discussed how COVID has impacted every area on campus and the challenges that UM and other campuses have been experiencing. He spoke to the response on campus to ensure in-person experience could be provided throughout the fall semester. The entire UM family came together to support students during this Pandemic. He extended thanks to the guidance and partnership with OCHE and across the system and shared the progress at the UM. He noted it has been a banner year for scholarships and research at UM, noting the new record for research expenditures, exceeding \$100 million for the first time in history. He spoke about the community impact that the campus is making during this challenging



time to help meet the needs of the community through creative efforts like the Business Emergency Assistance & Recovery (BEAR) Program, the UM spectrum Discovery Area now housed in the new Missoula Public Library and Living Lab. He highlighted the work towards diversity, equity, and inclusion as we as a State and Nation work to recognize and rectify social justice issues. He provided an update on Campaign Montana, a fundraising campaign with the ambitious goal of raising \$450.9 million. This effort marks the largest and most impactful fundraising effort in the history of Montana. He spoke to the importance of UM being rigorously self-reflective and willing to evolve to meet the needs of the community and state. Part of conducting that reflective practice and physical expression ties into physical space renewal. President Bodnar noted the work underway in making some overdue improvements to key features across the UM campus.

President Bodnar shared updates on Elevate U, S.E.A Change, and Montana 10, which are programs aligned with the student experience renewal effort launched by the interdisciplinary opportunities group. These programs are designed to help intentionally and systematically provide opportunities for students to get the skills they need to thrive and survive in the job market. He discussed the University Design Team, comprised of multiple parts, including inquiry, inclusivity, innovation, impact, interdisciplinary, and international components. Overall, this team will focus on tomorrow's university to help determine what a flagship of the future should look like. Discussion followed.

## Commissioner's and System Report

Commissioner Christian extended thanks and appreciation to all MUS faculty, staff, and above all students for their dedication and resilience this semester. He spoke to the importance and impact of campus engagement and the tie to student success. He noted the success of this past semester depending on the willingness of our students to wear their masks, social distance and follow other safety behaviors that we know can help to curb COVID-19.

- COVID-19 Update

Commissioner Christian and Deputy Commissioner Tessman spoke to the continued efforts of campuses and the corresponding success related to the successful completion of a semester offering in-person courses and balancing the online needs of many during the Pandemic. They noted the pride and excellent work of the Healthy Fall Taskforce, so much that they have reconvened and continue to focus efforts on the upcoming Winter semester and upcoming Spring semester. Deputy Commissioner Tessman echoed the comments on how big of a lift this has been for faculty to teach, conduct influential and important research, and other efforts to which faculty have risen to the occasion. He reaffirmed that it was undoubtedly the correct decision to have in-person classes this fall, and the changes to end semester dates, so they coincided with the Thanksgiving holiday, was an excellent choice. He noted at a State level; we continue to coordinate with statewide partners, who have been unshakable in their support of the MUS. He noted it is an important time to reflect on the fall and use lessons learned to focus efforts going forward into Spring. The MUS Taskforce is reengaging with their campus team and campus leadership and look to update, refine, and refresh planning guidelines so that as they enter the spring term and beyond, those



guidelines continue to be useful. He noted that mental health and wellness remain a salient topic of discussion as the Pandemic continues. They are looking at specific recommendations in this area for students and employees. Efforts are underway to bolster mental health resources on campuses thanks to assistance from the Governor's Office. Currently, the intent is to have a spring semester that looks very similar to the fall semester with a primarily in-person learning environment and other adjustments as needed. Discussion followed.

- Portal/Common App Update

Commissioner Christian provided historical references to this initiative noting the ties to the Montana Resident Student Access Initiative. He discussed how this focus was enhanced at a Billings meeting a few years ago to help tackle how to get a larger percentage of Montana graduating high school students to participate in some form of postsecondary education. This issue has been the focus now for a few years and grew further from shared policy goals with the Legislature. Recall that at the September meeting, we were very close to the launch of the Central App. It has now since been launched and is receiving web traffic. Deputy Commissioner Trevor and Scott Lemmon, Director of Admissions and Enrollment Strategy, discussed the portal and its success in greater detail. They noted the excellent results from coordinating the launch of the Application with College Application Week. Mr. Lemmon reported that Apply Montana's launch went very well and was the focal point of the College Application Week and returned the highest participation yet and yielded 10,000 applications to date. Discussion followed.

- Campus Reports (Linked to agenda)
- Introductions & Acknowledgements

Commissioner Christian noted the recent Governor's Award Recipient for the Montana University System was awarded to John Thunstrom, MUS IT Director. In addition, he extended congratulations to Dr. Beth Weatherby, who has announced her retirement after a 30-year career in higher education, and Dr. Susan Wolff of Great Falls College-MSU, who has announced her retirement after a 45 year career in higher education. He formally welcomed Dr. Sandra Bauman as the Dean/CEO of Helena College where she has been serving in an interim capacity. Additional campuses made introductions including President Cruzado of MSU welcoming Dr. Stefani Hicswa as the incoming Chancellor at Montana State University-Billings. Montana Tech welcomed their new Vice Chancellor for Administration and Finance, Michael Van Alstyne. President Bodnar of the University of Montana introduced Mary Kreta as the new Associate Vice President of Enrollment, Dr. Alan Townsend as the new Dean of W.A. Franke College of Forestry & Conservation, and Suzanne Tilleman, Dean of the new Sprunk and Burnham Endowed College of Business.

### What's Up Missoula

Provost Humphrey showcased a short video of panelists including Michael Legg, Artistic Director of Montana Repertory Theatre; Paul Gladen, Director of Blackstone LaunchPad at UM; and Dr. Erin Semmens, Assistant Professor at UM School of Public and Community Health Sciences. The panelists reviewed how their research, strategies and



other UM-led outreach efforts have had positive impacts on the local community through the Pandemic. Discussion followed.

Remarks by Governor Bullock (or Designee)

Governor Bullock's staff shared a designated recording from the Governor, who expressed his thanks and appreciation for the efforts of Board members, the Commissioner, Campuses, Faculty and Staff for their dedication and focus on students and ensuring that a postsecondary education is obtainable to them. He spoke to the recent final proposed budget he has presented, noting that he feels it's reflective of the values that Montanans hold, is balanced, has strong reserves, and protects the services that Montana's depend on while also including investments that will benefit the State now and going forward. This budget also includes \$4.6 million in need-based aid and Increase of \$18.8 million for the MUS and \$5 million in the Montana Research and Economic Development Initiative.

Remarks by Superintendent Arntzen

Superintendent Arntzen extended her thanks and appreciation for the meeting today. She noted that schools are in and out of the classroom right now due to the virus. She spoke to the increased responsibility that this Pandemic has placed on teachers, students, and parents. She spoke to the resiliency of Montana Families during this time. She provided an update on activities underway at OPI. Superintendent Arntzen discussed new leadership at the Legislature and noted her #1 priority for the upcoming session, to secure Base Aid from the Legislature and gain support for funding Special Education and those in in-state treatment. She spoke to the importance of continued efforts related to mental health and suicide prevention efforts.

Budget, Administration and Audit Committee

**CONSENT**

**Staff Items:**

- a. Staff Item; OCHE/MUS ITEM 191-100-R1120
- b. Staff Item; MSU Billings ITEM 191-2700-R1120
- c. Request for Authorization for Approval of University System/Employee Intellectual Property Joint Participation under MUSP 407; MSU Bozeman ITEM 191-2001-R1120 | Attachment #1

**Emeriti Faculty:**

- d. Bolton; UM-Missoula ITEM 191-1002-R1120
- e. Comer; UM-Missoula ITEM 191-1003-R1120
- f. Dean; UM-Missoula ITEM 191-1004-R1120
- g. Engstrom; UM-Missoula ITEM 191-1005-R1120
- h. Kaufmann; UM-Missoula ITEM 191-1006-R1120
- i. Granath; UM-Missoula ITEM 191-1007-R1120
- j. Whitlock; MSU Bozeman ITEM 191-2002-R1120





- k. Engel; MSU Bozeman ITEM 191-2003-R1120

**Facility Items:**

- l. Request for Authorization to Extend and Add Additional Space to an Existing Lease at Molecular Biosciences Building; MSU Bozeman ITEM 191-2005-R1120
- m. Request for Authorization to Repair the Brick Breeden Field House; MSU Bozeman ITEM 191-2006-R1120 | Attachment #1
- n. Request for Approval for the Ratification of UM-Verizon Lease Renewal; UM-Montana ITEM 191-1010-R1120 | Attachment #1

**Other:**

- o. Request for Approval to Revise BOR Policy 940.1 – Residency Policy; OCHE/MUS ITEM 191-103-R1120 | Attachment #1
- p. Montana Rural Physician Incentive Program (MRPIP), Applicant Approvals; OCHE/MUS ITEM 191-104-R1120
- q. Request for Authorization to Enter into an Exclusion Resolution with the Department of Energy; MSU Bozeman ITEM 191-2004-R1120 | Attachment #1

**ACTION**

- a. Request for Authorization to Remodel Aber Hall into Administrative Building; UM-Missoula ITEM 191-1009-R1120 | Attachment #1

Ron Muffick, OCHE Director of Operations & Administration and UM Vice President for Administration & Finance Paul Lasiter, presented this request Consistent with MCA 18-2-102 (b) and in accordance with Board of Regents Policy 1003.7, for the Board of Regents of the Montana University System to authorize the University of Montana – Missoula to expend up to \$1,300,000 for the necessary remodeling of Aber Hall so that it can be used for administrative swing space. Discussion followed.

- b. OCHE Staff Item; OCHE/MUS ITEM 191-105-R1120 | Attachment #1

Regent Dombrowski presented the request for the Montana Board of Regents to approve base salary adjustments for personnel who are employed on Board of Regents contracts consistent with salary adjustments for other Montana University System faculty, staff, professional and administrative employees in the Fiscal Year 2020-21 MUS pay plan. Discussion followed.

**INFORMATION**

- a. Governor's Budget



Commissioner Christian extended thanks and appreciation to Gov and team for the work they've done on this budget and throughout the years to help us accomplish all that we have in the past 8 years and his continued prioritization of higher education. Through this excellent partnership we have seen successes not just in higher education but also to those individuals being served and the local community and economy of the State. Deputy Commissioner Trevor spoke to the change in the amount of funding from one biennium to the next. He discussed HB 2 which contains the budget "traditional" increase to graduate programs for \$1 million like WICHE and WAMI. He noted that, also funded in this budget through Program 9 is roughly \$1 million for new space. Commissioner Christian spoke further to MREDI Funding noting that this helps create Montana jobs, solve Montana problems, and has the ability to catapult into tens of millions in research within the MUS. Deputy Commissioner Trevor spoke about LRBP, breaking down into three groups: capital projects, major repairs, and authority only. MUS has three projects listed under capital projects which he described in detail. He discussed the \$20 million total from the budget for Major Repair Projects, noting that Authority Only projects are for buildings proposed to come online from funding sources other than the state. Discussion followed.

b. Dawson Community College, Enrollment Update & Plan

Suela Cela, Vice President of Academic & Student Affairs, provided an update to the Board on enrollment at Dawson Community College (DCC). She explained that enrollment dropped due to COVID-19, requiring an update to the Board; however, a few days later, enrollment increased again. She reviewed the Dawson Community College Enrollment Action Plan includes recruiting, advising, registration, and retention action steps to increase Montana resident enrollment for Fall 2020. This plan is informed by enrollment trends and timelines for Fall 2020 and supports outreach to and recruitment of Montana students. DCC encourages prospective students to apply and complete the admissions process in a timely manner so that they can begin to develop a plan for their college career, as well as enroll in initial coursework appropriate to their level of readiness and goals.

Public Comment\*

None.

Meeting Recessed at 3:44pm

**Friday, November 20, 2020**

Meeting Reconvened at 8:02am

Academic, Research and Student Affairs Committee

**CONSENT**



- a. Request to Revise BOR Policy 221 – Authorization to Operate Postsecondary Institution in the State of Montana; OCHE/MUS *ITEM 191-101-R1120* | *Attachment #1* | *Attachment #2*

**ACTION**

- a. Mission Review; Montana State University Northern *ITEM 191-2801-R1120* | *Attachment #1*

Dr. Neil Moisey, Provost of MSU-Northern, presented this request for the Board to approve MSU-Northern’s mission statement. Per Board of Regents Policy 219 – Mission Statements, mission statements shall be reviewed by the regents every three years. He provided the institutional classification description and mission statement of the Montana State University-Northern for review. The proposed mission statement reads: MSU Northern provides higher education to students for professional and technical careers through an institution dedicated to teaching and the pursuit of knowledge. Chancellor Kegel shared the MUSN Vision Statement and discussed the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU) Core Themes that were developed to meet the requirements of the NWCCU. These include providing liberal arts, professional and technical programs that serve a diverse student population, promote student-centered and culturally enriched environments that foster student success, and partner with external entities to enhance and expand learning experiences.

- b. Request to Plan Proposals *Executive Summary* | *Supporting Documentation* | *New Program Tracking*

Dr. Steve Gammon, Provost of MT Tech presented the request to plan proposal for splitting the Civil and Mechanical Engineering Departments. Interim Provost Humphrey of UM presented the request to plan proposals for a non-professional option in the Pharmaceutical Sciences B.S. and creation of the Big Sky Language Literacy Institute. Robyn Kiesling, Executive Director of General Education & Transfer at Helena College, presented the request to plan for a certificate in general studies. Discussion followed about a potential proposed change in how these academic proposals are presented during board meetings. Dr. Tessman noted the goal of an expedited process and approving programs that are non-controversial and support rapid workforce training opportunities across Montana. This change in presentation format would help to free up additional time on the ARSA agenda for other discussions and information. Discussion followed.

- c. Level II Items *Executive Summary* | *Supporting Documentation*

Deputy Commissioner Tessman spoke to the process related to these submissions. Individual campuses spoke their requests individually, including MSU-Billings’ request to re-title the Department of Communication and Theatre to the Department of Communication. MSU-Bozeman’s requests to establish the Center for Science,



Technology, Ethics and Society (STES). The University of Montana's request to establish and name the L.S. Skaggs Institute for Health Innovation. Discussion followed.

- d. Request for Authorization to Appoint Doug Emlen as Regents Professor;  
University of Montana-Missoula *ITEM 191-1008-R1120* | *Attachment #1* | *Attachment #2* | *Attachment #3*

President Bodnar presented the request for the authorization to appoint Dr. Doug Emlen the rank of Regents Professor in recognition of his remarkable contributions, international recognition, and exemplary service to our great State and University of Montana.

Chair Lozar noted that the Board would act as a committee of the whole and vote on this action item. A motion for approval of action item b. Item 191-1008-R1120 was made by Regent Tuss; motion passed (7-0).

### INFORMATION

Academic Review Items:

- a. Accreditation Report

Deputy Commissioner Tessman and Joe Thiel, Director of Academic Policy & Research, provided an update to the Board regarding the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU) evaluations conducted at Montana University System campuses during the 2019-2020 academic year. They noted the rigorous process that campus undergo to maintain their accreditation as well as a number of reports they generate for NWCCU. This reports activities from the past year and those for the upcoming year.

- b. Program Reviews

Joe Thiel, Director of Academic Policy & Research, explained that the institutions that make up the Montana University System, except the three community colleges, are required by Board Policy 303.3 to conduct internal reviews of their academic programs to ensure program quality and effective stewardship of resources. All programs listed in the MUS official degree and program inventory, except for certificates of 29 credits or less, must be reviewed at least once every seven years. He discussed program review information as it relates to the University of Montana, Montana Technological University, Helena College, Montana State University, Montana State University-Billings, Montana State University – Northern, and Great Falls College-MSU.

- c. Proposed Changes to BOR Policy 303.7 – Online Learning *Attachment #1*

Joe Thiel, Director of Academic Policy & Research, presented this information request to the board proposing adoption of revisions to Board Policy 303.7. He explained the proposed revisions, developed in coordination with the MUS eLearning Advisory Committee, update the definitions of various distance learning modalities for both



courses and programs so they are more consistent with other areas of board policy, the MUS program inventory, and current campus practice. The proposed modality definitions are also more consistent with US Department of Education distance education regulations (which have recently undergone significant revision) and the reporting definitions of the National Council of State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (which did not exist when this policy was last revised). Discussion followed.

d. Proposed Changes to BOR Policy 940.20 – Annual Tuition and Fees for eLearning *Attachment #1*

Joe Thiel, Director of Academic Policy & Research, presented this information request to the board proposing adoption of revisions to Board Policy 940.20. He explained the proposed revisions, developed in coordination with the MUS eLearning Advisory Committee, would align the definition for online programs with Policy 303.7 and the MUS program inventory. The current definition of online programs includes program with on-campus, face-to-face requirements, so long as those requirements make up no more than 20% of the program credits. The MUS program inventory and the common language within the eLearning field would describe such a program as 'blended'. The revisions will align definitions of blended and online programs across BOR policy. This change will have no impact on the programs or courses for which campuses may assess eLearning fees or differential tuition for non-resident students. Discussion followed.

e. Proposed Changes to BOR Policy 507 – Title IX *Attachment #1*

Helen Thigpen, Acting Chief Legal Counsel, presented this information request to the board proposing changes to the Board's Title IX Policy. She noted the policy was adopted in 2012 in response to a significant guidance issued by the U.S. Department of Education (Department) in 2011. The guidance document has since been repealed and the Department has adopted formal regulations implementing Title IX. The new regulations recalibrated Title IX requirements by both expanding and contracting upon previous guidance issued by the Department. As a result, the Board's Title IX policy will need to be adjusted in accordance with the new regulations. The MUS Legal Team is exploring options for the Board's consideration. The attached document is an example of a potential revised policy. Additional changes may follow and will be brought to the Board for consideration. Discussion followed.

f. Academic Approval Memo

Deputy Commissioner Tessman spoke to the process related to these submissions for September of 2020.

Strategic Priority Items:

Deputy Commissioner Tessman noted the new bifurcated approach to information items to set aside time for discussions around strategic priorities for the MUS.



g. MUS Student Success Strategies

Crystine Miller, Director of Student Affairs and Student Engagement, provided an update regarding the framework for Student Success. She reviewed the breakdown of strategies and how they correspond to student needs, including academic momentum, purpose & belonging, finances, and mental health & wellness. She discussed how these strategies, including 15 to Finish, MUS Student Success Summit, State need-based aid, and national college health assessment, impact and affect student need. She discussed priority considerations for equity, quality, and rural development. She walked through various change levers, including policy, change management, pilots & demonstrations, scaling and continuous improvement, and partnerships to impact student needs and further support strategies. She reviewed and discussed metrics for student success, noting the importance of background, experiences, and outcomes. She addressed this framework in action related to Open Educational Resources (OER), Mental Health and Wellness, and MT 10. Discussion followed.

h. AIMA Update

Angela McLean, Director of American Indian/Minority Achievement and K-12 Partnerships, provided an update to the Board on American Indian Student Success. She noted that American Indian Enrollment now makes up 5.8% of MUS student enrollment, an increase from 2018-2019 AY. She spoke to retention, noting the slight increase in overall retention rates from 53.1% to 54.9%. Flagship retention increased from 60.8% in 2019 to 63.4% in 2020. Additionally, she spoke to bachelor's graduation rates noting that 4 and 6-year graduation rates continue to rise; and 4-year graduation rates grew by 9.8%. In terms of associates graduation rates, she explained that Two Year is holding steady for the last two years, and four years are increasing steadily over the last three years. Regarding student completions, Director McLean noted an overall increase of 4.3% from 2019-2020. She touched on strategies being used across the system, including engaging campus Chief Executive Officers, Chief Academic Officers, and Student Affairs Officers; engaging campuses in outreach to students this semester and for Spring 2020; and continuing to provide student support through AISS offices, TRiO, Gear Up services and student affairs offices. Discussion followed.

i. Research Update

Joe Thiel, Director of Academic Policy and Research – OCHE/MUS, Dr. Scott Whittenburg, Vice President of Research at UM, and Dr. Jason Carter, Vice President of Research, Economic Development and Graduate Education at MSU, provided an update to the Board on Montana Growth through Research. They discussed the Montana Research & Economic Development Initiative (MREDI) that utilized state-funded seed money of \$15 million, appropriated to the MUS by the Legislature, to leverage university-based research into strategic advancements for Montana's economy. MREDI tackled specific goals, including solving Montana problems with Montana solutions, creating good Montana private-sector jobs, and growing emerging research sectors to strengthen and diversify Montana's economy. They reviewed the return on state investment for MREDI, noting the \$57,567,717 in total additional grants received, 111 public and private partners, the creation of 12 new Montana businesses,



and the creation of 358 jobs. They discussed the growth at which MUS Research is growing since the MREDI in 2015-2016. They noted that MUS Research is an innovation driver and is continuing to help solve Montana's problems. In summary, they recapped the accomplishments of MREDI to include orientation of our universities' research capacity to Montana's needs and economic future; bridged the product development. How the initiative enriched the education of hundreds of Montana students; made Montana's university-based research more competitive on the national stage; and forged lasting partnerships between faculty, companies, and communities. The panel noted that looking forward to the upcoming 2021 Legislative session, the Biennial Budget Priority for an MREDI 2.0 approach. MREDI 2.0 encompasses the following strategies. Invest in transformational research; seed new innovation; increase national competitiveness; partner with Montana businesses, and ultimately continue to utilize university-based research as an investment into Montana's economy. Discussion followed.

#### Two Year Committee

#### **ACTION**

- a. Bitterroot Valley Community College District; OCHE/MUS *ITEM 191-102-R1120* | *Attachment #1*

Regent Nystuen provide a summary regarding the process to date associated with this request. Deputy Commissioner Brock Tessman presented the request for the Board of Regents to commit to expanding affordable access to higher education for all Montana residents and recognizes the importance of workforce training and career & technical education (CTE) as drivers of economic growth in the state of Montana, including the Bitterroot Valley. The Board of Regents has heard several presentations regarding the BVCC District, has carefully considered all documentation and public comment presented, and finds promise in the academic and workforce programming outlined. However, important information about the enrollment figures and funding sources necessary to launch and sustain a community college district can only be provided by the students and voters of Ravalli County, other potential financial supporters, and the Montana Legislature. Discussion followed.

#### **INFORMATION**

- a. MUS Two-Year Commission Final Report

Deputy Commissioner Brock Tessman provided a report to the Board of Regents summarizing the MUS Two-Year Commission's work. He noted the history of this Commission stemming back to HB 754 from the 2019 Legislature. The Commission was tasked with reviewing the reasons for 1995 restructure and considering whether a different structure might strengthen 2- year postsecondary education in Montana and, in particular, career and technical education (CTE). The Commission held seven meetings throughout the interim and heard from representatives of Montana's 2-year campuses and the Community and Tribal Colleges, the Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education, the Department of Labor and Industry, the Montana Chamber of Commerce,



and multiple industry sectors. After reviewing the history of vocational education in Montana and the 1995 restructuring and hearing from 2- year campus leaders, the Commission pivoted from considering changes to the governance structure to examining ways to strengthen 2-year programs and especially CTE programs within the current structure. Dr. Tessman then summarized the Commission's findings and recommendations.

**Public Comment:**

Marco Ferro, Director of MFPE, announced his retirement and extended thanks to the Board and OCHE for their service and a good relationship at MFPE. He virtually introduced his successor Diane Fladmo.

Julie Fostner, Founder of Economic Development Authority, spoke in support of the development of a Community College District in the Bitterroot Valley.

Aaron Rhodes, spoke in support of the development of a Community College District in the Bitterroot Valley.

India Hite, a Student Representative on the Bitterroot Council, spoke in support of the development of a Community College District in the Bitterroot Valley.

Tom Korst, Superintendent of Bitterroot School District, spoke in support of the development of a Community College District in the Bitterroot Valley.

Dixie Stark, resident of Darby, MT and Director of Adult Literacy Program at BVCC spoke in support of the development of a Community College District in the Bitterroot Valley.

Jennifer Johnson, a Chemistry Faculty member at Bitterroot, spoke in support of the development of a Community College District in the Bitterroot Valley.

Emily Creeden, a student at BVCC spoke in support of the development of a Community College District in the Bitterroot Valley.

Committee Reports & Action

- Budget, Administration and Audit Committee

**CONSENT**

**Staff Items:**

- a. Staff Item; OCHE/MUS ITEM 191-100-R1120
- b. Staff Item; MSU Billings ITEM 191-2700-R1120
- c. Request for Authorization for Approval of University System/Employee Intellectual Property Joint Participation under MUSP 407; MSU Bozeman ITEM 191-2001-R1120 | Attachment #1





**Emeriti Faculty:**

- d. Bolton; UM-Missoula ITEM 191-1002-R1120
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- f. Dean; UM-Missoula ITEM 191-1004-R1120
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- h. Kaufmann; UM-Missoula ITEM 191-1006-R1120
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- j. Whitlock; MSU Bozeman ITEM 191-2002-R1120
- k. Engel; MSU Bozeman ITEM 191-2003-R1120

**Facility Items:**

- l. Request for Authorization to Extend and Add Additional Space to an Existing Lease at Molecular Biosciences Building; MSU Bozeman ITEM 191-2005-R1120
- m. Request for Authorization to Repair the Brick Breeden Field House; MSU Bozeman ITEM 191-2006-R1120 | Attachment #1
- n. Request for Approval for the Ratification of UM-Verizon Lease Renewal; UM-Montana ITEM 191-1010-R1120 | Attachment #1

**Other:**

- o. Request for Approval to Revise BOR Policy 940.1 – Residency Policy; OCHE/MUS ITEM 191-103-R1120 | Attachment #1
- p. Montana Rural Physician Incentive Program (MRPIP), Applicant Approvals; OCHE/MUS ITEM 191-104-R1120
- q. Request for Authorization to Enter into an Exclusion Resolution with the Department of Energy; MSU Bozeman ITEM 191-2004-R1120 | Attachment #1

A motion for approval of the consent agenda, items a. – q. was made by Regent Tuss; motion passed (7-0).

**ACTION**

- a. Request for Authorization to Remodel Aber Hall into Administrative Building; UM-Missoula ITEM 191-1009-R1120 | Attachment #1

A motion for approval of action item a. Item 191-1009-R1120 was made by Regent Dombrowski; motion passed (7-0).

- b. OCHE Staff Item; OCHE/MUS ITEM 191-105-R1120 | Attachment #1

A motion for approval of action item b. Item 191-105-R1120 was made by Regent



Sexton; motion passed (7-0).

- Academic, Research and Student Affairs Committee

**CONSENT**

- a. Request to Revise BOR Policy 221 – Authorization to Operate Postsecondary Institution in the State of Montana; OCHE/MUS *ITEM 191-101-R1120* | *Attachment #1* | *Attachment #2*

A motion for approval of consent agenda was made by Regent Rogers; motion passed (7-0).

**ACTION**

- a. Mission Review; Montana State University Northern *ITEM 191-2801-R1120* | *Attachment #1*

A motion for approval of action item a. Item 191-2801-R1120 was made by Regent Sheehy; motion passed (7-0).

- b. Request to Plan Proposals *Executive Summary* | *Supporting Documentation* | *New Program Tracking*

A motion for approval of action item b. Request to Plan Proposals was made by Regent Sheehy; motion passed (7-0)

- c. Level II Items *Executive Summary* | *Supporting Documentation*

A motion for approval of action item c. Level II Items was made by Regent Nystuen; motion passed (7-0)

- d. Request for Authorization to Appoint Doug Emlen as Regents Professor; University of Montana-Missoula *ITEM 191-1008-R1120* | *Attachment #1* | *Attachment #2* | *Attachment #3*

The Board took action on this item as a committee of the whole on November 19, 2020. The motion for approval of action item b. Item 191-1008-R1120 was made by Regent Tuss; motion passed (7-0).

- Two-Year and Community College Committee

**ACTION**

- a. Bitterroot Valley Community College District; OCHE/MUS *ITEM 191-102-R1120*

A motion for approval of action item a. Item 191-102-R1120 was made by Regent Sexton; motion passed (7-0).



MONTANA UNIVERSITY SYSTEM

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Meeting Adjourned at 12:34pm

Approved by the Board of Regents on

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Clayton T. Christian  
Commissioner of Higher Education  
and Secretary to the Board of Regents

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Casey Lozar  
Chair, Board of Regents

# APPENDIX A

**SHED HORN CELLARS 406**



October 19, 2020

Letter to Montana Regents

I am writing this letter in support of the organization of the Bitterroot Valley Community College. I feel that a local community college would allow more opportunities for the majority unable to commute to Missoula, open opportunities for small business in the Bitterroot Valley, dedicate itself to the direct needs of the Bitterroot residents, community and businesses, and provide affordable programming.

Please strongly consider approving the organization of the Bitterroot Valley Community College.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Adawn Wood'. The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a light grey rectangular background.

Adawn Wood  
Business Owner  
Shed Horn Cellars 406

**PO BOX 1439  
HAMILTON, MT 59840**



October 15, 2020

Re: Bitterroot Community College

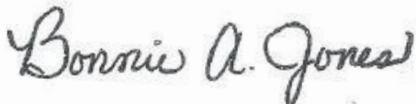
To WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

As a member of the Bitterroot community, I can truly appreciate the value of an independent community college. Their accessibility and affordable programs enhance the education and employability of our community both with our youth and adults alike.

As a business, we sent seven members of our staff to attend classes to update and refresh our computer skills. The class was well taught and flexible class scheduling did not interrupt our normal work day. It is to our benefit as a local business to encourage further skill development in our employees through the local community college classes.

The Bitterroot Community College gets a big thumbs up from Bitterroot Tool & Machine, Inc.

Sincerely,



Secretary/Treasurer

Bitterroot Tool & Machine, Inc.

Bitterroot Tool & Machine, Inc  
497 Stevensville Airport Road Stevensville MT 59870  
406-777-7096 (P) [www.bitterroottoolandmachine.com](http://www.bitterroottoolandmachine.com)  
406-777-0209 (F) [randyjones@btm-mt.com](mailto:randyjones@btm-mt.com)





105 East Main Street – Hamilton, MT 59840 – (406) 363-2400 – Fax (406) 363-2402

October 26, 2020

Casey Lozar  
Board of Regents  
560 N. Park  
Helena, MT 59620

Dear Regent Lozar,

This letter is written in support of the effort by Ravalli County residents to create a new community college in the Bitterroot Valley. The Board of Directors of the Bitterroot Valley Chamber of Commerce, representing our 450 member businesses, voted unanimously to support this measure at our regular board meeting on October 20, 2020.

The advantage of a locally controlled two-year community college is that it allows the ability to provide affordable coursework tailored to meet the specific needs of our local businesses. The addition of new trades should help attract new business to the area. The end result is that a local community college can keep our workforce trained in order to meet present and future demands in the valley.

As a major voice for the Bitterroot Valley for over one hundred years, we support the efforts to create a community college in Ravalli County. We request that you recommend to the Montana legislature that they create a new community college district for Ravalli County. Thank you for your service and for your consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Albert Mitchell", with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Albert Mitchell, Director  
Bitterroot Valley Chamber





## DARBY SCHOOL DISTRICT

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209 School Drive  
Darby, MT 59829

(406) 821-3841 (ph)  
(406) 821-4977 (fax)

info@darby.k12.mt.us  
www.darby.k12.mt.us

September 8, 2020

Casey Lozar, Chair

Montana Board of Regents

PO Box 203201

Helena, MT 59620-3201

Dear Chair Lozar,

Darby School District writes this letter in support of the organization of the Bitterroot Valley Community College District. Darby School District looks forward to having a local postsecondary education partner that it can count on to provide relevant programming opportunities for its students, parents, staff, and residents.

Darby School District is particularly interested in dual credit courses and career & technical programming for its high school students. Having a local community college which is focused on local needs and has the resources and authority to develop and deliver programs connected to local jobs and local career pathways would provide direction to many of our students. A local community college would understand the challenges Darby students face when transitioning from high school to the workforce and could be responsive to those particular challenges – providing the types of transfer and workforce education that make for a successful transition to adulthood.

Finally, over one half of the land mass of Ravalli County lies within the Darby School District. Darby School District serves an area that is not within commuting distance to Missoula. Having a dynamic community college that is accessible to the residents of Darby School District would be socioeconomically transformative to Darby and its greater community.

Darby School District strongly endorses the establishment of the Bitterroot Valley Community College.

Sincerely,

Chris Toynbee, Superintendent

Darby School District



September 10, 2020

Casey Lozar, Chair  
Montana Board of Regents  
P. O. Box 203201  
Helena, Montana 59620-3201

Dear Chair Lozar:

I am writing this letter to communicate my support of Ravalli County residents who are working to create a new community college in the Bitterroot Valley. The Human Resource Council (HRC) provides job training and workforce development services to Ravalli County residents through the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act and through the Pathways Program of the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) Program. The underlying goal of our Workforce Development Services is to provide opportunities for lower income individuals to gain skills and education that will enable them to obtain employment that will meet the economic needs of them and their families. Our staff depend on the partnership we have with the Bitterroot College to provide opportunities for education and training, both for those seeking a degree or those seeking an industry recognized credential.

A locally controlled two-year college will provide accessible and affordable courses tailored to meet the specific needs of our residents who are seeking to advance their careers in our local businesses. Additionally, a local community college will keep our workforce trained and educated to meet present and future demands needed to remain successful.

We at HRC wholeheartedly support the effort to create a community college in Ravalli County. We ask that you recommend to the Montana legislature that they create a new community college district for Ravalli County. We at HRC will continue to work collaboratively and be supportive of a local community college.

Sincerely,

  
Jim Morton  
Executive Director

Incapacity  
Assessment  
Services

Low Income  
Advocacy

Workforce  
Development

Energy  
Assistance

Owner  
Occupied  
Home  
Rehabilitation  
Loan Program

Affordable  
Housing  
Development

First Time  
Homebuyer  
Assistance

2-1-1  
Information  
& Referral

Residential  
Energy  
Conservation

Rental  
Assistance

Summer  
Food  
Service

A LEADER IN COMMUNITY ACTION SINCE 1965

1801 South Higgins Avenue, Missoula, Montana 59801 (406) 728-3710 FAX (406) 728-7680

Offices in Missoula, Mineral and Ravalli Counties  Equal Opportunity in Service and Employment



August 1, 2020

Casey Lozar  
Board of Regents

Dear Regent Lozar:

I am submitting this letter to communicate my support of the efforts of Ravalli County residents to create a new community college in the Bitterroot Valley. Our business/organization has six hundred and fifty employees, the majority of whom are residents of the Bitterroot Valley. A locally controlled two-year college will provide accessible and affordable courses tailored to meet the specific needs of our local businesses and industry, helping to grow new trades and attract new businesses. A local community college can keep our work force and industry trained and educated to meet present and future demands needed to remain successful.

As the largest employer in the Bitterroot Valley, we would greatly benefit from the opportunity to partner with a local community college to help ensure that our workforce needs are met and that Ravalli County residents have ample opportunity to find quality work near their homes. Potential partnership opportunities include training and education offerings customized to meet MDMH's strategic needs, clinical site rotations for students on the MDMH campus, and opportunities to offer college credit to local high school aged children who show an interest in healthcare as a career.

We at Marcus Daly Memorial Hospital wholeheartedly support the effort to create a community college in Ravalli County. We ask that you recommend to the Montana legislature that they create a new community college district for Ravalli County. We would work collaboratively and continuously to support the efforts and success of a local community college.

Sincerely,



John Bishop  
CEO



# *The Paper Clip*

228 Main Street - Box 978 | Hamilton, Montana 59840 | 406.363.5480

August 3, 2020

Casey Lozar  
Board of Regents  
560 N Park  
Helena, MT 59620

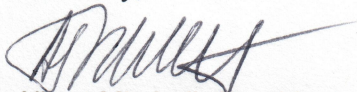
Dear Regent Lozar:

This letter is written in support of the effort by Ravalli County residents to create a new community college in the Bitterroot Valley. Over the past several years the Paper Clip has employed four individuals who all attended the local Bitterroot College with varying degrees of success and satisfaction.

The advantage of a locally controlled two-year community college is that it allows the ability to provide affordable coursework tailored to meet the specific needs of our local businesses. The addition of new trades should help attract new businesses to the area. The end result is that a local community college can keep our workforce trained in order to meet present and future demands in the valley.

As a longtime employer, we support the efforts to create a community college in Ravalli County. We request that you recommend to the Montana legislature that they create a new community college district for Ravalli County. Thank you for your service and for your consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,



Albert Mitchell, *President*  
*The Paper Clip, Inc.*



# Hamilton PUBLIC SCHOOLS

September 2, 2020

Hamilton School District #3 • 217 Daly Avenue • Hamilton, Montana 59840-2827

Casey Lozar, Chair  
Montana Board of Regents  
PO Box 203201  
Helena, MT 59620-3201

Dear Chair Lozar,

The Hamilton School District Board of Trustees writes this letter in support of the organization of the Bitterroot Valley Community College District. The Hamilton School District is aware of the challenges the current Bitterroot College University of Montana faces under its present governance and funding structure. Having a local college that Hamilton Schools can rely on as a vibrant and dynamic partner in the education of our community's children, parents, and residents is an exciting prospect. Transitioning Bitterroot College UM to a locally controlled, permanent community college allows this prospect to become a reality.

The Hamilton School District has enjoyed a strong relationship with Bitterroot College UM since its inception as Bitterroot College Program in 2009. Over the years Hamilton School District has partnered with Bitterroot College on a Welding CAS, Dual Credit courses, and Certified Nurse Aide student placement. Since 2015, Hamilton School District has housed Bitterroot College in the District's old middle school. Since 2018, Hamilton School District has contracted with Bitterroot College to deliver its adult education programming and provide the HiSET. Hamilton School District understands that these present partnerships are in danger and that future partnerships are in question if Bitterroot College is not able to secure adequate and reliable funding to continue present operations and to plan for future programming.

Establishing Bitterroot Valley Community College would provide our local college with access to the resources and authority its needs to become a permanent and reliable actor in our community. And, critically for Hamilton School District, the new locally controlled college would become a dependable partner in building locally available postsecondary education pathways, particularly career and technical pathways, for the district's students, parents, employees, and residents.

The Hamilton School District Board of Trustees strongly endorses the organization of the Bitterroot Valley Community College District.

Sincerely,



Patrick Hanley, Board Chair

Hamilton School District

Heidi Apedaile, Drew Blankenbaker, Tim Campbell, Jeni Seifert, Rebekah Stamp, Seth Gale Wyrick

**OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT**  
217 DALY AVENUE  
P: 406.363.2280  
F: 406.363.1843

**HAMILTON HIGH SCHOOL**  
327 FAIRGROUNDS ROAD  
P: 406.375.6060  
F: 406.375.6076

**HAMILTON MIDDLE SCHOOL**  
209 SOUTH 5TH STREET  
P: 406.363.2121  
F: 406.363.7032

**DALY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**  
208 DALY AVENUE  
P: 406.363.2122  
F: 406.363.6494

**WASHINGTON PRIMARY SCHOOL**  
225 NORTH 5TH STREET  
P: 406.363.2144  
F: 406.363.7420



10/28/2020

RE: Letter of Support for the Bitterroot College

To Whom It May Concern:

The Bitterroot Valley Community College is a critically needed resource for Ravalli County as well as the State of Montana. There are many positive aspects of community colleges that are well known but I'd like to speak to three primary reasons I believe we need a local community college.

First, we have a growing economy but as a business owner, it is extremely difficult to find qualified job applicants. We have approached hiring with the attitude that we will have to provide all the necessary training to anyone we hire. The credentials we need just don't exist in our area. This is a common problem for business throughout our valley and the state in general. We have watched companies bring in workers from out of state to fill positions that should go to Montanans. Having qualified workers in our local community would help the economics in both the business climate and the home environment. There are a lot of jobs that require the education and training that a two year program can like the Bitterroot Community College can offer.

Skilled labor is not what is used to be. Workers need to be multi-faceted, not only in their chosen field, but in the technical aspects of today's business world. This includes computer capabilities, math skills, and the ability to read and write professional/technical correspondence. Community colleges do a great job of filling this void in the work force. If our workforce has an opportunity to get some of this introductory training in a community college setting, they will undoubtedly be more hireable and likely, save businesses thousands of dollars in training expenses. These are funds that can be put towards business growth and stability allowing for better wages and more hiring down the road.

The second reason I believe we need a community college in the Bitterroot Valley comes from personal experience. I attended Flathead Valley Community College and earned both an Associate of Arts degree and an Associate of Science degree. Building on that foundation, I continued my education at the University of Montana where I earned my Bachelor of Science degree in Geology and then did a semester of post grad work at Montana Tech. My academic career has led to the formation of a thriving business in a technical field that is supporting my family and is growing to provide jobs to other Montanans. I can honestly say that I learned more and was better prepared for the working world because of my 2 years at FVCC. My education at FVCC was of a higher quality than at any other institution I attended. This is a critical point to make. Community colleges have smaller class sizes,

professors are more available, and they are better at providing hands on instruction for the types of jobs we need to fill in Montana.

The third advantage of a community college is the ability to serve non-traditional students. It provides an opportunity for people who are in the work force but are trying to improve their situation. It also provides opportunities for families who have children at home. For these types of students, commuting to Missoula for class is nearly impossible. Other non-traditional students would include Gifted and Talented high schoolers. This is an area that doesn't get a lot of attention. In rural areas, the opportunities for these kids can be limited. As a senior in high school, I was ready to move on and I was able to attend classes at FVCC through the Running Start program. This allowed me to get a jump on my college education while living at home. I was able to get both high school and college credit and felt the education was much more suited to my needs than the AP/Honors program at my high school. I would love to see this type of opportunity for my own kids and other students who may need it. I have a 7<sup>th</sup> grader who is currently taking a freshman level algebra class. By the time he is a senior, he will be academically ready for college level math courses. There are several students who share the same level of academic achievement as my son. Giving our advanced students an opportunity to jump start their college education can lead to great things and can help lower the total cost of their education.

For all the reasons stated above, I strongly support the need for the development of an independent community college in the Bitterroot Valley. Programs that are developed in conjunction with business owners will lead to successful workplace hiring and a stronger economy. Higher wages will result in more stable communities and stronger families. The return on this investment makes it a critical change that we need.

Sincerely,



Jessie Ellis

President

November 16, 2020

To the MUS Board of Regents:

I've had the pleasure of teaching at the Bitterroot Community College Program for more than 10 years, and the pleasure of watching it grow into an institution the community supports and cherishes. In May, voters – for the second time – expressed overwhelming support to make the BCCP an independent community college in Ravalli County, Montana. With multiple levies proposed within months, a funding initiative only missed by a slight margin. I am writing to urge you to support the voters' will and establish the necessary foundation to allow the Bitterroot College to grow with the community. Too often, the development of innovative and responsive job training and education programming at Bitterroot College – training and education that supports both students and employers in the community - has been restricted by the college's (non)status and the fact that its resources are not locally controlled.

In the last decade, under exceptional leadership by its staff and board, Bitterroot Community College has developed a highly qualified and dedicated core faculty. They are teachers who are adept at connecting students to their home community – which includes a National Institutes of Health Bio-Level IV Lab and a Glaxo-Smith-Kline vaccine laboratory, as well as numerous trucking companies, manufacturing and construction businesses, and a growing number of care facilities and health care services. Our faculty are also teachers who are adept at connecting students with a wider world. During one of my early years teaching anthropology at the college, I had an older student stop my lecture and ask me to slow down. She turned from her seat in the front row to explain to the class, “When I was growing up in school, girls didn't learn science.”

She is now a range management specialist with a graduate degree, and while exceptional in her own right, her path is a common one for community college students. I have taught veterans who now own their own businesses, an elderly father who attended college with his adult daughter (to give her confidence), parents who wanted to set an example for their high school students, a single dad with a disabled son who came to class with him, a disabled student who is now an archaeologist. I look back in amazement at the extraordinary human potential I have witnessed – and I know that for almost all of those students, college was only possible because it was local, because it included a high-quality classroom experience, and because the staff was supportive enough to light the path.

I also work at the local domestic violence program, where we always have program participants who are attending Bitterroot Community College as a way to improve their job prospects, support their families and increase their self-worth. Domestic violence survivors know all too well the barriers to making it on their own if they decide to leave an abusive partner: Seventy percent of single female-headed households with children under age six live in poverty in Ravalli County. So, our domestic violence program participants who sign up at Bitterroot Community College are smart: Poverty rates for women decrease to under twenty percent if they attend some college.

I worry about what will happen to those women without a local college option. Attending college in Missoula isn't something you can do when you need to be there for the Head Start bus. While attending college online can become an excellent path, it is often not the smoothest way to start for students who have learning challenges, child care challenges, unreliable technology or internet access, or just need

extra help; and it is not an appropriate path for many job training programs, including health care training programs.

Bitterroot Community College's students are the people who collected initiative signatures, who put their faces on promotional posters for the college, who speak to civic groups and pass out course catalogs at the County Fair, and who encouragingly welcome and mentor new students. They don't have lobbyists. They may not even have a car that can get to Helena. They make all this effort because the college has done something positively powerful for them – and they are asking you to do something to ensure the Bitterroot Community College continues. Thank you for your attention.

Respectfully,

Jamie Ogden  
Corvallis, MT



**From:** [Jaime Middleton](#)  
**To:** [Unsworth, Amy](#)  
**Subject:** Addition to public comment for tomorrow's Board of Regents meeting-Thank you!  
**Date:** Thursday, November 19, 2020 7:59:25 PM

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Hi Amy,

I emailed this letter to the regents this evening. I'm hoping it can be added to the public comment for tomorrow. Thank you so much!

Jaime

Dear Regent Sheehy,

My name is Jaime Middleton. I have been teaching mathematics at the Bitterroot College for six years. I know you have received lots of information from our faculty urging you to support the organization of the Bitterroot Valley Community College District in Ravalli County. I share that view and also wanted to share my personal experience as a Bitterroot College faculty member.

I was born and raised in the Bitterroot Valley, so it means the world to me to feel like I am giving back to the community by providing high quality education to those who are trying to provide for their families and improve themselves by getting the kind of education that will give them a fulfilling career. After six years here, I have seen so many students start here, or even in our Literacy program, work hard and then years later come back and tell me they love their accounting job, or nursing, or engineering, teaching, social work, or even dentistry. I have a drawer full of graduation announcements that always makes me smile. The Bitterroot College is an extraordinary place. And of all the faces and stories I have, I know very few who could have made it work if they had to drive to Missoula or take from a big online university. They needed a place to learn in their community that they could go to class, then take a shift at work, be there to get their kids from school or close to them if there was an emergency. Students also come here because they know it is a safe place, they know the people who work and teach here. They know, that even if it has been years since they were in school, that it is never too late, and they will be supported and cared for each step of the way. They get that message the moment they walk in the door until the time they accept their diploma and beyond.

For traditional freshmen, we provide a way for them to get required coursework done at a fraction of the cost. If they need to save money, work, and live at home, they can. They learn valuable student skills that they take with them as they go on to one of Montana's four-year institutions. They go with an associate's degree, self-advocacy skills, and learning and study strategies that make them successful. Ultimately contributing to the entire economy of

Montana. However, I fear many of our students, without the initial support of the Bitterroot College, would have difficulty jumping into the large university structure. We often get students who come back home after not having a great experience at a big school and need to regroup and get help with the transition from high school to college. I am so glad we can be a safety net for them and help them get back on their educational track.

This semester, the Bitterroot College gave what few college students have had around the country, the ability to feel safe attending face-to-face classes and the option of attending remotely if they were ill or high risk, all the while still receiving the needed individual support to be successful. We really amped up our success safety nets for students, including the EdReady Montana program, advising alerts, onsite tutoring, and having space available in the building for students to access WiFi if they didn't have good Internet access at home. Many of my students are in pre-nursing or healthcare-related majors, and the majority of them are employed full time on the front lines in health care. COVID-19 presented so many challenges for these students, who often were taking on extra shifts due to coworkers being ill or quarantined and then, sometimes even having to quarantine themselves. It was a constant and tumultuous semester for these folks, but since they had access to all the resources and course material, they never had to get behind in class and made it the end, successfully completing difficult math course work through it all.

I am so thankful for the Bitterroot College learning community. The students, faculty, and staff here rose to the challenge and helped its community continue to thrive and learn in the midst of a pandemic. Through it all, it is the close relationships that we have built and developed with students that kept them going, which is the power of a community college. I hope you will help us keep doing the work we love by supporting the organization of the Bitterroot Valley Community College District, so we can have more access to resources and continue to lift our community up. Thank you, again, for all your time, energy, and hard work.

Sincerely,

Jaime Middleton

Dear Members of The Board of Regents:

I am writing this letter to you, the members of the Board of Regents, in hopes that you will take the right action and recommend to the legislative body an authorization of the community college district for Ravalli County. In addition to recommending this best paradigm for 2-year education in our county, this action will honor the democratic process. Ravalli county citizens voted for this. In fact, the good people of Ravalli County have voted for this **twice**. First in 2007 and most recently this spring. I believe votes reflecting the will of the people are still honored in Montana. A community college is the cheapest, most affordable access to higher education. All the data support this fact. The structure and paradigm of community colleges are a proven system, especially for rural communities.

Our county pays over \$450,000 to the higher education mill levy. And this county sent \$44 million in income taxes to support the University through the General Fund last year. Yet we receive very little in return as far as assistance in work force development and higher education. We are the 7<sup>th</sup> largest population in the State not served by a bona fide higher education institution. We are 8<sup>th</sup> in the state for paying taxes. The Bitterroot College is under the aegis of the University of Montana which does not wholly recognize or fund the college and this community's particular needs. The university is rife with its own problems and financial woes. It does not have the time or inclination to address our educational needs here in Ravalli County. This is not an indictment on the UM. The UM is not located in Ravalli County. Out of sight is out of mind. There are enough issues to address at the University without also having to address the needs of Ravalli County residents' pursuit of educational opportunities.

I attended a community college. I was married with a family and had a full-time job. The flexibility of the college allowed me the opportunity to take classes as my responsibilities allowed. When I eventually moved out of state and was able to attend a university all the classes transferred. All my siblings attended this community college. We all have degrees. One brother became a successful and respected neurologist. My other brother has obtained several masters degrees and is presently an educator. My sister had a 35-year career with a district attorney's office.

None of us would have achieved any professional success or financial stability without our community college. Both of my parents worked as teachers and paying for all of us to immediately attend a four-year institution was out of the question. A community college let us stay home and work to relieve the financial burden and eased us into the rigors of an academic setting. Many high school students from Ravalli County and similar rural areas attempting a university system fresh out of high school will be consumed and fail miserably. They are not prepared. One or two years at a community college in a supportive environment lays a foundation for success. My father attended our community college on the GI bill after World War Two. He became a well-respected educator. His attendance at our junior college took place over 70 years ago. But this institution had been in existence for 25 years before he attended. The good people in my little farming community wanted opportunity for their children and citizens a 100 years ago! This paradigm for an initial entry into the rigors of higher education is a proven model and is being used in most all the states.

The community I grew up in is like the Bitterroot Valley; primarily agriculture, surrounded by national forests with active timber programs, and proximity to national parks. There was also a large state hospital complex with several medical staff. Here in Hamilton The Rocky Mountain Lab and Glaxo Smith Kline are similar institutions. The community college I attended reflected all the qualities of the community environment and offered accredited programs in forestry, psychiatric and traditional nursing, building trades, and vocational training involving specific agricultural activities that produced specialized equipment and products plus all lower level academic classes.

Here in the Valley, the work-force training and higher education opportunities could be reflective of biological and lab technicians for The Rocky Mountain Lab and Glaxo Smith Kline, dental hygiene training, solar, wind turbine and forestry technicians, medical coding and nursing. Only local control that is responsive to the higher educational and vocational needs of a community is alert and attentive enough to recognize a community's needs and plan accordingly. A centralized university system is too ponderous and not facile enough to represent outlying communities. The University does not live in the Bitterroot. It is not part of the community. But the system willingly takes student's fees, loan monies, and the state money allocated for the higher educational effort and applies it first to the University's needs in Missoula. Little of substance is returned here to Ravalli County.

Most notably, successful students at a junior college will usually go on to the University system. It is a proven statistic that community colleges are feeding grounds for four-year colleges. To fail initially at a University because one was not prepared is devastating. A bone- fide community college in the Bitterroot would only be *good* for the Montana University system. It would invest in students' success to continue at the university level. Much of the demographic in Ravalli County can not afford to drive to Missoula to attend classes if not offered here. Most already have full-time or part-time jobs and many are single mothers. An impossible hardship.

A community college has easier requirements to attend, lower fees, usually one pays no tuition, only for the classes you attend, lower living costs; apartments and dorms in a university setting is much more expensive. And in addition, the flexibility of classes, many at night so one can still work and attend. There is more support that can reduce the financial burden. I was a teacher in a Federal training program in the Bitterroot. Our campus houses 225 students. A community college would also be the perfect segue for those completing our program and who wish to seek more education and training. Local youth and adults could also take classes specific to their needs for enhancement, or to fulfill undergraduate requirements and then, if appropriate move onto a four-year college. The University is making this much more difficult by their extraction of funds and inattentive approach to the needs of our community. They are spiting themselves by making it more difficult for future students to fulfill requirements and not implementing programs for them to eventually enroll in their institution.

As I have stated, as property owners in Ravalli County, we pay taxes for higher education. I am very frustrated with my property taxes going to the nebulous University system. There is little accountability. There are few services.

The Bitterroot Valley Community College is asking for no funds from the state this biennium. This is an opportunity for Montana to begin to correct the state's 2-year education system.

Having said all this and allowing my frustration to vent, I want to thank you. I sincerely believe that you have all been provided with enough information and data to recommend that the Bitterroot Valley Community College be established. I believe that the Board of Regents takes its job seriously and is composed of individuals who want the best educational opportunity for the people of the Bitterroot Valley and thus the best for all the people of Montana. Please make the right decision.

Respectively, John Davenport / 134 Canyon Creek Drive, Hamilton, Montana