



Montana State University Billings
(MSUB)

Evaluation of Institutional Effectiveness (EIE):
Year 7 Report

Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities
(NWCCU)

August 4, 2025

Contact:
Kathleen Thatcher
Accreditation Liaison Officer (ALO)
Director of Assessment and Accreditation
McMullen Hall, Room 203A
Billings, MT 59101
406-657-2204
kathleen.thatcher@msubillings.edu

INSTITUTIONAL REPORT CERTIFICATION FORM

Please use this certification form for all institutional reports (Self-Evaluation, Annual, Mid-Cycle, PRFR, Evaluation of Institutional Effectiveness, Candidacy, Ad-Hoc, or Special)



Institutional Report Certification Form

On behalf of the Institution, I certify that:

- ☒ There was broad participation/review by the campus community in the preparation of this report.
- ☒ The Institution remains in compliance with NWCCU Eligibility Requirements.
- ☒ The Institution will continue to remain in compliance throughout the duration of the institution's cycle of accreditation.

I understand that information provided in this report may affect the continued Candidacy or Accreditation of my institution. I certify that the information and data provided in the report are true and correct to the best of my knowledge.

Montana State University Billings

(Name of Institution)

Stefani Hicswa

(Name of Chief Executive Officer)

(Signature of Chief Executive Officer)

August 4, 2025

(Date)

Table of Contents

Institutional Overview.....	1
Preface	3
Student Success and Institutional Mission and Effectiveness.....	4
1.A Mission.....	4
1.B Improving Institutional Effectiveness.....	5
1.C Student learning.....	13
1.D Student Achievement	26
Conclusions	34
Addenda.....	34

Institutional Overview

Montana State University Billings (MSUB) is one of sixteen colleges and universities that make up the Montana University System (MUS). The MUS is governed by the Montana Board of Regents (BOR). MSUB is a public regional institution originally established as a Normal School in 1927. The Normal School became Eastern Montana College in 1965, reflecting growth in enrollment and expansion of programmatic offerings. The final and most recent name change occurred in 1994, when Eastern Montana College became Montana State University Billings. As a result of a reorganization of the Montana University System (MUS), all campuses governed by the Board of Regents, including all former vocational-technical centers, were aligned with either Montana State University or the University of Montana. MSUB became affiliated with Montana State University (Bozeman). The former Billings Vocational Technical Center was merged fully into MSUB and became MSU Billings College of Technology. The College of Technology received another name change in June 2012 when the MUS Board of Regents approved its new name of City College at MSUB.

Today, MSUB comprises five academic colleges across two campuses. The University campus houses the College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences, College of Business, College of Education, and College of Health Professions and Science. These four colleges offer degrees that advance students' knowledge in the areas of human behavior, society, culture, business, education, healthcare, and science.

Located seven miles west of the University campus, the City College campus serves as MSUB's embedded two-year college, providing over 30 industry-recognized associate degrees and certificates in the fields of health, business, computers, industry, and transportation technologies. City College helps to develop the workforce by delivering top-quality learning opportunities to meet market needs in a variety of in-demand careers. A full range of academic programs is offered across both MSUB campuses leading to certificates, and associate's, bachelor's, and master's degrees.

MSUB is situated in Montana's largest city and is a significant economic driver for the region. It is the only four-year university serving southeastern Montana (a vast area covering almost 42,000 square miles). MSUB draws students from rural areas throughout the region, including many who are American Indian, Hispanic, military-affiliated, first-generation, low-income, and non-traditional aged. With two Native American reservations within ninety miles of Billings, both with their own tribal colleges, Native American students are a vital and influential component of MSUB's campus culture.

In fall 2024, the [MSUB student body](#) had the following characteristics:

- 39.9% first generation
- 42.9% Pell eligible
- 34.1% part time and 65.9% full time
- Average age: 26.10 years

The following tables categorize the overall fall 2024 MSUB student body by race/ethnicity and student type:

Montana Race/Ethnicity		
American Indian	275	9.3%
Asian	32	1.1%
Black	26	0.9%
Hispanic	190	6.4%
Pacific Islander	6	0.2%
White	2,247	76.0%
Multi-Racial	85	2.9%
Non-Resident Alien	70	2.4%
Unknown	24	0.8%

Student Type		
New First Time	557	18.8%
Transfer	299	10.1%
Continuing	1,861	63.0%
Returning	238	8.1%

Since 1996, MSUB has been a leader in distance education in the state, aiming to successfully provide rural and non-traditional-aged students with access to higher education. Faculty design courses to meet students where they are and provide learning opportunities that fulfill their specific needs. Whether students choose [fully online](#), hybrid, HyFlex, or in person learning, MSUB maintains the technology and appropriate pedagogies to serve a diverse student population. Using national and regional comparators, MSUB is [above the average for non-traditional-aged student enrollment when compared to disaggregated peer data](#). Similarly, MSUB contains the [highest percentage of non-traditional-aged students when compared to aspirant institutions](#).

MSUB's accreditation was reaffirmed by the NWCCU following its Year 7 comprehensive review in fall 2018. While the NWCCU found MSUB substantially in compliance with the standards, four recommendations were identified:

1. Develop indicators of achievement that are meaningful, assessable, and verifiable that form the basis for evaluating accomplishment of the objectives of its Core Themes (Standard 1.B.2).
2. Ensure the University is addressing human resources issues that have been highlighted previously as needing attention, including issues related to duties, responsibilities, and authority of all positions, and evaluate if there is a sufficient number of qualified personnel to maintain its support operations (Standard 2.B.1).
3. (Revised) Demonstrate a commitment to stabilize its administrative team and provide effective leadership and management, with appropriate levels of responsibility and accountability, for the major support and operational functions and units to foster fulfillment of its mission (Standard 2.A.9; 2.A.11).
4. Develop a plan to monitor its internal and external environments and to inform and guide its strategic direction, including review and revision of its mission, core themes, core theme objectives, goals or intended outcomes of its programs and services, and indicators of achievement (Standard 5.B.3).

During the past seven years, the MSUB leadership and campus community used these recommendations to guide needed improvements. MSUB is proud to report that through the work of an ad hoc report/visit (2020) and the mid-cycle review in 2021, three of the four recommendations were determined to be fulfilled by the NWCCU. As a result of the PRFR review in fall 2024, the final recommendation of demonstrating a commitment to stabilizing the administrative team was fulfilled. With the Chancellor serving MSUB since January 2021 and a commitment to hiring over 25 tenure-track faculty in recent years, the NWCCU recognized the consistent effort and substantial progress MSUB achieved. At the time of this writing, MSUB has no outstanding recommendations. The only significant leadership change that has occurred since the submission of the PRFR is that MSUB welcomed a new Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, Dr. Lee Vartanian, in July 2025.

Preface

Since the submission of the Year 6 PRFR report, MSUB is excited to highlight both recent accomplishments and planned future initiatives. We offer the following updates to the NWCCU and the EIE Year 7 review team.

Established in 1927, MSUB is approaching its 100th anniversary. As MSUB prepares to celebrate this important milestone, the groundwork for a new strategic plan is being developed. A local consulting firm has been hired to begin feedback and information sessions in spring 2026. A [strategic planning group](#) of internal and external partners has been identified.

Aligned with the current strategic plan, MSUB has implemented a comprehensive [Retention and Graduation Plan 2022-2027](#). The development and implementation of the plan have had broad campus support with involvement from faculty, staff, student support units, deans, and department chairs. This campus-wide engagement is one of several factors contributing to the success of the plan. Several components of the plan have been [institutionalized](#), contributing to an increase in student retention rates.

A [dynamic retention dashboard](#) and weekly report provides detailed disaggregated data that are available to staff and faculty. Institutional Research (IR) sends out weekly aggregate enrollment reports every Monday to the entire campus, while the Registrar's office sends a weekly email related to student retention, along with action items each Wednesday to those who have completed the necessary data privacy training. Deans, department chairs, faculty advisors, and care teams strategically use these lists to contact students.

Other notable accomplishments from the work of the Retention and Graduation Plan are:

1. Overall cohort retention has increased from 76.4% ([fall 2022 to spring 2023](#)) to 78.0% ([fall 2024 to spring 2025](#)).
2. Fall 2024 to spring 2025 data show:
 - a. [a retention rate of 80.5% for female students](#), the highest increase (5 percentage points) this subpopulation experienced since this work began;

- b. [a retention rate of 80.1% for transfer students](#), which reflects more than a 2 percentage point increase since this work began;
- c. [a retention rate of 76.7% for Hispanic students](#), compared to 70.1% in fall 2022 to spring 2023;
- d. [a retention rate of 89.5% for international students](#), compared to 61.9% in fall 2022 to spring 2023.

These data reflect the collective efforts of the Retention and Graduation Plan. All five colleges and MSUB's dedicated student care teams have contributed to increased student retention rates in ways that are coordinated, collaborative, caring, and intentional.

High-level work that has supported and contributed to these successes includes the operationalization of new processes and procedures, such as utilizing care teams to follow up with individual students. The data demonstrates the success of these changes. The intentional decision to restructure key units within Academic Affairs to form the [Office of Academic Success](#) has strengthened collaboration between the Registrar's office, Advising, Academic Support Center, International Studies, Career and Employment Services, and Jacket Student Central at City College. The expansion of the Deans Council to include the Registrar further facilitates coordination between units of academic leadership.

Despite this progress, MSUB's retention and graduation rates still fall below both peer and aspirant institutions. To advance this work further, faculty, staff, and administrators are considering collecting more qualitative data to better understand why students do not return. This would complement and add important context to the student achievement data already available. There are currently conversations about the potential creation of a triage team to help resolve individual student issues more effectively. MSUB remains committed to this work and the campus is ready to take on the next steps needed to support student success.

Student Success and Institutional Mission and Effectiveness

1.A Mission

1.A.1 The institution's mission statement defines its broad educational purposes and its commitment to student learning and achievement.

[MSUB's mission statement](#) is **to deliver a transformative education that empowers students from diverse backgrounds to succeed**. The mission is achieved by providing an array of academic programs and student support services that are intended to holistically care for students, regardless of where they are in their academic journey. As a public regional institution, MSUB provides students with opportunities to achieve a certificate, or an associate's, bachelor's, or master's degree.

While students from all over the world attend MSUB, a large concentration of students are from Yellowstone County. Other students come from surrounding rural areas. The table below is included in the MSUB [Quick Facts 2024-2025](#):

Geographic Region	University Campus	City College	Total	%
Yellowstone County	1,068	1,484	2,552	61.8%
Other Montana	646	487	1,133	27.4%
Out-of-State	307	67	374	9.1%
Non-Resident Alien	57	13	70	1.7%

MSUB's mission statement acknowledges and honors the student population served. Institutional strengths include maintaining close connections with students and finding the resources to support their success.

The mission is shared publicly on the website and is addressed every fall by the Chancellor during the [State of the University address](#). This campus-wide meeting often includes a reminder of the mission statement, relevant accomplishments, and current initiatives related to strategic planning. The mission statement defines the commitment to student achievement at MSUB. It provides the foundational guidance for the work faculty, staff, and administrators do to help our students succeed.

1.B Improving Institutional Effectiveness

1.B.1 *The institution demonstrates a continuous process to assess institutional effectiveness, including student learning and achievement and support services. The institution uses an ongoing and systematic evaluation and planning process to inform and refine its effectiveness, assign resources, and improve student learning and achievement.*

MSUB identifies priorities to fulfill the mission and evaluate effectiveness through strategic planning. The current mission statement, along with a vision statement and four core themes, was developed during the creation of MSUB's current [strategic plan \(2019-2026\)](#). The core themes have effectively guided the work of the mission throughout the past six years. They are as follows:

- I. Build educational programs to support student needs
- II. Progressively grow the university
- III. Strengthen relationships with the community to enhance partnership opportunities
- IV. Unify, invigorate, and engage in MSUB's structure and culture

MSUB's mission, vision, and core themes establish the foundation for the work of the strategic plan. Objectives are operationalized through subobjectives, which establish an action plan that implements the work. Appropriate quantitative and qualitative metrics provide the necessary data to continuously guide this iterative work. In response to strategic planning efforts, the Office of Institutional Research (IR) developed dynamic dashboards to monitor institutional effectiveness, [including disaggregated retention and graduation rates and enrollment numbers](#). Currently in the sixth year of implementation, the strategic plan has been mostly

operationalized. While some delays were experienced during 2020, most areas of the strategic plan continued to progress.

MSUB staff, faculty, and leadership are proud of the [many accomplishments achieved](#) through the current strategic plan work; a few examples are highlighted herein.

Core Theme I. Build educational programs to support student needs:

- MSUB created and implemented (fall 2020) a comprehensive Academic Program Review (APR). The results of implementing this process are many, including but not limited to changes to academic programs, resource allocation, and increased awareness and usage of institutional data. The APR process is described in more detail in response to standards 1.C.1 and 1.C.7 of this report, beginning on page 13 and page 21, respectively.
- Following significant conversation amongst deans, provost council, academic senate, and faculty, MSUB created the [Center for Teaching and Learning](#) in 2021. Programming for faculty and staff continues to foster a culture of learning to promote pedagogical perspective through collaboration, mentorship, knowledge sharing, and course design for both physical and virtual spaces.
- The general education curriculum was revised and updated. A highlight of these efforts was to create a meaningful process for evaluating student learning. These efforts are described in more detail in response to standard 1.C.6 (beginning on page 18).

Core Theme II. Progressively grow the University:

- The development and implementation of the [Retention and Graduation Plan 2022-2027](#) has been an impactful achievement for MSUB. The use of data and the focus on retaining students, especially specific subpopulations, has been an important shift in thinking for many. More details of the related work are included throughout this report.
- MSUB's [12-month enrollment](#) trends down, while remaining near average when compared to 12-month enrollment trends at peer institutions. MSUB continues to monitor this data closely and in the context of nationwide trends. Disaggregating enrollment trend data provides context for which student populations are improving, holding steady, or experiencing larger declines. Of particular concern is the [37.7% decline in graduate student enrollment](#) in the past four years (2020-24).
- Several efforts to recruit and retain faculty and staff have also been implemented. Highlights include the revival of employee wellness opportunities, increased internal professional development opportunities, revamped new employee orientation, and the creation of an [employee retention dashboard](#).

Core Theme III. Strengthen relationships with the community to enhance partnership opportunities:

There have been several efforts to strengthen relationships with Native American, Veteran, and Hispanic communities. A taskforce worked collaboratively with the campus to create [land acknowledgement and diversity statements](#) (*scroll to middle of page*). In addition to these institutional statements, other efforts have been implemented to help improve relationships with these important subpopulations:

- The [Native American Achievement Center](#) (NAAC) used allocated resources to hire a retention specialist and financial aid specialist, and successfully launched the [Elder-in-Residence](#) program.
- The MSUB [Military Veteran Success Center](#) (MVSC), in collaboration with state and federal partners, expanded access for military-affiliated students by 70%, and revised the evaluation of military joint services transcripts, amending residency for VA-funded students, and updating the state-level honorable discharge tuition waiver. The MVSC staff also improved onboarding for new students by increasing their understanding of their benefits.
- For Hispanic communities, MSUB established both a Hispanic Advisory committee and La Plaza, a dedicated space and resource hub. The Hispanic Outreach Coordinator and La Plaza's graduate assistant serve as case managers for Hispanic/Latinx students to help increase retention and success for this student subpopulation.

Core Theme IV. Unify, invigorate, and engage in MSUB's structure and culture

- To ensure the operating budget is aligned to strategic objectives, the implementation of a [technical budgeting system](#) was established. [Budget workbooks](#) for each department have increased the efficiency of the annual budget preparation process. This has significantly improved overall budgeting and forecasting accuracy for the university.

The accomplishments articulated above demonstrate that the current strategic plan has provided a structure for ongoing planning, allocation of resources, and assessment of efforts toward achieving the goals. MSUB is proud of the work that has resulted from the current strategic plan. There is more work to be done, and we are excited to begin planning for and developing a new strategic vision. With the current strategic plan ending in 2026, MSUB is ready to collaboratively develop a new strategic plan that will lead the institution into its second century.

Complementing the work of the institutional strategic plan is the [Operational Plan](#) developed annually by the [Chancellor's Cabinet](#). While the overall strategic plan serves as a long-term planning document, the Cabinet's annual Operational Plan emphasizes shorter-term goals. The goals within the Operational Plan are aligned with the strategic plan. Budgetary needs, strategic planning, accreditation, and other institutional priorities are considered. To prioritize retention and graduation efforts, the Chancellor's Cabinet selected several Retention and Graduation Plan initiatives to include in the 2024-25 Cabinet Operational Plan. This helps concentrate resources and attention, ensuring the initiatives are effectively supported and implemented.

Once the plan is created, regular check-ins and reviews occur throughout the academic year during Cabinet meetings. This added layer of short-term planning has helped to enhance the work of the strategic plan that informs mission fulfillment.

MSUB ensures quality of academic programs by implementing regular Academic Program Review (APR) and program-level assessment of student learning. Co-curricular and administrative program assessment processes ensure that effective support programs and services are offered. These processes are addressed in greater detail in the Student Learning section of this report.

These institutional and program-level processes work together to inform, maintain, and improve institutional effectiveness at MSUB.

1.B.2 The institution sets and articulates meaningful goals, objectives, and indicators of its goals to define mission fulfillment and to improve its effectiveness in the context of and in comparison with regional and national peer institutions.

MSUB uses strategic planning to set goals, objectives, and indicators of its goals to define mission fulfillment and improve effectiveness. The [strategic plan framework](#) outlines the strategic planning subobjectives, each aligned to a main objective and core theme. The subobjectives, objectives, and core themes are also aligned to the vision and mission. While the framework outlines the structure of the strategic plan, the work was implemented at the subobjective level. An action plan for each subobjective includes action items, deliverable goals, partners involved, status updates, success indicators, and target dates. Subobjective leads reported annually on the progress of implementing the action plans. Annual reports included areas of success, challenges, and significant changes made to the action plan. As strategic planning is a dynamic process and changes are occurring more rapidly in higher education than in years past, the ability for subobjective leads to update the action plan allowed for the work to remain current and relevant. An example of the documentation for subobjective 1.4 of the strategic plan is provided.

Subobjective 1.4: *Review and strengthen general education to enhance student learning*

[Example action plan](#)

[Example annual report](#)

Some of the subobjective leads, including the lead for subobjective 1.4, opted to use peer institutions for informing the work and setting targets. During the review of the general education coursework, [General Education committee members used peer institutions](#) (pages 1-2) to investigate elements of various general education models and to [consider criteria \(essential and desired\)](#) (page 2, Item D) for general education courses. For subobjective 1.2, *Enhance development opportunities to empower faculty as educators and scholars*, peer institutions were used to [identify internal funding opportunities](#) (pages 1 and 6-8), with special focus on more creative opportunities that could be adapted and used at MSUB.

MSUB also uses peers and aspirants to help inform other initiatives. For example, these institutions are frequently consulted when program faculty are considering other faculty to serve as external reviewers during the Academic Program Review (APR) process. The peer and aspirant comparators have also been used to benchmark for policy review and development. The MSUB Graduate committee used policies from peers and aspirants to review credit/transfer policy. Similarly, the MSUB Honors program used the peer and aspirant comparators to review, align, and improve the Honors curricular committee by-laws.

MSUB uses peer and aspirant institutions for comparative data analysis and rich context when discussing and planning for high-level institutional metrics like enrollment, retention rates, and graduation rates. For example, these data were used for the development of the aspirational targets set in the MSUB [Retention and Graduation Plan 2022-2027](#). The comparison of regional and national peers was invaluable for setting the targets identified in this plan. The data provided important context that allowed MSUB staff and faculty to set challenging but realistic goals.

The Office of Institutional Research (IR) maintains the [MSUB Student Achievement page](#), where these tools are publicly posted and available to all. More details on these tools are included in the Student Achievement section of this report.

1.B.3 The institution provides evidence that its planning process is inclusive and offers opportunities for comment by appropriate constituencies, allocates necessary resources, and leads to improvement of institutional effectiveness.

A variety of stakeholders, both internal and external, were involved in the iterative development of MSUB's current strategic plan. A [working group](#), convened by the Chancellor at the time (2018), consisted of staff, faculty, and students, as well as members of the MSUB Foundation and community. These discussions were framed in the context of two very important questions: Who is MSUB, and what is our purpose? Conversations at brainstorming sessions generated feedback and ideas that were pivotal for creating the components of the current strategic plan. Additionally, a variety of [guiding documents](#) was consulted to help establish the mission, vision, core themes, and values. The core themes identify the essential elements of the mission and vision statements, and they provide greater clarity to the University's highest priorities. From these core themes, MSUB articulated objectives and subobjectives. The [MSUB Strategic Plan Framework](#) showcases the work and results of many campus conversations and has served as a guiding document for both internal and external campus stakeholders over the last six years.

The [Retention and Graduation Plan 2022-2027](#) was developed through efforts related to the current strategic plan (2019-2026). As another example of comprehensive work that was widely represented, the plan also includes internal and external stakeholder input. Stakeholder involvement was used in both the development and implementation of the plan. Additionally, peer and aspirant institutional data were used to identify benchmarks and set targets. These data, combined with MSUB institutional data, were invaluable in the development of reasonable and realistic retention and graduation targets.

MSUB made the decision to revitalize the [Budget Advisory Council](#) (BAC) (formerly the University Budget Council) in fall 2024. Previously, this council worked to identify challenges in the budget and allocate resources. However, there were several functional issues with the former council, and it was eventually dissolved by a previous chancellor. Through conversations at budget listening sessions and conversations related to shared governance, Chancellor Hicswa made the decision to bring back the council. Structural issues identified by members who had served previously were addressed and resolved. The Chancellor charged the Council with:

gaining a deeper understanding of the budget's complexities. The objective is to establish, communicate, and implement clear and straightforward fiscal processes. The Council will play a role in providing budgetary guidance and recommending resource allocations that align with and support the University's strategic goals and priorities.

The group began meeting in [fall 2024 and now meets regularly](#). During spring 2025, the Council focused on building foundational knowledge of the budget's current state, existing fiscal practices, and both internal and MUS level processes. Beginning in fall 2025, the BAC, including staff, faculty, and administrators, will engage in efforts to deepen their knowledge of the budget and processes, as well as develop recommendations for strategic fiscal resource allocations. The impetus for reviving this group was to increase transparency and decision-making related to financial resources. For a smaller campus, careful and strategic resource allocation is critical to student success and mission fulfillment.

In 2021, the Chancellor established the [Data Governance Council](#) (DGC) to foster a culture that recognizes and manages institutional data as a university asset. The DGC is a diverse, cross-functional group dedicated to implementing and overseeing MSUB's data governance program. The group reviews project proposals that include the exchange of university data or data sharing agreements between the university and external entities for the resources (financial, human, technology, etc.), privacy, and security needed for implementation. Based on their review, the DGC makes a recommendation to the executive team (Chancellor and three Vice Chancellors). The Chancellor and Vice Chancellors, informed by a campus-wide perspective, makes the final decision as to whether the project is to be pursued. This [inclusive review process](#) ensures data security for MSUB, directs the allocation of resources, and leads to improved institutional effectiveness.

MSUB has established planning and decision-making structures that help to ensure comments from appropriate constituents are included. The [Chancellor's Cabinet](#), [Jacket Leadership Team](#) (JLT), [Provost Council](#), Deans Council, Department Chairs, [Academic Senate](#), Staff Senate, and [Student Senate \(Associated Students of MSU Billings\)](#) are all examples of intentionally structured committees that provide important feedback for planning and decision-making. Additionally, the MSUB Faculty Association and the Montana Two-Year College Faculty Association work collaboratively with MSUB leadership, including the Chancellor and Vice Chancellors, to ensure collaboration between the faculty unions and the administration. These formal groups exist to ensure all perspectives are included when planning and making decisions.

While MSUB maintains appropriate structures for adhering to the principles of shared governance, concerns about shared governance were raised recently by faculty and staff. In response to these concerns, the Chancellor included this as a priority in the [Cabinet's Operational Plan](#), and she asked members of the Chancellor's Cabinet to create guiding information to help ensure that shared governance principles are consistently implemented. A subgroup of the Cabinet drafted [a document](#) that was used to facilitate a conversation with the entire Cabinet. A similar conversation with the [Jacket Leadership Team \(JLT\) took place in April 2025](#). The document was refined and revisited based on those conversations and then revisited again at a Cabinet meeting in June 2025. The goal of these discussions is to establish a common understanding of the expectations for implementing effective shared governance at MSUB. The [Shared Governance card](#) was created to outline the principles emphasized by the faculty, staff, and administration. A website is being developed to showcase the results of these important conversations. As this work continues, Chancellor Hicswa is dedicated to empowering the entire campus to understand their role in shared governance.

MSUB is improving in its communication with and involvement of all affected stakeholders, not only in conversations, but in the decision-making process. Recent examples of these efforts include the re-establishment of the Budget Advisory Council and regular standing meetings between faculty leaders and the Chancellor and Provost. As of the 2024-25 academic year, the Vice Chancellor for Administration and Finance and the Vice Chancellor for Student Access and Success attend and provide regular updates at Academic Senate meetings. These have been intentional efforts to improve the implementation of the principles of shared governance.

1.B.4 The institution monitors its internal and external environments to identify current and emerging patterns, trends, and expectations. Through its governance system it considers such findings to assess its strategic position, define its future direction, and review and revise, as necessary, its mission, planning, intended outcomes of its programs and services, and indicators of achievement of its goals.

The MSUB administration, faculty, and staff engage in the Billings community and surrounding region through a variety of mechanisms. The Chancellor meets regularly with members of the Billings community. While the purpose of each meeting may vary, these interactions are strategic and are often used to receive feedback from community partners and to share relevant work and events at MSUB. The Chancellor also serves on local boards, including Big Sky Economic Development and Billings Chamber of Commerce. Faculty, students, and staff interact with community partners through board service, volunteering, and community service. This information is tracked through the [Service Sting](#), a survey to collect volunteer and service hours. In 2023, over 40 employees recorded over 1,955 service and volunteer hours in the community, serving more than 55 local organizations. These interactions within the community and surrounding region play an important role in staying connected and building relationships with external environments.

In addition to service, faculty and staff also maintain relationships with external partners through program-level advisory committees and involvement with school districts, medical institutions, and other academic institutions, including tribal colleges. [Transfer and articulation](#)

[agreements](#) have been established and continue to be established as potential institutional partnerships or student needs arise. Transfer arrangements help students as they navigate their academic pathways, and they also help MSUB maintain important partnerships within the region. Faculty engage with faculty from other institutions who offer similar academic programs when undergoing Academic Program Review (APR). Feedback from the external reviewer during APR offers invaluable guidance and perspective. The MSUB [Career and Employment Services](#) staff maintain partnerships with local and regional employers to provide students with opportunities for [internships](#) and employment. Specifically, the [Employer Partnership Program](#) contributes to student success by building stronger relationships, increasing campus visibility, and marketing the employer online and on campus. This program creates a positive relationship for the employer, student, and MSUB. The Career and Employment Services office also connects with MSUB alumni through the [Graduate Survey](#). The data collected from the survey help to inform other students of employment expectations. The data are monitored for how MSUB graduates are using their education through employment or further advancement of their education. These interactions with local employers assist MSUB, as important, if not primary, providers of workforce development opportunities in the region, in tailoring academic offerings to fit the changing needs of the regional economy.

As a public regional university, MSUB uses institutional data to monitor its internal and external environments and make necessary adjustments. Several institutional tools help MSUB collect regular feedback from students, and some provide comparison data with other institutions. The table below provides the schedule and cycle for implementing institutional assessments. Some of the national survey tools recently switched from a three-year implementation cycle to a four-year cycle to allow more time between implementations for deeper data analysis and to improve usage.

Tool	Survey Implementation Cycle	Who completes the survey?	Years of Data	Tool Type (National vs Homegrown)
CCSSE	Every four years	City College students (excluding dual enrollment and students under 18 years of age)	2019, 2022	National Tool
NSSE	Every four years	First year and senior students	2016, 2019, 2022	National Tool
SSI	Every four years	Currently enrolled undergraduate	2017, 2020, 2024	National Tool

		and graduate students		
Positive Influence Survey	Every semester	Students who have filed for graduation	2023, 2024, 2025	Homegrown Tool
Healthy Minds	To be determined	Students, faculty, staff	2024	National Tool

MSUB recently began implementing the [Positive Influence Survey](#). Students who are close to graduating are given the opportunity to submit a name and description of someone at MSUB who made a positive impact on them during their Yellowjacket experience. The data collected from the survey not only recognize individuals who contributed to student success but also identify programs and services that have had a positive impact on students.

MSUB administrators, faculty, and staff monitor internal and external environments through a variety of mechanisms to identify current and emerging patterns, trends, and expectations. These include national tools that provide external comparisons and benchmarks, as well as internal tools capturing useful feedback from MSUB students, faculty, and staff. Several programs and services at MSUB use these data to guide planning and programming efforts. Data from these tools are regularly shared with Jacket Leadership Team, department chairs, Provost Council, Academic Senate, and the division of Student Access and Success. [Data nuggets](#) are also shared through [At the Hive](#), MSUB's bi-weekly newsletter.

As MSUB embarks on the development of a new strategic plan, stakeholders from MSUB and the Billings community will be involved. MSUB serves a large region both within the city limits of Billings and the rural areas beyond. To effectively serve these communities and fulfill the MSUB mission, internal and external stakeholders provide important perspectives. Meetings, listening sessions, and surveys will be used to solicit feedback during 2025 and 2026. The feedback collected will guide and inform the development of the strategic plan, using an iterative process. The aim is to complete the process and have a newly finalized strategic plan to introduce in 2027, coinciding with the MSUB centennial. MSUB will use internal shared governance structures to obtain feedback on the collective priorities for the campus in the next iteration of strategic planning. These groups include but are not limited to Chancellor's Cabinet, Jacket Leadership Team, Deans Council, department chairs, Academic Senate, Staff Senate, and Student Senate.

1.C Student learning

1.C.1 *The institution offers programs with appropriate content and rigor that are consistent with its mission, culminate in achievement of clearly identified student learning outcomes that lead to collegiate-*

level degrees, certificates, or credentials and include designators consistent with program content in recognized fields of study.

MSUB offers programs with appropriate content and rigor consistent with its mission of delivering *a transformative education that empowers students from diverse backgrounds to succeed*. As a public regional university with an embedded two-year college, MSUB offers students the opportunity to achieve a certificate, or associate's, bachelor's, or master's degree. Students coming to MSUB from diverse backgrounds can find a variety of academic programs to explore. New programs and existing programs undergo separate but similar review processes to ensure appropriate content and rigor are offered and clearly articulated learning outcomes are published.

To propose a new program, MSUB is guided by the Montana Board of Regents [Policy 303.1](#). The [forms and templates](#) for this process are used to identify program need, program learning outcomes, program assessment, proposed curriculum, necessary resources, collaboration between the Montana University System (MUS) institutions, and how the new program aligns with the mission of the institution and existing programs. Two recent examples are provided:

1. Associate of Applied Science (AAS) in Medical Coding & Insurance Billing Specialist
 - a. [Curriculum Proposal Form](#)
2. Master of Science (MS) in Criminal Justice
 - a. [Curriculum Proposal Form](#)

When a new program has been proposed, the review process begins internally at the department and college levels. At MSUB, each college maintains a curriculum committee. Once a proposal receives approval from the respective college curriculum committee, it moves to either the undergraduate or graduate curriculum committee. The Academic Senate is the final step for faculty approval of new programs. The Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs then reviews the proposal. When the program is approved by the Provost, it is submitted to the Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education (OCHE) for the appropriate review, before final approval by the Montana Board of Regents. This comprehensive review process ensures that the development of a new program is at a collegiate level and includes appropriate program learning outcomes.

All existing programs at MSUB maintain program learning outcomes. In the event faculty propose changes to an existing academic program, the requested curricular changes are reviewed for appropriate content and rigor by the various curriculum committees (outlined in the above paragraph). The requested curricular changes are also reviewed in the context of the program learning outcomes.

All degree-granting programs undergo MSUB's Academic Program Review (APR) [every seven years](#), consistent with [Montana Board of Regents Policy 303.3](#). This comprehensive review of academic programs includes identification of accomplishments and challenges, analysis of institutional data, review of programmatic assessment of student learning, and a review of institutional support resources (information technology, library, marketing, etc.). The program faculty write a self-study using the [APR template](#). An external reviewer (usually a faculty

member from a similar program at another institution) reviews the completed self-study. Feedback from the external reviewer is collected using the [APR feedback form](#). The Dean uses the self-study and external reviewer feedback to create a letter with commendations and recommendations. The Provost reviews the self-study, external reviewer feedback, and letter from the Dean to draft [an action plan](#), which includes short- and long-term priorities for the program. Once the action plan is drafted, the Provost schedules an action plan meeting to discuss the priorities for the program. Examples and supporting evidence of this process are included in response to standard 1.C.7 (beginning on page 21). This comprehensive review process ensures that the academic offerings at MSUB remain current, relevant, and supported by the appropriate resources. The APR process provides an opportunity for all academic programs to review their content and its rigor.

In addition to MSUB's curricular review and APR processes, a number of programs are also accredited by an appropriate [disciplinary accrediting agency](#). This is another layer of review that helps these programs maintain high standards of curriculum and pedagogy. While sometimes the content within the APR process and the external program accreditation process may overlap, the results yielded are distinct enough that MSUB upholds both processes for programs with specialized accreditation. Program accreditation does not supersede MSUB's APR process.

The above processes, combined with faculty expertise and credentials, help ensure that all academic programs at MSUB are rooted in appropriate learning outcomes, which are supported by curriculum designed at the collegiate level.

The institution's Distance Education programs are consistent with the mission and educational objectives of the institutions (Standard 1.C.1).

All Distance Education programs at MSUB are developed by academic departments and follow the same program approval process as any new program, regardless of modality. The institution currently offers online programs at the certificate, associate, bachelor, and master levels. The programs offered are consistent with the mission of MSUB to "deliver a transformative education that empowers students from diverse backgrounds to succeed" as they focus on fulfilling regional needs (e.g., in health care, business, education), and they allow students the flexibility to balance their education with other responsibilities.

1.C.2 *The institution awards credit, degrees, certificates, or credentials for programs that are based upon student learning and learning outcomes that offer an appropriate breadth, depth, sequencing, and synthesis of learning.*

Student learning outcomes lay a strong foundation for certificate and degree offerings at MSUB. Academic certificates and degrees are delivered based on the evaluation of student learning achievement for each program- and course-level student learning outcome.

Course learning outcomes are articulated in each course syllabus. MSUB's Center for Teaching and Learning works collaboratively with the faculty to maintain a [syllabus template](#). The template contains required and recommended elements. Course learning outcomes are a

required element of every course syllabus. Course learning outcomes are also published and maintained on the [Montana Common Course Numbering](#) (CCN) guide. Finally, as new courses are developed or existing courses are revised, the course-level learning outcomes are also articulated and kept up to date in MSUB's curriculum management software.

Course learning outcomes guide and inform the creation of program learning outcomes, which are articulated in the Academic Catalog ([Undergraduate](#) and [Graduate](#)) for each program and often articulated on the respective program webpage. Program learning outcomes are used by each program in assessment planning and annual reporting processes. Program assessment plans and reports, along with the program learning outcomes, are regularly reviewed by the University Assessment and Accreditation committee (UAAC) and during Academic Program Review (APR). Examples of these documents are included in response to standard 1.C.7 (beginning on page 21). Finally, if faculty propose revisions to a program, program learning outcomes are also reviewed at that time by the various curriculum committees.

The processes outlined above provide ample opportunities for learning outcomes to be reviewed, helping to ensure each program at MSUB offers an appropriate breadth and depth of learning. Evaluation of student achievement of the outcomes ensures that the appropriate sequencing and synthesis of learning occurs. Assessment of student learning combined with faculty expertise informs the breadth, depth, sequencing, and synthesis of achievement of outcomes for both the course and program levels.

1.C.3 The institution identifies and publishes expected program and degree learning outcomes for all degrees, certificates, and credentials. Information on expected student learning outcomes for all courses is provided to enrolled students.

Student learning outcomes are published in the Academic Catalog ([Undergraduate](#) and [Graduate](#)) for each program. Faculty are also encouraged to publish program learning outcomes on their respective program webpages to help prospective and current students understand the expectations of the program.

1.C.4 The institution's admission and completion or graduation requirements are clearly defined, widely published, and easily accessible to students and the public.

MSUB publishes admission requirements on the [Office of Admissions webpage](#) and in the [Academic Catalog](#). These requirements are also discussed with prospective and current students during campus tours and meetings with Admissions staff. The Office of Admissions staff use [step-by-step information](#) to guide students through the processes of applying to MSUB through preparing for their first day of classes. In line with MSUB's mission, admission is open but select programs have additional admission requirements. These requirements are found on each of the program pages within the catalog and/or on the department's website. For example, both the [Registered Nursing program](#) and [Radiologic Technology program](#) at City College outline additional admission requirements on their program webpages under "Admission Requirements & Competitive Application Process." Programs within the College of Education, specifically [educator preparation programs](#), require additional milestones before being fully admitted to the program. Additional program-level admissions requirements are

also located in the [Academic Catalog](#) (Registered Nursing on page 230, Radiologic Technology on page 259, Educator preparation programs on page 72).

Once students are admitted to their respective academic programs, professional and faculty advisors create a plan of study in the degree planning and audit software (DegreeWorks). The created plan of study can be accessed by the student, advisors, and Registrar's office. The plans are informed and guided by the student's interests and the degree requirements published in the Academic Catalog. When degree requirements change because of approved curricular changes, the degree planning and audit software is updated to reflect those changes for future students. When curricular changes occur, students already enrolled in the program work directly with their faculty advisor and the Registrar's office to determine the best interest for the student. For example, it may benefit a student to move to the updated curriculum but in the event it does not, students are permitted (and encouraged) to stay with the degree requirements published in the Academic Catalog in effect when they entered the program. Notes are kept in the degree planning and audit software to maintain documentation of these conversations and decisions, and students can track their progress to completion through the software.

Graduation requirements are published in the [Academic Catalog](#) (pages 33-35), on advising worksheets ([University campus programs](#) and [City College campus programs](#)), and on the [MSUB Registrar's office webpage](#). The Registrar's office emails students two weeks before graduation applications are due. Students receive an email to announce eligibility to graduate when they have completed a certain number of credits. The email encourages students to consult with their faculty advisor and/or the Registrar's office. This is to help students stay on track and remind them they will need to complete the graduation application once they have completed the degree requirements.

MSUB faculty and staff communicate admissions and graduation requirements through many strategies to ensure students receive the information in a timely and clearly articulated manner.

1.C.5 The institution engages in an effective system of assessment to evaluate the quality of learning in its programs. The institution recognizes the central role of faculty to establish curricula, assess student learning, and improve instructional programs.

MSUB established a set of [institutional standards for program-level assessment](#) of student learning in fall 2020. These standards articulate the expectations for evaluating student learning at the program level. The standards were also used to inform the [assessment plan template](#) and the [assessment report template](#). The templates are provided to faculty for organizing and implementing meaningful programmatic assessment of student learning. They are not mandatory, but many faculty elect to use them. Often, programs with external accreditation will elect to use the template provided by their accrediting agency.

Faculty establish assessment plans that outline the details of the intended assessment efforts for a three-year period. The plans include learning outcomes; assessment mapping to courses

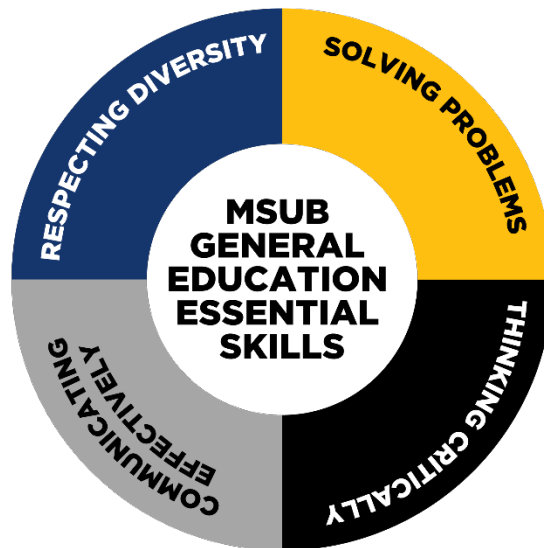
and experiences; and a description of when, how, and by whom data will be collected and analyzed. Faculty are encouraged to create and use rubrics that are informed by the program learning outcomes to collect the data. Another common practice is for faculty to use item analysis of specific exam questions to assess student learning achievement of the outcome. Assessment plans are submitted to the Assessment and Accreditation office and kept on file. Faculty update assessment plans every three years or as needed. Implementation of assessment of student learning is reported by each program annually. The Dean of each college works with the Assessment and Accreditation office to identify an [annual reporting month](#). During that month, faculty submit their program's annual report to the Assessment and Accreditation office. At the time of submission, faculty will often request feedback from the Director of Assessment and Accreditation. This provides an opportunity for program faculty to reflect on changes they may want to consider for the next reporting period.

The annual program assessment of student learning and the Academic Program Review (APR) process (every seven years) are integrated. Having these two important processes aligned provides an additional opportunity for faculty to obtain external feedback and support allocation of resources for academic units. Both processes help faculty maintain the curriculum by assessing student learning and improving instructional programs.

In addition to program assessment and APR, the faculty at MSUB maintain curriculum through scaffolded curriculum committees. These processes support and guide faculty who propose new academic programs and revise existing programs. A newly proposed program or change to an existing program also includes a review of the program learning outcomes. Faculty serve on the various curriculum committees, providing feedback and ensuring the curriculum remains current, relevant, and appropriate.

***1.C.6** Consistent with its mission, the institution establishes and assesses, across all associate and bachelor level programs or within a General Education curriculum, institutional learning outcomes and/or core competencies. Examples of such learning outcomes and competencies include, but are not limited to, effective communication skills, global awareness, cultural sensitivity, scientific and quantitative reasoning, critical analysis and logical thinking, problem solving, and/or information literacy.*

As a regional public institution, MSUB uses the general education curriculum to define institutional learning outcomes. The learning outcomes are articulated using essential skills in the areas of Respecting Diversity, Solving Problems, Thinking Critically, and Communicating Effectively.



Nine learning outcomes articulate the specifics of what will be measured for each of the essential skill areas. The outcomes, each aligned with an essential skill, are as follows:

Respect Diversity

1. Express the impact of inequity on the human experience.
2. Synthesize multiple perspectives in contemporary and historical contexts.

Problem Solve

3. Use statistical or mathematical methods to solve problems.
4. Use scientific methods to solve problems.
5. Use quantitative and qualitative information to provide solutions to social and/or ethical problems.

Think Critically

6. Locate and evaluate information from multiple sources.
7. Synthesize evidence to construct logical arguments.

Communicate Effectively

8. Apply communication strategies for specific purposes and audiences.
9. Utilize interpersonal skills to collaborate toward a common purpose.

The outcomes are published in the [Academic Catalog](#) and on the [General Education committee webpage](#). MSUB's General Education committee uses learning outcomes to guide the collection and evaluation of student work. With detailed curriculum maps, the committee collects work from specific courses, according to the [assessment schedule](#). Student work is evaluated using rubrics that were developed to inform achievement for each of the nine learning outcomes. Data are analyzed by the General Education committee and shared with faculty through the Academic Senate. The General Education committee also [communicates the results](#) directly to departments that offer general education courses. The data are shared to celebrate successes and to improve curriculum and student learning.

The General Education committee also refines the assessment process as they identify issues during implementation. For example, while the committee worked to develop a rubric to measure the ninth learning outcome, it was determined that the learning outcome needed a few adjustments. The outcome was revised and [approved by the Academic Senate](#) (page 3, item VI). The rubrics used to collect the data continue to be adjusted and revised as needed. During a recent review of the data collected for the learning outcomes within the Problem Solve category, faculty on the General Education committee had an in-depth conversation about learning outcome #5: *Use quantitative and qualitative information to provide solutions to social and/or ethical problems*. In many cases, the data collected did not inform the outcome, as many of the reviewers selected the “not applicable” option. Faculty discussed the potential issues that would have caused these results ([see meeting minutes, page 2](#)). Conversations will continue with faculty who teach the courses where the data were collected, as well as considerations about the outcome itself. The committee will begin by adjusting the “not applicable” option on the rubric to collect contextual details as to why the reviewer selects “not applicable.” This will help provide important context to the faculty on the General Education committee and improve the usefulness of the data in the future.

Through discussions related to assessing the general education curriculum, the Academic Senate worked with members of the General Education committee to develop and propose [The College Experience \(TCE\)](#). TCE was created to help establish a foundation course for general education and is required for all MSUB students seeking an associate of science, associate of arts, or bachelor’s degree. The faculty developed the course to not only help students succeed and better integrate the principles of general education throughout their academic journey at MSUB, but also to provide additional cohesion to the general education curriculum. In fall 2025, several sections of TCE (COLS 108) will be offered. Students can choose to enroll in whichever section of TCE appeals to them. The course titles planned for fall 2025 for TCE are as follows:

- Big Discoveries, Bright Futures
- From the Grateful Dead to Taylor Swift: Building Community through Music
- The Motion Lab
- Forensic Investigation
- Be a GOAT: Building Leadership
- Morality in Disney Films

Faculty applied to teach the new COLS 108 course for fall 2025 by submitting an application to MSUB’s Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL), including a topic idea. Applications were reviewed by the Chair and subcommittee members of the General Education committee. The faculty selected to teach the course attended a training at the CTL to help maintain consistency across the sections, including a [syllabus shell with the common learning outcomes for the course](#). The creation of The College Experience (COLS 108) was a direct result of discussions around student learning in the general education curriculum.

Institutions that offer courses or programs via multiple delivery modalities ensure learning outcomes and levels of student achievement are comparable across modalities (Standard 1.C.6).

MSUB offers courses and [programs](#) via in-person, hybrid, HyFlex, and [fully online modalities](#). Offering these [various modalities](#) is in response to the needs of the diverse students that MSUB serves. The learning outcomes for courses and programs, regardless of the modality, are consistent. For example, the Department of Communication offers all programs either online or in person and uses Hyflex teaching. Outcomes are based on program, not modality. The expectations for evaluating student learning are also the same, regardless of modality. Student learning data are collected and analyzed within all types of course and program offerings at MSUB. Review of all courses, regardless of modality, is the responsibility of department faculty. Courses are reviewed at department meetings, during the faculty review process, in academic program review, and as needed to adapt to changes in the discipline.

1.C.7 The institution uses the results of its assessment efforts to inform academic and learning-support planning and practices to continuously improve student learning outcomes.

[MSUB's program assessment standards](#) outline expectations for assessing student learning. Faculty use the standards to guide their assessment of program-level student learning outcomes and use these outcomes to outline a three-year assessment plan. The implementation of the plan is reported annually. This annual reporting process documents curricular and pedagogical changes implemented as a result of faculty collecting and analyzing student learning data. Two examples are provided below, one from University campus and one from City College campus:

- Example #1: Health and Human Performance K-12 Teaching, BS
 - [Assessment Plan](#)
 - [Assessment Report](#)
 - [University Assessment and Accreditation Committee Feedback](#)
- Example #2: Welding and Metal Fabrication, AAS and CER
 - [Assessment Plan](#)
 - [Assessment Report](#)
 - [University Assessment and Accreditation Committee Feedback](#)

The [University Assessment and Accreditation committee](#) (UAAC) developed a [feedback form](#) that is rooted in the [University Standards for Program Assessment](#). The committee comprises [two faculty members per college](#). Faculty review program assessment documents and provide peer feedback (*see the two examples provided above*). This faculty-to-faculty evaluation process helps to foster a productive and meaningful culture of evaluating student learning across University and City College campuses. The collective feedback provided to each program is aggregated to monitor and inform areas where MSUB can continue to grow and expand efforts related to evaluating student learning within the academic programs.

The aggregate data from the UAAC reviews has informed topics for workshops offered at the Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL). For example, a workshop on analyzing student learning data was offered this past spring (2025) to help faculty advance the use of program-level

assessment data. A workshop on program assessment planning was provided through the CTL in fall 2024, also as a result of the aggregate peer reviews. These data continue to be collected and will be used to guide programmatic assessment efforts, campus wide.

Through MSUB's Academic Program Review (APR) process, program faculty and academic leadership work collaboratively to identify goals and areas for improvement for each academic program. Two examples of programmatic changes that have occurred as a result of the APR process are provided below:

- The Department of Communication maintained three undergraduate degree options at the start of the APR process in fall 2022. Through close examination of the curriculum and analysis of the data of the three distinct programs, it was determined that offering one major with three options would be a more efficient use of resources and academically appropriate, given the curricular overlap across the three distinct majors. After the APR action plan meeting, the Communication faculty put forward the necessary curricular paperwork and the Academic Senate approved the merger of the three communication majors into one. This change has served the students and faculty well. The [Dean's letter for APR](#) outlines the suggestion for this change.
- The School Counseling MED program was reviewed through the APR process, and it was determined that an additional faculty member was needed. The program was serving over 80 students with one full-time faculty member. The APR process identified a need for additional resources. The Provost worked with the Dean of the College of Education to allocate the necessary resources to hire an additional faculty member for the School Counseling MED program in 2023-24. The [APR action plan](#) outlines the commitment to hiring a tenure-track faculty member and also includes the other action items identified for the program through the APR process.

In addition to facilitating these programmatic changes, the APR process itself has evolved. Using intentionally collected data and feedback, the offices of Assessment and Accreditation and Institutional Research (IR) have continued to refine the APR process. The first of those changes occurred during the third year of implementation. Conversations with the Deans and the Provost revealed that the timing of their involvement in APR was problematic. As a result, the timeline was shifted, providing faculty with more time to prepare the self-study and providing Deans and Provost a more suitable window to review APR portfolios.

The second change involved revising the APR question template, guided by data collected by the IR staff using a feedback rubric. The rubric aimed to determine if faculty were appropriately using program-level information to make decisions. In June 2024, IR staff developed and applied the [data feedback rubric](#) to evaluate the 2023-24 APR final self-studies. Two IR staff reviewed and scored each APR report individually. All IR staff discussed the individual feedback rubrics and prepared a combined data feedback summary for the program faculty and academic leadership as part of the APR process. At the conclusion of the reviews, suggestions for revisions to the APR question template were provided to the Assessment and Accreditation office and the template was updated to reflect those changes. The [data feedback rubric was](#)

[also revised](#). IR staff will continue this process, tracking institutional improvement of data usage year over year.

Co-curricular program assessment occurs across both Academic Affairs and Student Access and Success. Departments and programs such as Housing and Residence Life, Student Health Services, Career and Employment Services, the Academic Support Center, and others develop and implement plans to assess and evaluate program effectiveness. Reports are submitted annually to the reporting Vice Chancellor and the Office of Assessment and Accreditation.

This annual planning and reporting process provides an opportunity for Directors and Vice Chancellors to review program goals, evaluate progress, and address challenges. It also promotes strategic evaluation, data-informed decision making, analysis, and meaningful reflection among staff within co-curricular departments. For example, [MSUB's Housing and Residence Life](#) uses an [annual quality of life survey](#) to obtain data on facilities, service offerings, and what students would like to see improved. Recent results of this survey identified the following needs:

- Update study lounges (in progress)
- Add printers to computer labs (completed)
- Adjust quiet hours (completed)
- Offer more affordable options to reduce financial stress
 - Added a loyalty program and meal plan options (completed)
- Replace washers and dryers (completed)
- Update rooms and room amenities (in progress)

Housing and Residence Life staff also observed positive impacts on the intentional partnerships between Residence Life, Student Health Services, and the Academic Support Center. Students report a noticeable difference in feeling more at home and better supported. Early data indicate an increase in residence hall retention from spring to fall.

MSUB's Career and Employment Services staff used the recent [co-curricular annual planning and reporting process](#) to outline three learning outcomes for the students they serve, focusing on evaluating students' networking, interviewing, and professional etiquette skills. The plan/report also outlines how each outcome will be measured and the results from implementation. One hundred percent of students attending the networking event (Mix and Mingle) reported that they gained confidence in introducing themselves and talking to others because of the event. With positive responses from all involved (students, faculty, and employers), the Career and Employment Services staff intend to continue offering the event annually, using student, employee, and faculty feedback to refine and grow the offering each year.

Administrative units also engage in the annual evaluation of services offered, using a process and template similar to those of the co-curricular units. For example, the Office of Institutional Research's (IR) [recent assessment plan/report](#) outlined three operational outcomes that were evaluated during the 2024-25 academic year. The outcomes addressed questions about how

faculty use data to make decisions in the APR process. IR found that the data provided to faculty supported a meaningful process that informs academic and learning-support planning and practices.

The processes and associated accomplishments and progress outlined above were made possible through the intentional evaluation of programs and services, and using data to inform decision making and resource allocation. The processes are designed to celebrate successes and to identify areas where student and administrative outcomes can be improved.

1.C.8 Transfer credit and credit for prior learning is accepted according to clearly defined, widely published, and easily accessible policies that provide adequate safeguards to ensure academic quality. In accepting transfer credit, the receiving institution ensures that such credit accepted is appropriate for its programs and comparable in nature, content, academic rigor, and quality.

MSUB's transfer-of-credit policies are published in the [Academic Catalog](#) (pages 23-24). Prior-learning policies are also published in the [Academic Catalog](#) (page 27) and on the [Registrar's office webpage](#).

The Registrar's office, along with the Advising office, reviews credit for prior learning from sources that include [Advanced Placement \(AP\)](#), [International Baccalaureate \(IB\)](#), [CLEP Exam](#), the American Council on Education (ACE), and the National College Credit Recommendation Service (NCCRS). MSUB maintains specific policies and procedures for [evaluation of military credit](#), in consultation with MSUB's Military and Veteran Success Center and Veteran Affairs. MSUB's prior-learning credit policies and procedures are in line with and informed by the [Montana Board of Regents Policy 301.19](#).

The Registrar's office ensures that transfer and prior learning credit is appropriately and consistently accepted in accordance with the articulated policies. MSUB maintains a fair and equitable transfer-of-credit policy guided and informed by the [Montana Board of Regents Policy 301.5](#). In line with BOR Policy 301.5, MSUB accepts credits from institutions accredited by:

- Higher Learning Commission
- Middle States Commission on Higher Education
- New England Commission of Higher Education
- Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities
- Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges
- WASC Senior College and University Commission
- Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges

Credits from all college-level courses from institutions of higher education accredited by agencies listed above are received and applied towards the general education, major, minor, and elective requirements of certificate, associate, or baccalaureate degrees as applicable in accordance with MSUB academic policy. The following points outline the structures and procedures used by the Registrar's office staff to accept credits while maintaining the quality and rigor of MSUB's academic offerings:

- The Montana University System (MUS) coordinates [common course numbering](#) (CCN) for public colleges and universities across the state. Instituted at MSUB in 2009, the CCN provides students with a “reasonable level of transparency and predictability for the transfer of courses and credits.”
- Additionally, the MUS defines [the MUS Core](#), a transfer agreement among community, tribal, and publicly funded colleges and universities in Montana. In this region, it is common for students to take classes from several state institutions before completing their degree. The CCN and the MUS Core are important tools for students wanting to transfer credits from another Montana college or university.
- Articulation agreements are designed to maximize the number of credits students will be able to transfer. [Transfer guides](#) are posted publicly on the MSUB Advising webpage and linked on the Registrar’s webpage. MSUB has made a concerted effort to increase and renew articulation agreements with tribal partners and two-year colleges in the region, as this is an important consideration for the students MSUB serves, especially with the proliferation of dual-credit opportunities.
- Faculty involvement in evaluating transfer credit ensures the credit is appropriate for the respective program. Course-by-course review conducted by the Advising office, in collaboration with faculty from associated disciplines, is an important process used to help students receive appropriate credit for courses completed at other accredited higher education institutions. This review is conducted for any course that is not included in the CCN, the MUS Core, or articulation agreements.

1.C.9 The institution’s graduate programs are consistent with its mission, are in keeping with the expectations of its respective disciplines and professions, and are described through nomenclature that is appropriate to the levels of graduate and professional degrees offered. The graduate programs differ from undergraduate programs by requiring, among other things, greater: depth of study; demands on student intellectual or creative capacities; knowledge of the literature of the field; and ongoing student engagement in research, scholarship, creative expression, and/or relevant professional practice.

MSUB offers [13 graduate degrees](#), along with several post-baccalaureate certificates. Graduate programs at MSUB are distinct from undergraduate programs. A separate [academic catalog](#) is maintained for MSUB graduate programs. MSUB is committed to ensuring that all graduate students complement the theoretical study of a subject area with personal investigation and practical application. They are distinguished from undergraduate programs by requiring greater depth of study, which is often articulated through course descriptions and student learning outcomes. Additionally, all graduate programs require a research course and a culminating experience. The [Graduate Catalog](#) outlines the expectations for graduate students including admission standards and procedures, curricular requirements, and program learning outcomes.

New graduate courses and programs, as well as changes to existing curricula, undergo a comprehensive faculty approval process. The process begins at the department level and moves through the college, the Graduate committee, and the Academic Senate. During the 2024-25 academic year, an issue came to light during the Academic Senate’s review of co-convened coursework (coursework taken by both graduate and undergraduates simultaneously). Through the curricular review process, faculty leadership realized the need for

additional structure and guidance for these types of courses. The Academic Senate worked with faculty across campus and within the various curriculum committees to create and approve the [co-convened course policy](#). This policy further identifies requirements for faculty to ensure the expectations for greater depth of study are maintained, specifically when graduate and undergraduate students are learning together.

The [Graduate Studies office](#) is staffed by a Faculty Director and Graduate Advisor who support both students and faculty through the enrollment process, connecting students to funding resources, supporting career development in partnership with MSUB's Career and Employment Services office, and managing student petitions and requests. Graduate Studies also supports the Graduate committee, a faculty subcommittee of the Academic Senate charged with curriculum and policy review for graduate education. Students have the option to petition the Graduate committee for any necessary exceptions related to curriculum substitutions. Petitions are reviewed by faculty serving on the committee for rigor and content.

MSUB experienced a 37.7% decline in [graduate student enrollment](#) from fall 2020 to fall 2024. The decline in enrollment is concerning to MSUB, both because it illuminated issues with graduate admissions and retention, and created challenges balancing resources. To address the challenges, the Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs reorganized the structure of Graduate Studies, moving from a staff director to a faculty director leading the office. MSUB continues to strive to address declining enrollment concerns and appropriate resource allocation.

1.D Student Achievement

1.D.1 Consistent with its mission, the institution recruits and admits students with the potential to benefit from its educational programs. It orients students to ensure they understand the requirements related to their programs of study and receive timely, useful, and accurate information and advice about relevant academic requirements, including graduation and transfer policies.

Prospective students from diverse backgrounds and experiences begin their journey with the [MSUB Office of Admissions](#). Admissions staff consistently communicate with prospective students during recruitment. Once prospective students apply, they become applicants and continue to receive support from admissions staff throughout the enrollment process, including pertinent information and access to relevant resources. Applicants are evaluated based on established admission criteria and admitted accordingly. City College, MSUB's embedded two-year college, maintains an open access policy while the University campus follows the [Montana Board of Regents Policy 301](#) for admission standards. The Admissions office provides one-on-one support for all applicants including enrollment checklists for new freshmen and transfer students, resources for applying for federal financial aid, and connecting them to helpful student support services.

New student orientation offers students multiple opportunities to engage with MSUB before classes begin. [Registration Days](#) are offered in the summer ([May – August](#)) to first-time students to advise them on degree requirements, help them register for fall semester courses

with an advisor, learn how to navigate MSUB course [planning and class registration systems](#) (plan of study included), apply early for specialized campus support programs, and apply for financial aid. Advising sessions during Registration Days also include an individual review of course placement scores for writing and math. The learning management system (Canvas), customer relationship management software (EAB Navigate360), degree planning and audit system (DegreeWorks), and options for purchasing textbooks are also introduced to students during Registration Days. The event incorporates a suite of resources and information that are necessary for student success.

Transfer students are encouraged to meet individually with an academic advisor. Once a transfer student is admitted, an advisor contacts the student to confirm that MSUB has received the necessary transfer paperwork (transcripts). An advisor then sets up an appointment to meet with the student one on one (in person or virtual) and provides the same information and support that are provided to first-time students.

Advising worksheets ([University campus programs](#) and [City College campus programs](#)) are used to guide the conversation with all students to create a plan of study. The student receives a copy at the time of their initial meeting with an advisor, and the information is loaded into the degree audit software (DegreeWorks), where both the student and advisor can monitor progress toward the degree. MSUB uses a centralized total intake-split advising model, ensuring all students receive consistent guidance. MSUB welcomes all students, including transfer students, at [New Student Orientation](#) in [July](#) and then celebrates their new academic journey at the [New Student Kickoff event](#) the day before fall classes start. These two events aim to help students (along with their families and supporters) build community, engage with faculty, and better understand academic expectations while connecting with campus programs and student support services. New Student Orientation and New Student Kickoff are collaborations between the Admissions staff and multiple areas of campus including student support resources and faculty.

In addition to these general processes, recruitment, admission, and orientation processes for specific student subpopulations and programs are offered.

Graduate Students

Recruitment, admissions, and orientation for graduate students involve the academic departments, Graduate Studies office, and graduate admissions. Academic departments, with support from the [Graduate Studies office](#), recruit students to apply for graduate programs. MSUB graduate programs are designed for professional advancement. MSUB Graduate Studies maintains the [admission requirements by program](#) on their webpage and in the [Academic Catalog](#) (pages 13-18). Interested students submit their application online, accessed through the [Graduate Studies webpage](#).

Admitted students receive an acceptance email which includes the program name, semester start date, their ID number, assigned advisor, and links to financial aid and the Graduate Studies website. The email also includes timeline expectations for completion. All graduate students

must complete the program requirements in six years and no coursework older than 10 years will be considered at the time of completion ([Graduate Catalog, page 24](#)). Some programs choose to send additional welcome letters to students outlining degree requirements. If a student is provisionally admitted, they receive a similar email, but it also includes the conditions of provisional admission. The student must meet the conditions within the stated timeline to become fully admitted. Students with prior credits applying to a graduate program meet individually with the faculty advisor to determine if the credits can transfer and be applied to the degree they are seeking.

Once students have been admitted, the respective department faculty advise them through the process of registering for courses and developing a plan of study.

International Students

MSUB recruits F-1 visa students through the [Office of International Studies](#) (OIS). Applicant information is sent to MSUB and evaluated by the dedicated International Admission and Advising Specialist—a position which provides stability and consistent support for the specific needs of international students. After students are admitted, the OIS staff work closely with them to ensure the necessary paperwork is completed. Welcome emails are sent in stages and include orientation information, travel information, and a link to the [OIS website](#).

To support international students as they arrive, the [Billings Friendship Family \(BFF\) program](#) connects students with families in the Billings community. Interested students complete a questionnaire and, based on the responses, are paired with a local family. The BFF program helps the student to get connected and become acclimated to the cultures of Billings and Montana.

The OIS staff offer [international student orientation](#) to new students every fall and spring. The orientation addresses several topics including academic expectations, registration, schedules, university code of conduct, student health, and campus safety. The schedule is informed each year by previous iterations and student feedback. Since some international students have not yet arrived during the registration and orientation events scheduled for the general student population, it is important that they attend the international student orientation.

OIS staff support international students through to completion. The staff assist with visas, immigration paperwork, and options for students after they complete their degree programs. The staff also offer a Town Hall, an annual gathering allowing international students the opportunity to discuss their campus experiences, ensuring that the OIS staff stay informed regarding the programs and services they provide.

Program-specific Orientation

Some programs at MSUB also offer program-level orientation for students. For example, students in the registered nursing program and the paramedic program at City College attend a mandatory orientation offered by the program directors and faculty. Additionally, athletic training, health administration, clinical rehabilitation and mental health counseling, and the

nursing programs on the University campus offer additional orientation to students enrolled in their programs. Program-level orientation often includes specific information about the program as well as reminders about important university level processes and policies.

MSUB is intentional with its recruitment, admission, and orientation processes. Several layers of support are offered to new students to ensure they understand the requirements related to their programs of study and receive timely and accurate information to help them succeed. In addition to advising support and advising worksheets, the Academic Catalog provides students with detailed information on the academic requirements for their program of study. Additional information on university level policies, including graduation and transfer policies, is also located in the Academic Catalog.

1.D.2 Consistent with its mission and in the context of and in comparison with regional and national peer institutions, the institution establishes and shares widely a set of indicators for student achievement including, but not limited to, persistence, completion, retention, and postgraduation success. Such indicators of student achievement should be disaggregated by race, ethnicity, age, gender, socioeconomic status, first generation college student, and any other institutionally meaningful categories that may help promote student achievement and close barriers to academic excellence and success (equity gaps).

During the creation of the current strategic plan (2019-2026), an extensive review and [selection process](#) was implemented to identify appropriate [peer and aspirant comparators](#) for MSUB. Each group includes regional and national peers. The Office of Institutional Research (IR) used a combination of publicly available datasets, previous comparator work, specific criteria for peer and aspirants, and data found through website/internet searching to identify an initial list of 29 institutions. The details and criteria used to identify the 29 institutions are outlined in the [selection process](#). The Chancellor's Cabinet provided feedback and additional guidance to refine the peer and aspirant list, which was approved in June 2019.

IR staff maintain the [MSUB Student Achievement webpage](#). The webpage contains multiple tools for analyzing and comparing MSUB to peer institutions. A high-level description of each section is offered:

- *Student Achievement Measure*: this tool tracks student outcomes across institutions but it provides limited comparisons to MSUB's peers and aspirants due to lack of participation by MSUB's peer institutions.
- *IPEDS Data Feedback Reports*: a federal report of identified metrics for MSUB in comparison to peers and aspirants.
- *US Department of Education's College Scorecard*: a public website containing institutional profiles, promoted in conjunction with the FAFSA through the USDE to prospective students and families.
- *Peer and Aspirant Institution Comparisons*: this site provides institution-specific trend information related to enrollment, retention, and graduation data.

In addition to the data available publicly on the MSUB website, IR provides static reports and dynamic dashboards available to all employees on the MSUB Intranet (username and password

required). The data include documentation to define the metrics. Guided by strategic planning and the state's performance-based funding model, student subpopulations of interest have been identified as Native American, military-affiliated, Hispanic, Pell-eligible, and adult learners. MSUB's IR office disaggregates all data reports by these subpopulations wherever possible. These data are used to support and inform some of MSUB's processes including [strategic planning](#), [Academic Program Review](#) (APR), the development and implementation of the Retention and Graduation Plan 2022-27 ([screenshot of retention dashboard](#)), and other specific operational uses such as recruitment and admissions.

The Montana Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education (OCHE) provides [a variety of data and reports](#) to internal and external stakeholders including dashboards, one-page briefs, and enrollment reports. MSUB administration, faculty, and staff use these data to support state level comparisons, inform institutional decision making, and facilitate state-wide conversations with colleagues. Using state level comparisons, City College can benchmark its performance with other 2-year colleges across the state and the University campus can compare itself to similar 4-year institutions. This is especially valuable given MSUB's unique structure of having an embedded two-year college.

MSUB has developed a rich data culture, and MSUB administration, faculty, and staff use a variety of data to guide conversations, decision-making, and resource allocation. The data are organized by meaningful indicators aligned with strategic planning efforts and the state's performance-based funding model. When possible, the data are disaggregated by meaningful categories to help promote student achievement and close barriers to academic excellence and success.

1.D.3 The institution's disaggregated indicators of student achievement should be widely published and available on the institution's website. Such disaggregated indicators should be aligned with meaningful, institutionally identified indicators benchmarked against indicators for peer institutions at the regional and national levels and be used for continuous improvement to inform planning, decision making, and allocation of resources.

The Office of Institutional Research (IR) maintains the [MSUB Student Achievement webpage](#), which contains disaggregated indicators of student achievement (*peer and aspirant comparator data are located towards the bottom of the page*). MSUB faculty and staff use these datasets to inform planning, decision making, and allocation of resources. For example, the [Retention and Graduation Plan 2022-27](#) used peer and aspirant comparator retention and graduation data to set short-term and long-term targets for MSUB. These targets, along with specific action items, are guiding the decisions related to retention processes and procedures, including the allocation of resources toward these efforts.

The [Chancellor's Cabinet](#) and the [Jacket Leadership Team](#) (JLT) recently reviewed the tools included on the [Student Achievement webpage](#). Both leadership groups spent significant meeting time discussing the data provided on the webpage, asking questions, and sharing reactions and observations. The discussions led to a broader awareness of these datasets and spawned deeper discussions about areas that can be improved at MSUB, especially when

compared to peers and aspirants. As a result of these conversations, IR staff produce [data nuggets](#) and share them in At the Hive ([campus newsletter](#)), and with the Chancellor's office to be used at leadership meetings (Chancellor's Cabinet meetings, Vice Chancellor division meetings, and Jacket Leadership Team meetings).

As a result of Cabinet and JLT discussions, IR staff have monthly discussions about data usage and access. These conversations help the IR staff to appropriately respond to the needs of the campus. As MSUB embarks on a new strategic visioning process, these important datasets will also be considered during the planning and implementation phases. MSUB will work to integrate throughout the new strategic visioning process specific disaggregated data points that showcase gaps in student achievement to focus resources on improving student success where they are needed most. This integration of data will ensure that planning, decisions, and allocation of resources are guided and informed by meaningful indicators.

1.D.4 The institution's processes and methodologies for collecting and analyzing indicators of student achievement are transparent and are used to inform and implement strategies and allocate resources to mitigate perceived gaps in achievement and equity.

A key element of MSUB's commitment to transparency is the public-facing [student achievement data](#) webpage, which includes disaggregated data by specific student subpopulations along with peer and aspirant institution comparisons at the regional and national levels. These data are accessible to both internal and external stakeholders.

The IR staff uphold data integrity through routine data edits and validation throughout the registration cycle. During Academic Program Review (APR), faculty review program data with IR staff and have an opportunity to ask questions, analyze, and raise concerns about their program data. IR staff will validate the data by examining them at the most granular unit level to ensure the records are accurate. If errors are found, the IR staff work with the faculty to correct them. This example underscores MSUB's commitment to transparency and data integrity.

MSUB staff and faculty use a variety of data and tools to inform and implement strategies and allocate resources to mitigate gaps in achievement and equity, beginning at the admissions stage and continuing through to student completion.

The Tableau applicant dataset is one of MSUB's most [actively accessed data tools](#). Curated by the IR office, this comprehensive dataset organizes applicant data into categories such as college, care groups, and student subpopulations. This dataset is used to address potential equity gaps that have already been identified. Below are key examples of how the data are used.

1. Admissions staff use the applicant dataset to prepare new, transfer, and re-admitted students throughout the application and enrollment process. The report is also used to create an [applicant dashboard](#) that is reviewed by campus leadership. Disaggregated data guide personalized support for students. For example, students

who identify as Native American are encouraged to complete the Native American Tuition Waiver and are connected to the [Native American Achievement Center](#) (NAAC). Similarly, students with veteran and military indicators are connected directly with the [Military and Veterans Success Center](#) (MVSC). Students who are undecided on their plan of study are referred to MSUB's Career and Employment Services. If students have not yet filed a FAFSA, Admissions staff reach out to assist with aid applications and eligibility information for Pell grants and scholarships.

2. Ahead of large-scale matriculation events such as registration and orientation, advising and admissions staff use the [applicant dataset](#) to identify students at academic risk or in need of placement testing. These insights provide opportunities for early intervention and ensure each student receives relevant, supportive, and inclusive programming during these important events.
3. [The Montana 10 Scholars Program](#) uses the applicant dataset to identify eligible scholars and students who may need financial appeals. This state-supported program is aligned with the work of MSUB's [Retention and Graduation Plan](#), providing holistic support to students who have been identified as at risk.
4. Financial Aid staff use the dataset to identify and code students who are eligible for the [Yellowjacket Excellence Scholarships \(YES\)](#). Using applicant data, admissions staff engage in direct outreach to students, including calling and texting campaigns, assisting families with understanding aid packages, and navigating payment plans.

These examples provide insight into how MSUB collaboratively uses disaggregated applicant data to inform and implement strategies and allocate resources to mitigate gaps in achievement and equity. Other examples include the following:

- [Weekly registration reports](#) are reviewed in cross-campus meetings, which have led, for example, to a specialized orientation for American Indian students.
- Retention dashboards and [weekly Wednesday emails](#) from the Registrar's office are used to closely track student retention, and include updates to [retention rate targets and actuals](#). Both the [cohort profile dashboard](#) and the [retention data](#) included in the weekly emails are disaggregated and sorted by student subpopulations, college, care teams, and student type. The weekly updates help Deans, faculty, and staff identify and reach out to at-risk students. Follow-up notes are kept to ensure that students do not have duplicative contact and to support student stop-outs. This collaborative effort is contributing to increased [student retention rates overall](#), as well as retention improvements in several [student subpopulations](#) (female, transfer, Hispanic, and international students).

- The Office of Institutional Research (IR) developed predictive models for [one semester](#) and [one year](#) retention that allow MSUB offices to direct limited institutional resources where they are most likely to have an impact. The [Jacket Mentors program](#) was established and informed by the data from these predictive models, targeted to students in the highest-risk group to maximize impact.
- Predictive retention models have also been used to guide resource allocation for American Indian students, using two predictors—self-reported American Indian status and first term grades and GPA—to intervene earlier with students in this group who are struggling and better direct them to resources and coaching.
- A case management approach using customer relationship management software (EAB Navigate360) enables faculty to issue alerts for attendance and academic concerns, and referrals for tutoring. A [flow chart](#) outlines the early alert case management process, which involves over twenty individuals. Thousands of alerts have been triaged since launching Navigate in fall 2022, and several departments allocate personnel resources to respond to progress reports in Navigate.
- MSUB also uses EAB Navigate360 to deploy a [student intake survey](#). Staff from key offices identified gaps in student demographic data, and the questions in the survey were intentionally revised to address the gaps. For example, being able to identify MSUB students who are also parents has led to the creation of the student parent club. The IR office is working to pair the intake survey data with other institutional data to further expand its use.
- Academic Program Review (APR) data are disaggregated by student subpopulations, and compared with like programs at the department, college, and institution levels. Program faculty identify and analyze student subpopulation trends in the areas of [enrollment](#), [one-year retention rate](#), and [overall graduation rate](#), helping identify potential gaps in student achievement and encouraging faculty to consider remedies within their programs, [as demonstrated in relevant excerpts taken from recent APR self-studies](#). MSUB aims to increase usage of these data by encouraging program faculty and department chairs to access them annually, even when their program is not undergoing APR. This work is ongoing.
- The MSUB [150% graduation rate](#) is lower than peer institutions. Disaggregating by gender and degree type, an interesting trend emerges. Female students achieved a 16-percentage point higher graduation rate for a bachelor's degree (University campus), while male students achieved a seven-percentage point higher graduation rate seeking an associate/certificate (City College campus). To help close the gap for female students

at City College, female faculty from the automotive program and the instrument and electrical program have offered [Women in Automotive Introduction, Women in Automotive Intermediate and Advanced](#) workshops for female students, faculty, staff, and community members. These workshops provide opportunities for women to expand their knowledge and confidence in the areas of auto repair and electrical home repair.

MSUB has developed a rich data culture which has been used by staff, faculty, and campus leaders to inform and implement strategies and allocate resources to mitigate gaps in achievement and equity.

Conclusions

As demonstrated throughout this report, MSUB has accomplished an impressive amount of work in the past seven years. Guided by the mission and the drive to help students succeed, the faculty, staff, and leadership have partnered to implement effective continuous improvement processes for academic, co-curricular, and administrative units. Integrated into these processes are the relevant data that support informed decision-making, which include disaggregated student data when applicable. Regular evaluation of programs and services, as well as analysis of data, will continue to guide decisions and resource allocation at MSUB in the future. Implementing continuous improvement processes, guided by appropriate data, will remain institutional priorities.

As the current strategic plan is ending, staff, faculty, students, MSUB leadership, and the Billings community will consider the current mission and institutional priorities during the development of the new strategic plan. The plan will be developed to guide MSUB into the future—its second century—with an aim of successfully serving the students who choose MSUB to achieve their academic goals. The current strategic plan yielded many accomplishments, notably the work related to the Retention and Graduation Plan. As discussed throughout this report, some initiatives have been operationalized and completed while others are in various stages of progress. This work will continue and will likely be an important component of the next strategic plan.

Addenda

- a. *Response to any concerns (findings) raised in the peer-evaluation report of the Year Six, Policies, Regulations, and Financial Review (PRFR).*

There were no findings raised in the peer-evaluation report of the Year Six, Policies, Regulations, and Financial Review (PRFR).

- b. *Institutions authorized to offer Distance Education must include an addendum to their EIE Self-Evaluation Report. In this addendum, institutions should address and provide evidence of the following:*

- *Policies and procedures for ensuring the student who registers in a Distance Education course or program is the same student who participates in the course and receives credit.*

All students at MSUB must verify their identity through a secure process before they are provided with credentials that allow them to register for classes and access the institution's learning management system (LMS). Students must either appear in person or provide documentation of their identity remotely (in a secure area). This ensures that student data are protected in the process. The [Student Authentication Policy](#) outlines the identity verification process for MSUB students. MSUB uses Canvas as its learning management system. The Canvas system integrates with the university's authentication services to ensure appropriate and secure student access to courses and other Student Information Systems. Canvas also requires dual factor authentication. All users of the university's learning management system are responsible for maintaining the security of their access credentials. Attempting to discover another user's password or gain unauthorized access to another person's files or email is prohibited.

- *Policies and procedures that make it clear student privacy is protected.*

MSUB maintains a robust data privacy procedure. The [Data Governance Council](#) (DGC), co-chaired by the Director of Information Technology/CIO and the Director of Institutional Research, oversees all systems that require data from students, staff, or faculty for their operation. The DGC vets the project to ensure student privacy is protected. The DGC is also responsible for educating MSUB staff and faculty on data use, privacy, and security. The institution refreshed the university's [data stewardship standards](#) in 2023. These standards classify data and ensure that data stewards have responsibility for data protection. The standards define how data are stored and disposed of, as well as how reporting is handled to ensure student privacy is protected.

- *Notifications to students at the time of registration of any additional charges associated with verification procedures.*

At this time, there are no additional student fees associated with student verification. In the event any verification fee is needed, it will be posted on the course registration site to provide an advance alert to students and included in admission documents at the time of enrollment.

- *Academic policies and procedures for instructors to implement requirements for regular and substantive interactions in Distance Education courses or programs.*

MSUB has a multi-dimensional approach to ensure that regular and substantive interaction is implemented in distance courses. First, the Academic Senate established a [Regular and Substantive Interaction policy](#). This policy defines the components of regular and substantive interactions, and places responsibility for compliance on the academic units. Second, the Center for Teaching and Learning hosts [workshops](#) that reinforce the importance of faculty engagement in distance education courses. Third, the CTL has developed [a rubric](#) for online course review that reinforces instructor presence and interaction.