



# ***Students First***

## **A Strategic Plan for 2019-2026**

### **Montana State University Billings**



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## **MSU Billings Strategic Plan Framework**

**Vision:** Educating students to impact an evolving global community.

**Mission:** Montana State University Billings delivers a transformative education that empowers students from diverse backgrounds to succeed.

### **Theme I: Build educational programs to support student needs**

**Objective 1 - Educate:** Ensure a high level of effective teaching and learning across the curriculum

- 1.1 Develop and implement best practice teaching techniques
- 1.2 Enhance development opportunities to empower faculty as educators and scholars
- 1.3 Elevate programmatic offerings to be responsive to student and community needs
- 1.4 Review and strengthen general education to enhance student learning

### **Theme II: Progressively grow the university**

**Objective 2 – Recruit/Retain:** Develop and recruit a vibrant and diverse academic community of students, faculty, and staff

- 2.1 Increase student enrollment
- 2.2 Improve student retention and graduation rates
- 2.3 Continue to recruit and retain quality faculty and staff

### **Theme III: Strengthen relationships with the community to enhance partnership opportunities**

**Objective 3 - Partnership:** Develop and enhance public-private partnerships at the local and regional levels

- 3.2 Strengthen relationships with the Billings community and alumni
- 3.3 Improve community giving and philanthropy to MSU Billings
- 3.4 Strengthen relationships with Native American, Veteran, and Hispanic communities

### **Theme IV: Unify, invigorate, and engage MSUB's structure and culture**

**Objective 4 –University Foundations:** Stimulate student success by enhancing campus facilities and services to effectively support academic and co-curricular programs

- 4.2 Develop and implement a clear communication, branding, and marketing plan
- 4.3 Foster a vibrant campus atmosphere
- 4.4 Emphasize service excellence across the university

**Objective 5 - Stewardship:** Be responsible stewards of resources and foster a culture of collaboration

- 5.1 Maintain a competitive student cost of education
- 5.2 Ensure the operating budget is aligned to strategic objectives
- 5.3 Establish a stable auxiliary funding platform



## History/Heritage

Responding to a plea from Montana citizens for an institution of higher education in central or eastern Montana, the fifth unit of the Montana University System—Eastern Montana State Normal School was established **March 12, 1927**, with Dr. Lynn B. McMullen named as the first president. Although the institution was granted several acres of land nestled under the famous Rimrocks, classes had to be held in downtown Billings until the first building, McMullen Hall, was completed in **December 1935**.

At first, the Normal School was authorized to offer a two-year certification program for elementary teachers. It enrolled 149 students (140 women, 9 men), with a faculty of 14.

Between **1927** and **1945**, commencement exercises were held quarterly. Montana Governor J. E. Erickson gave the commencement to the first three graduates (one of whom was 52 years of age) in **March 1928**.

Over the first 16 years, enrollment averaged 175 students, but, with the onset of WWII, enrollment fell to 50 (women only) in **1945**. All athletic and many social activities came to a halt but resumed with enthusiasm after the war.

In **1949**, the Normal School changed its name to Eastern Montana College of Education. Enrollment broke the 1,000 mark in **1958**. In **1964**, enrollment reached 2,162, and the students were asked to design a campus flag. The original flag featured yellow lettering on a field of blue surrounding the official seal of the school. The motto, "Education is Life" continues to challenge today's students.

In **1965**, the institution's name was changed to Eastern Montana College. Enrollment surpassed 3,000 in **1967**, and in that same year the College of Liberal Arts was established. EMC's enrollment broke the 4,000 mark in the **early 1970s**, and in **1979** the Montana University System (MUS) Board of Regents gave their final approval for the establishment of the College of Business. In **1983**, the university recorded its largest enrollment -- 4,424.

In **1994**, the MUS was restructured. Eastern Montana College changed its name for the third time on **July 1, 1995**, becoming Montana State University Billings. As a result of the reorganization, all campuses governed by the Montana University System (MUS) Board of Regents, including all former vocational-technical centers, were aligned with either Montana State University or the University of Montana. MSU Billings affiliated with Montana State University - Bozeman. The former Billings Vocational Technical Center was merged fully into MSU Billings and became MSU Billings College of Technology. In the spring of **2004**, the university formally launched its fifth college - the College of Allied Health Professions.

The College of Technology received another name change in **June 2012** when the MUS Board of Regents approved changing its name to City College at Montana State University Billings. The purpose of the name change was to help increase the awareness of the expanded mission of the two-year campuses across the state of Montana, which included the traditional workforce training programs (career and technical education) as well as transfer education



opportunities. In **2019** the university received Montana University System (MUS) Board of Regents approval to rename two of its five colleges. The College of Allied Health Professions changed its name to the College of Health Professions & Science (CHPS), and what was once the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences became the College of Liberal Arts & Social Sciences (CLASS).

Today, MSU Billings is a comprehensive, regional university dedicated to delivering a transformative education that empowers students from diverse backgrounds to succeed. Eighty-six percent—well above the national average of its outstanding faculty hold the highest degrees in their fields.

Spread over 98 acres, MSU Billings has 16 buildings, employs more than 900 full-time and part-time people, and is the fourth largest employer in Yellowstone County, with an annual payroll in excess of \$18 million. With an enrollment in excess of 4,200, this campus is the third largest unit in the Montana University System. It offers a wide range of academic programs; from licenses and certificates to associate, bachelor's, and master's degrees. Other academic programs unique in the Montana University System, are offered in the areas of human services, special education, rehabilitation, and a master's degree in Information Processing and Communication.

Public service activities of the university include the Montana Center for Inclusive Education, established in 1947, and KEMC/KBMC Public Radio which was originally licensed to the university in the early 1970s.



## Vision, Mission, Values and Aspirations

### Montana State University Billings - Vision Statement

Educating students to impact an evolving global community.

### Montana State University Billings – Mission Statement

Montana State University Billings delivers a transformative education that empowers students from diverse backgrounds to succeed.

### Montana State University Billings – Values

**Respect:** Respect is what allows us to seek out and appreciate the best in other people. Self-respect is also a vital value, which results from knowing one has put forth his/her strongest effort.

**Integrity:** We commit to honesty, ethical behavior, and accountability, and promise to do only what is right, legal, and moral.

**Selfless Service:** We are a university of people that will put the welfare of our community and fellow human beings—especially students before our own.

**Inclusion:** We value processes that seek input from a broad array of stakeholders to produce better products and outcomes.

**Stewardship:** We promise to conserve and best-utilize the human, economic, physical, and environmental resources entrusted to us.

**Excellence:** We strive for perfection in everything we do from teaching, to service, knowing that we can *always* improve.

**Ingenuity:** We embrace and support innovative and creative solutions to set our university apart and to best serve students.

**Lifelong Learning:** We value educational experiences for all people that spark intellectual curiosity and cultivate engaged citizens.



## Montana State University Billings – Peer and Aspirant Peers

For Montana State University Billings to meaningfully evaluate success on its strategic initiatives, it must continually compare itself against other institutions in the United States. This list is based on institutions that reflect similar histories, number of enrolled students, and environmental conditions to MSUB and have also seen growth and success in their own strategic initiatives. Two of these universities in each the peer and aspirant categories are also accredited by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU).

MSUB has identified seven peer universities:

- Indiana University – Northwest, IN
- Cameron University, OK
- Indiana University – Southeast, IN
- Southeastern Oklahoma State University, OK
- Missouri Western State University, MO
- **Eastern Oregon University, OR**
- **Lewis-Clark State College, ID**

In addition, six aspirant universities have been identified:

- **University of Washington – Tacoma, WA**
- Northeastern State University, OK
- Nicholls State University, LA
- Bemidji State University, MN
- Missouri Southern State University, MO
- **Western Oregon University, OR**

MSUB will use these 13 institutions to create a benchmarking system to compare our progress in meeting our objectives defined in our Strategic Plan.



## MSUB Strategic Themes

**Theme I: Build educational programs to support student needs.** MSUB will ensure academic excellence that will help develop well-rounded students, capable of responding to the needs of their peers, their communities, the region and the country. This process will include reviewing and aligning the university's programs –including its general education curriculum. Theme I also calls for the exploration of new, innovative, and best-practice teaching techniques that go beyond traditional instruction. Theme I has one major objective: “1.0 Educate- ensure a high level of effective teaching and learning across the curriculum.”

**Theme II: Progressively grow the university.** The competition to attract student, staff, faculty and administrators is perhaps at an unprecedented high. Further, the diversity of needs and resources to retain and graduate these individuals has grown even more numerous in recent years. MSUB must offer appealing positions to hire and retain the best people and needs to be an employer of choice. Attracting students must be rigorous and comprehensive across all populations (including local high school graduates, veterans, Native American, international, non-traditional, adult learners, Hispanics, and out-of-state). Each population goes through the same process of orientation, enrollment, retention and graduation, but each group has different needs. MSUB needs to adapt its process and service to support to each student needs. Theme II has one major objective: “2.0 Recruit- develop and recruit a vibrant and diverse academic community of students, faculty, and staff.”

**Theme III: Strengthen relations with the community to enhance partnership opportunities.** As a key partner with industry, government, business, and schools in eastern Montana, MSUB must expand its outreach and deepen its commitment to its community. The University intends to create stronger connection between Billings and the university, as well as with specific populations with physical communities in the area: veterans, Hispanics, and Native Americans. MSUB anticipates that this enhanced partnership would benefit our students through strengthening the culture of philanthropy within the community. The result of this theme will be better collaboration and outreach between our region and MSUB. Theme III has one major objective: “3.0 Partnership- develop and enhance public-private partnerships at the local and regional levels.”

**Theme IV: Unify, invigorate and engage MSUB's structure and culture.** As stewards of our resources, MSUB must keep its resources strategically aligned to maintain its direction and support new initiatives. The University must continually review its programs, functions, and processes to ensure effective and efficient use of those resources. The university aims to create an easily navigable set of student support structures, and to foster a vibrant learning and living atmosphere for all. Theme IV has two major objectives: “4.0 University Foundations- stimulate student success by enhancing campus facilities and services to effectively support academic and co-curricular programs;” and “5.0 Stewardship- be responsible stewards of resources and foster a culture of collaboration.”





## Major Objective 1: Educate

### 1.0 Educate: Ensure a high level of effective teaching and learning across the curriculum.

This objective addresses higher education issues with respect to different methods of instruction models. The 1.0 Educate sub-objectives include:

- **1.1: Develop and implement best practice teaching techniques.** The intent is to enhance teaching and learning by emphasizing and encouraging effective pedagogy and instructional support systems.

Desired outcomes: Ensure a high level of student learning throughout the curriculum, as demonstrated by interaction with High Impact Practices. Ensure faculty are able to provide quality learning by providing them with opportunities to develop their teaching

Metrics: Number of courses that employ high quality HIPS; Percentage of students who encounter at least two HIPS; Percentage of faculty that attend faculty workshops devoted to teaching and learning practices.

- **1.2: Enhance development opportunities to empower faculty as educators and scholars.** The intent is to enhance faculty ability to learn innovative teaching techniques and to deepen their knowledge in their field and to bring these back to benefit the whole university.

Desired outcomes: Ensure a strong campus impact of development opportunities for faculty as measured by the stated goals of each development form.

Metric(s):

1. Funded Opportunities (internal grants)
  - Annually review achievement of individual outcomes as stated on faculty development grant applications; track percentage of outcomes achieved.
  - Annually calculate and review percentage of faculty applying and awarded internal grants. Review distribution by college, field, tenure status, contract type, and gender to ensure equitable distribution.



- **1.3: Elevate programmatic offerings to be responsive to students and the community.** The intent is to review and improve curricular offerings to be in-line with the vision of key stakeholders.

Desired outcomes: Create processes and expectations for our academic programs that focus on meeting student and community needs.

Metric(s): Record of yearly advisory committee meeting minutes and program review outcomes.

- **1.4: Review and strengthen general education to enhance student learning.** The intent is to deliver a curriculum of general education courses that facilitate key learning skills and concepts to compliment students' education goals.

Desired outcomes: Establish a methodology to inform student learning achievement within the general education curriculum. Ensure the curriculum is meeting student needs and fostering respect for diversity, problem solving skills, critical thinking skills, and communication skills.

Metric(s): Annual general education assessment; Analysis of general education course transferability; Measure impact of more integrated general education model.



## Major Objective 2: Recruit/Retain

### 2.0 Recruit: Develop and recruit a vibrant and diverse academic community of students, faculty, and staff.

The Recruit and Retain Objective directly addresses higher education concerns about declining enrollment by addressing changes in the diversity of the student population and the declining graduation rates. The 2.0 Recruit sub-objectives are:

- **2.1 Increase student enrollment.** The intent of this sub-objective is to develop a strategic enrollment action plan.  
Desired outcomes: The plan will include action items and targets for undergraduate, graduate, and diverse populations of students.  
  
Metric(s): Overall headcount, FTE, First-time Freshman, New Transfers, Graduate students, Readmits  
Sub-Populations: Native Americans, Hispanics, Vet/Mil, International Students, Dual Enrollment
- **2.2 Improve student retention and graduation rates.** The intent is to increase the retention and graduation of students at Montana State University Billings.  
  
Desired outcomes: The retention action plan; set benchmarks; dashboard creation to regularly review progress.  
  
Metric(s): **Completion of GateKeeper courses** (entry college-level math and English courses); **Term-to-term and year-to-year persistence tracking** (for all students, the performance-based funding cohort, and the annual federal cohort); **Completions** (credentials awarded); **Graduation rates**
- **2.3 Continue to recruit and retain quality faculty and staff.** The intent is to strengthen our appreciation for the university's excellent employees and encourage them to stay at MSUB.  
  
Desired outcome: Improve employee recruitment and engagement and decrease turnover at MSU Billings  
  
Metric(s): Staff and Faculty turnover rates; Exit Survey Data; Retention Data for faculty and staff; Recruitment Data for faculty and staff



## Major Objective 3: Partnership

### 3.0 Partnership: Develop and enhance public-private partnerships at local and regional levels.

The partnership objective addresses our connection and collaboration with our community partners and stakeholders. The 3.0 Partnership sub-objectives are:

- **3.2 Strengthen relationships with the Billings Community and alumni.** The intent of this sub-objective is to strengthen the relationship with the Billings community by expanding the university's service presence in the city.

Desired outcomes: Strengthen the positive relationship between MSU Billings and the Billings, Yellowstone-county, Eastern-Montanan and regional communities by providing service opportunities to MSUB students, staff and faculty.

Metric(s): Number of service hours and projects in the communities by MSUB students, faculty and staff; Analysis of the quality and outcomes of service in the communities as measured in qualitative surveys to community members and partners

- **3.3 Improve community giving and philanthropy to MSUB.** The intent is to ensure a strong MSUB Foundation Strategic Plan to improve the spirit of giving over the next seven years- both in amount available dollars and number of contributors.

Desired outcomes: A percent increase in fundraised dollars each year, as well as an increase in the number of contributors who support MSUB and our students.

Metric(s): Annual dollars fundraised; Number of contributions per year.

- **3.4 Strengthen relationships with Native American, Veteran, and Hispanic communities.** The intent is to expand service, communication with, and outreach to key geographical and cultural communities that have traditionally been underserved.

Desired outcomes: Connect identified populations with programs and services offered through MSU Billings to create a community, as demonstrated by improving the retention rate of these populations' students.

Metric(s): Annual assessment report that includes qualitative data; evaluation of desired outcomes stated in detailed action plan; establishment and completion of various aims for the committees.



## Major Objective 4: University Foundations

### 4.0 University Foundations: Stimulate student success by enhancing campus facilities and services to effectively support academic and co-curricular programs.

The University Foundations objective focuses on improving the environment and support structures that support student learning and life. The 4.0 University Foundations sub-objectives are:

- **4.2 Develop and implement a clear branding, communication, and marketing plan.** The intent is to refine MSUBs' brand and distinguish the university with a recognizable, and unified affirmation of our values.

Desired outcomes: Clearer brand recognition for the university, improved communication with students leading to better recruitment & retention, and marketing that improves enrollment. Increase overall visibility and recognizability of the MSUB brand in Montana and U.S. through various marketing and advertising strategies, which in turn will boost enrollment.

Metric(s): Increase communication with target populations in Montana and U.S. and standardization of university logos for strategic branding.

- **4.3 Foster a vibrant campus atmosphere.** The intent is to create opportunities for students, faculty and staff that invigorate campus with life and activity, including cultivating diversity and physical/mental well-being.

Desired outcomes: Foster a vibrant campus atmosphere by strategically increasing participation campus activities, events, and programs.

Metric(s): Event and program participation data; Annual campus vibrancy report addressing diversity, wellness and health, housing and residential life, and athletics.

- **4.4 Emphasize Service Excellence Across the University.** The intent is to ensure that faculty, staff, and administration are committed to ensuring a high and consistent level of service for every student, prospective student, and fellow employee.

Desired outcomes: Identify processes and procedures on the campus where service levels have gaps in effectiveness and increase student satisfaction as measured by NSSE/CSSE/SSI data questions and responses over seven years.

Metric(s): Service Excellence Matrix: Analysis of student satisfaction data from NSSE/CCSE/SSI.



## Major Objective 5: Stewardship

### 5.0 Stewardship: Be responsible stewards of resources and foster a culture of collaboration.

The Stewardship objective addresses the rising cost of education and the fiscal responsibilities of the University. This includes all forms of funding from tuition, state funds, grants and auxiliary funds. The 5.0 Stewardship sub-objectives are:

- **5.1: Maintain a competitive student cost of education.** The intent is to stay competitive and affordable using a comprehensive strategy regarding tuition & fees, scholarships & waivers, cost of living, and required study materials.

Desired Outcomes: To offer students a competitive and affordable cost of education.

Metrics: Cost of Education Matrix: Analysis comparing our cost of education to other institutions within the state of Montana and with peer institutions in the United States. Analysis utilizing scholarship and waivers for the benefit of identified student populations.

- **5.2 Ensure the operating budget is aligned to strategic objectives.** The intent is focus on allocation of resources in a prioritized manner that focuses on specific objectives that support the future vision and current mission of MSUB.

Desired Outcomes: University has transparent financial reporting and resource allocation that demonstrates a connection between financial resources and the strategic plan.

Metrics: Executive and managerial reporting that is available to campus to effectively manage resources. Transparent budget process that communicates the allocation of resources. Regular reporting on the status of the university's finances to the cabinet and campus constituents.

- **5.3 Establish a stable auxiliary funding platform.** The intent is to promote a financial stable management philosophy for all auxiliary operations while creating a vibrant program that provides required services, events and products to enhance campus life.

Desired Outcomes: All auxiliaries are in a financial status of financial break-even or have excess resources to put in reserves.

Metrics: Analysis of the financial health of auxiliary services offered on campus.



## Timeline for Implementation

In order to maintain manageability of the strategic plan, a phased timeline for implementation is included. The timeline provides a staggered implementation of sub-objective work that will allow committees to develop measures and track progress. This will ensure accountability, while also providing flexibility to course correct as needed.

	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023+
<b>Education</b>	1.1. Best Practice Teaching				
			1.2 Development		
		1.3 Community/Student needs			
	1.4 General Education				
<b>Recruit &amp; Retain</b>	2.1 Enrollment				
	2.2 Retention/Graduation				
			2.3 Retain Faculty/Staff		
<b>Partnership</b>		3.1 Workforce Needs			
		3.2 Billings			
		3.3 Philanthropy			
		3.4 NA/Vet/Hispanic			
		3.5 Educational Communities			
<b>University Foundations</b>		4.1 Infrastructure			
	4.2 Marketing				
		4.3 Vibrant Campus			
			4.4 Service Excellence		
<b>Stewardship</b>		5.1 Cost of Education			
	5.2 Resources & Objectives				
		5.3 Auxillaries			
			5.4 Sustainable Campus		



## Guiding Documents and References

Given the role that MSUB plays in the Montana University System (MUS) as the largest university in the eastern region, it is vital that MSUB incorporate a wide variety of plans, policies, and strategies to meet the needs of the students of Montana, the surrounding states and the nation. The strategic plan is not an isolated product. These guiding documents were synthesized with internal visions from current staff, faculty, and administrators, to produce a well-rounded and distinct plan for the university's future. External documents and information used in the planning process include:

- MUS Strategic Plan 2018
- MSU Bozeman Strategic Plan 2019
- MSUB Community Task Force Plan 2018

Each of the documents referenced above specify objectives, intent, and metrics, which direct the organization to fulfill specific missions.

Internal documents and information used in the planning process include:

- MSUB Holistic Enrollment and Retention Committee (HERC) 2018
- MSUB Strategic Planning Group Sessions, Fall 2018
- Previous MSUB strategic plans

More information on the planning process is outlined below.

**MSUB Community Task Force:** Montana State University Billings, in coordination with its Foundation and community partners, developed a task force to identify key issues and areas of focus for the university. These efforts were developed over the summer of 2018 and were presented to the Board of Regents in the fall of 2018. The identified areas of focus were:

- Stabilizing senior leadership
- Focus on student success
- Focus on program areas that support community needs
- Develop a marketing/branding program that all can get behind
- Improve the infrastructure that supports the student and community

These areas of focus are incorporated across the university's strategic plan. The recruitment and retention of faculty and staff was identified as a priority under Theme II; the focus on student success was placed directly in the revised mission and vision statements; Themes I and III focus on academics and community relationships; and Theme IV establishes the internal support structures, including a marketing plan, to achieve its other objectives and exceed student expectations.





**MSUB Holistic Enrollment and Retention Committee (HERC):** The HERC was created prior to the strategic planning efforts at the direction of the Chancellor to evaluate the recruitment and retention of students. The group organized around six committees: marketing and identity, community engagement, diversity, student experience, adult learners, and campus vibrancy. The outcomes from these subcommittees were directly merged with the strategic plan at the sub-objective and action-step levels.

**MSUB Strategic Planning Group Sessions:** MSUB created a 50+ planning group comprised of administration, faculty, staff, student and community members during the fall of 2018. The intent was to kick-start the strategic planning process by brainstorming and collecting thoughts on the future direction for MSUB, facilitated by an external strategic planning consultant. This effort occurred over two multi-day sessions. The results produced a focused practical vision, strategic direction, underlining contradictions, and basic implementation concepts. These ideas and concepts were included into our Strategic Plan and formed the basis of the Mission and Vision Statements, as well as the four Core Themes.

**Creating the Strategic Plan:** These reference documents and group sessions were the basis for the draft framework, which contain the mission and vision statements, four core themes, and five major objectives. This structure was vetted with campus and community stakeholders at several open forums and on the university website. Ultimately, this framework (excluding the objectives) was presented to the Board of Regents for approval in the spring of 2018. Vice Chancellors were appointed as the leads of each major theme, and two co-chairs were selected to lead each objective. These individuals formed committees to identify their strategic sub-objectives and develop action plans. Each committee started with draft sub-objectives, as well as guiding directions and resources to frame their discussion. The first step for each committee was to review and modify their objective and sub-objectives before developing action plans with metric, initiatives, timelines, products, and required resources. All components of the strategic plan were reviewed by the Chancellor's Cabinet and were presented to the campus community at several open forums.