

**Ad-Hoc Self-Evaluation Report for the  
Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities  
The University of Montana Western**

**Spring 2014**

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## Exhibits

- Exhibit 1. Spring 2011 Year One Mission and Core Themes Peer-Evaluation Report
- Exhibit 2. Spring 2010 Comprehensive Peer-Evaluation Report
- Exhibit 3. Spring 2013 Year Three Resources and Capacity Peer-Evaluation Report
- Exhibit 4. 2013 IPEDS Data Feedback Report
- Exhibit 5. FIPSE Project Report
- Exhibit 6. Teacher Education Program Handbook
- Exhibit 7. Experience the Difference, 2014 Strategic Plan
- Exhibit 8. 2013/2014 Catalog
- Exhibit 9. Experience the Difference, Tactical Plan
- Exhibit 10. Assessment Committee Charge, Membership and Three-Year Plan
- Exhibit 11. UMW Assessment Overview
- Exhibit 12. Student Learning Outcomes
- Exhibit 13. General Education Course Assessment Form
- Exhibit 14. Assessment Committee, *Report to Leadership*
- Exhibit 15. Faculty Senate Articles
- Exhibit 16. Process for Departmental Annual Reports

## Introduction

The University of Montana Western's (Montana Western) accreditation for the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities was reaffirmed on the basis of the Spring 2013 Year Three *Resources and Capacity* Evaluation. This evaluation was expanded to address Recommendation 1 of the Spring 2011 Year One *Mission and Core Themes* Peer-Evaluation Report ([Exhibit 1](#)) and to again address Recommendations 1, 2, and 3 of the Spring 2010 Comprehensive Peer-Evaluation Report ([Exhibit 2](#)).

In response to the NWCCU's request, Montana Western has prepared this ad hoc report addressing progress on the aforementioned recommendations and Recommendation 1 of the Spring 2013 Year Three *Resources and Capacity* Peer-Evaluation Report ([Exhibit 3](#)). These recommendations along with the evaluator's cited supporting NWCCU standards are summarized in Table 1. In reaffirming Montana Western's accreditation and requesting additional assurance of timely compliance, the NWCCU noted Montana Western was substantially in compliance with all but one recommendation—Recommendation 2 of the spring 2010 Comprehensive Evaluation does not meet the Commission's criteria for accreditation. This report describes the unique features of the institution and documents its progress on and timely compliance with all of the recommendations.

Two themes emerge from the prior recommendations. They are (a) mission fulfillment and (b) assessment of developmental education, general education, and academic program learning outcomes. This ad-hoc self-evaluation report is organized to address these major themes.

Table 1. Summary of Evaluator’s Recommendations and Cited NWCCU Standards

Evaluator’s Recommendations		Cited NWCCU Standard (New as of 2010)
Spring 2010 Comprehensive Peer-Evaluation Report	1	<p>The institution provides programs, wherever offered and however delivered, with appropriate content and rigor that are consistent with its mission; culminate in achievement of clearly identified student learning outcomes; and lead to collegiate-level degrees or certificates with designators consistent with program content in recognized fields of study.</p>
	A	
	B	
	C	
	2	
	<p>The evaluation team recommends that the university develop and implement procedures necessary to accomplish the following:</p> <p>Provide students with a substantial and coherent general education program with identifiable student learning outcomes</p> <p>Establish program assessment procedures based on these outcomes</p> <p>Implement the assessment procedures and use the results to improve the achievement of student learning outcomes</p> <p>While the evaluation team recognizes that some departments have produced exemplary assessment of student learning outcomes, it does not find evidence that the commitment to assessment has been embraced throughout the curriculum. The team therefore recommends that the institution take immediate steps to implement frequent, regular and substantive assessment of learning outcomes in all academic programs. Furthermore, the team recommends that the assessment process explicitly connect student learning outcomes to program mission, the institution’s strategic plan, the budget process and the university mission.</p>	<p>The institution provides programs, wherever offered and however delivered, with appropriate content and rigor that are consistent with its mission; culminate in achievement of clearly identified student learning outcomes; and lead to collegiate-level degrees or certificates with designators consistent with program content in recognized fields of study.</p>

	<p>3</p> <p>As the university acknowledges, many entering students are underprepared for college-level learning in math and writing. Therefore, the team recommends that the institution continue to assess and improve its developmental mathematics and writing courses in order to heighten student competence in quantitative reasoning and written communications</p>	<p>The General Education component of undergraduate programs (if offered) demonstrates an integrated course of study that helps students develop the breadth and depth of intellect to become more effective learners and to prepare them for a productive life of work, citizenship, and personal fulfillment. Baccalaureate degree programs and transfer associate degree programs include a recognizable core of general education that represents an integration of basic knowledge and methodology of the humanities and fine arts, mathematical and natural science, and social sciences. Applied undergraduate degree and certificate programs of thirty (30) semester credits or forty-five (45) quarter credits in length contain a recognizable core of related instruction or general education with identified outcomes in the areas of communication, computation, and human relations that align with and support program goals or intended outcomes.</p> <p>The institution demonstrates that the General Education components of its baccalaureate degree programs (if offered) and transfer associate degree program (if offered) have identifiable and assessable learning outcomes that are stated in relation to the institution's mission and learning outcomes for those programs.</p>	2.C.19
Spring 2011 Year	<p>1</p> <p>The institution should define mission fulfillment in the "context of its purpose, characteristics and expectations." The evaluation panel recommends that the definition of mission fulfillment should look forward, build upon the successes that have followed the adoption of <i>Experience One</i>, and usefully guide the University in its self-study activities.</p>	<p>The institution defines mission fulfillment in the context of its purpose, characteristics, and expectations. Guided by that definition, it articulates institutional accomplishments or outcomes that represent an acceptable threshold or extent of mission fulfillment.</p>	1.A.2
Spring 2013 Year	<p>1</p> <p>While the university has identified core themes and has made progress on the identification of objectives and indicators of achievement, the evaluation committee found that levels of mission fulfillment have not been defined. The evaluation committee recommends that indicators of achievement need to be better aligned with clearly defined and meaningful levels of mission fulfillment.</p>	<p>The institution has a widely published mission statement—approved by its governing board—that articulates a purpose appropriate for an institution of higher learning, gives direction for its efforts, and derives from, and is generally understood by, its community.</p> <p>The institution identifies core themes that individually manifest essential elements of its mission and collectively encompass its mission.</p>	1.A.1 1.B.2

## Mission Fulfillment

The following sections are provided in response to NWCCU Standards 1.A.1, 1.A.2, and 1.B.2. The cited standards address institutional purpose, characteristics and expectations, strategic planning, mission statement, core themes, and establishment of meaningful and aligned metrics. Collectively the articulated elements define institutional mission, and fulfillment of the aligned metrics culminates in mission fulfillment.

### Institutional Purpose, Characteristics and Expectations

Montana Western is a small, innovative, comprehensive, public, undergraduate university located in southwest Montana. The institution was legislatively authorized in 1889 for the primary purpose of “instructing and training teachers for the public schools of Montana” (Montana Code Annotated 20-25-253). At the turn of the twentieth century, all students (~100 students) pursued two-year training on the Dillon campus to become teachers. By the turn of the twenty-first century, the institution’s degree and course offerings were much more diverse in terms of subject content and delivery mode.

For the 2012-2013 academic year, unduplicated headcount was approximately 2000 (2013 IPEDS Data Feedback Report, [Exhibit 4](#)). During the 2012-2013 academic year, 43% of all students and 49% of baccalaureate-seeking students declared majors in early childhood, elementary, secondary, and K-12 education (UMW Registrar). Sixty-eight percent of student enrollment during the 2012-13 academic year was in on-campus courses, the remaining enrollment was in online (22%), blended (4%) and off-campus (5%) courses (UMW Registrar). From 1889 to 2012, Montana Western evolved from a normal school into a comprehensive university with enrollment in certificate, associate, and baccalaureate degree programs in education (43%), business (17%), and the arts and sciences (40%). Roughly one fifth (18%) of the fall 2012 enrollment was in one- and two-year programs; four-fifths (82%) of the enrollment was in baccalaureate programs (UMW Registrar). Wherever located and however delivered, Montana Western remains committed to the primacy of its historic, legislatively authorized purpose and attends to its modern, BoR-authorized purpose as a comprehensive, public, undergraduate university.

During the late 1980s and early 1990s, the university suffered from program retraction, declining enrollments, reduced state funding, and low faculty and staff morale. Innumerable campus meetings, department discussions, and informal conversations ensued on educational philosophy, campus differentiation, program expansion, low campus enrollments, and a commitment to student success. *Experience One*, a teaching and learning approach utilizing a course-scheduling model where students take and faculty teach one-course-at-a-time, emerged as a concept from the dialogue and the institution sought extramural funding to pilot the concept.

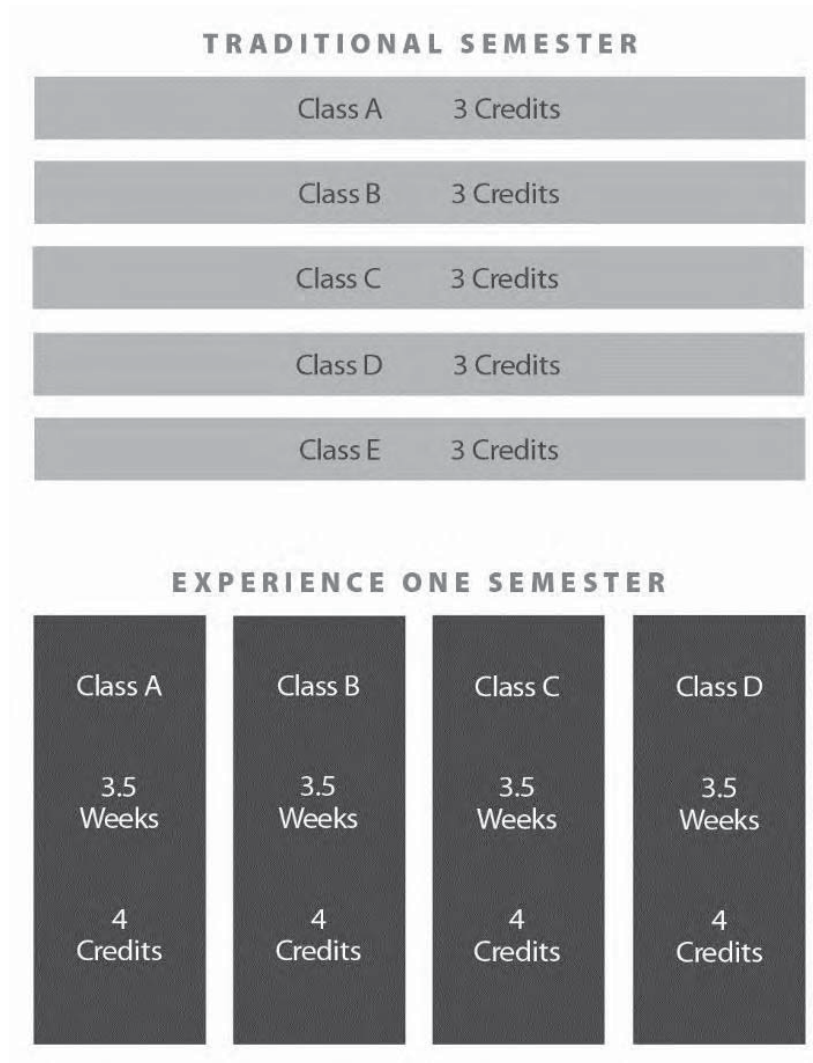
After successfully running a three-year (academic years 2002-03, 2003-04 and 2004-05) freshman pilot project funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE) program, the university distinguished itself with full adoption of Experience One in fall 2005. The success of the pilot project was assessed on the basis of increased fall-to-fall retention rates and Cornell Critical Thinking scores (FIPSE Project Report, [Exhibit 5](#)). Montana Western is the first and only public, four-year university to offer Experience One. It is Montana Western's signature brand and it distinguishes Montana Western from other small, comprehensive, public, undergraduate universities around the country.

Experience One promotes and expands on the educational philosophy adopted by Montana Western's Education Department—constructivism (Teacher Education Program Handbook, p. 10, [Exhibit 6](#)). Constructivism is the established education philosophy that students learn by constructing knowledge from their own experience. In a constructivist model the educator's role is as mentor—promoting problem-based, adaptive learning that challenges students to integrate new knowledge with existing knowledge. Experience One discourages lecture-based teaching and encourages project-based, student learning. Experience One, as an institutional philosophy, facilitates progressive, constructivist pedagogy, and experiential learning.

While Montana Western follows a traditional semester system with three terms (fall, spring and summer), it utilizes block scheduling on campus to support Experience One. Figure 1 illustrates the difference between a traditional class schedule and Montana Western's Experience One class schedule. Rather than simultaneously enrolling in multiple courses that meet 3 hours per week throughout a 15-week term, students take and faculty teach one-class-at-a-time. Experience One classes meet minimally for three hours daily over a 3.5 week period. A four class, 16-credit schedule under Experience One promotes progress-to-degree more than a five class, 15-credit schedule under a traditional semester. Experience One's longer daily class periods and intensive instructional schedule allow students to pursue their studies with singular focus. The longer class periods also discourage lecture-based instruction and facilitate in-depth, project-based learning, and encourage extended lab sessions and field trips.



Figure 1. Traditional Class Schedule versus Experience One Class Schedule



Experience One is the product of Montana Western’s unique academic purpose, characteristics, and expectations—none of which is accidental. Montana Western fulfills its educational mission by adhering to its constructivist educational philosophy and promoting experiential education. The university facilitates experiential teaching and learning, optimizes faculty-student and student-student interactions, fosters a caring campus atmosphere, and promotes student success by maintaining small class sizes. As enrollments grew from 2003 to 2013, Montana Western maintained small average class sizes (15 to 16) by hiring more faculty, adding class sections, and managing enrollments to reduce the percentage of low (<10) enrollment and high (>30) enrollment classes (Table 2).

Year	Average Class Size	Faculty FTE <sup>a</sup>	Number of Classes	Distribution of Class Enrollments			
				<10	10-19	20-29	>30
2003	15	62	325	37%	34%	22%	6%
2013	16	78	338	22%	42%	35%	1%
Percentage Point Difference				-15	+8	+13	-5

Source: UMW Registrar. <sup>a</sup>Full-time equivalency.

Montana Western aspires to fill a niche in public postsecondary education, to provide students with a high quality education, and to ensure longevity of the institution through responsible stewardship of its academic programs and facilities.

### Strategic Planning

Chancellor Storey convened a strategic planning taskforce in fall 2011 and authorized it to develop a new five-year plan and explore options for a more concise mission statement. From 2011 to 2013, the strategic planning taskforce solicited and incorporated input from all campus stakeholders (alumni, community members, faculty, foundation members, staff, and students). The resulting plan, entitled *Experience the Difference*, was circulated for comment fall 2013 and it was formally approved by the Chancellor in February 2014 ([Exhibit 7](#)). Experience the Difference embodies Montana Western’s commitments to its mission, core themes, and guiding principles.

The revised mission statement was ready for submission and review at the January 2014 Montana Board of Regents (BoR) meeting. However, the BoR was not ready to review any mission statements at that meeting. Montana Western’s leadership anticipates the mission statement will be considered by the BoR in fall 2014.

### Mission

Montana Western’s current mission statement (2013/2014 Catalog, p. 1, [Exhibit 8](#)) is:

The University of Montana Western provides innovative interdisciplinary education through experiential learning that combines theory and practice. Montana Western serves citizens of all ages with its academic, community service, and lifelong learning programs. As part of the global community, Montana Western encourages diversity, international awareness, environmental responsibility and mastery of technology as a gateway to the world. (Approved by the BoR November 2006.)

Although the university received praise for its concise mission statement in the 2010 Comprehensive Peer Evaluation, the campus community felt it was operationally too long and did not provide the clarity of purpose relative to experiential education. The proposed revision, which was approved on-campus during fall 2013 and was submitted in early 2014 for system

review, is included below as informational and to illustrate the honing of mission differentiation embraced by campus stakeholders.

The University of Montana Western differentiates itself and achieves academic excellence by sustaining a culture of concentrated experiential education.

The proposed mission statement is supported by the six guiding principles articulated in the 2014 strategic plan, Experience the Difference.

#### Core Themes

Montana Western developed three core themes during the 2011 academic year:

1. Continuously improve undergraduate education and experiential learning.
2. Maximize campus-wide support for student success and completion.
3. Foster responsible campus efficiency and stewardship of resources.

The three core themes emphasize the university's academic, student, and administrative purposes; individually manifest elements of the mission; and collectively encompass the mission. There is obvious overlap among the themes and each core theme bifurcates into subthemes: Core Theme One emphasizes undergraduate education (UGE) and experiential learning (XL), Core Theme Two emphasizes student success (SS) and student completion (SC), and Core Theme Three emphasizes campus efficiency (CE) and stewardship of resources (SR). These core themes were authorized by the BoR and accepted by the NWCCU in 2011. They continue to guide Montana Western's planning efforts and are incorporated in the 2014 strategic plan without revision.

#### Tactical Metrics

The major concerns expressed in the Year One and Year Three recommendations relate to the institution's need to establish quantifiable levels of mission fulfillment. Montana Western routinely evaluates institutional data to set enrollment goals, allocate budget, hire faculty lines, etc.; however, measurable objectives and baseline metrics had not routinely been established relative to the university's strategic plan and mission.

Experience the Difference articulates generalized priorities and goals that support Montana Western's mission and core themes. The measurable objectives and baseline metrics that demonstrate achievement of the goals, priorities, core themes, and mission are developed in a separate tactical document ([Exhibit 9](#)). The objectives are designed to be measurable, ambitious, and achievable. The alignment of goals, priorities, and core themes is evident in the tactical document. An excerpted example of such alignment is provided in Table 3. Each goal is coded to the six relevant core subthemes (UGE, XL, SS, SC, CE and SR). Each objective is tied to a goal and is based on a baseline metric. The tactical document is a living document—it will be reviewed, amended, and modified on an annual basis with input from all stakeholders. Future annual program assessment and performance evaluation efforts will address progress toward meeting the established objectives.

Table 3. Example of Tactical Alignment of Academic Priorities, Core Themes, Goals, Objectives and Baseline Metrics			
Priority One – Encourage Academic Excellence and Innovation			
Strategic Goal	Core Subthemes <sup>a</sup>	Objective	Baseline Metrics
A. Develop a cohesive general education program that utilizes experiential education and achieves universally accepted student learning outcomes.	UGE, XL	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Adopt the Liberal Education &amp; America's Promise (LEAP) general education learning outcomes by October 2013.</li> <li>2. Include student learning outcomes in all (100%) general education syllabi by January 2014. The outcomes shall reflect LEAP and Montana University System common course numbering (CCN) outcomes.</li> </ol>	<p>No universally adopted learning outcomes for general education beginning Fall 2013.</p> <p>66% of general education courses in Block 1, 2013 included student learning outcomes in the course syllabi.</p>
B. Enhance and promote experiential teaching and learning across the curriculum.	UGE, XL	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 100% of course evaluation to measure effective use of experiential teaching and other high impact practices.</li> <li>2. Award at least one faculty development award each year that is specific to the scholarship of experiential teaching and learning.</li> </ol>	<p>90% of general education courses will document use of experiential teaching and other high impact teaching practices.</p> <p>No faculty development awards are currently designated for supporting the scholarship of experiential teaching and learning.</p>
C. Improve academic programs through rigorous and ongoing assessment and review processes.	UGE, SS, SC, CE	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 100% of departments will conduct annual assessment of academic programs.</li> <li>2. 100% of academic programs will conduct comprehensive seven-year review. The seven-year review shall include an external evaluator.</li> <li>3. 100% of curricular requests shall utilize annual assessment and program review data to justify program changes.</li> <li>4. Reduce average number of credits to graduate by 1-2% per year.</li> </ol>	<p>60-80% of programs currently conduct and formally document annual program assessment.</p> <p>100% of programs are currently in compliance with seven-year review cycle. Not all reviews include external evaluator.</p> <p>Assessment data is currently not required in curricular program revision requests.</p> <p>Reduce average number of credits to graduate with a bachelor's degree from 144 in FY12 to 142 in FY13, 140 in FY14, 138 in FY15, 136 in FY17, and 134 in FY18.</p>

<sup>a</sup> Codes for core subthemes: undergraduate education (UGE), experiential learning (XL), student success (SS), student completion (SC) and campus efficiency (CE). Source: Tactical Objectives and Metrics for Experience the Difference. <sup>b</sup>Common course numbering (CCN).

## Montana Western Assessment Activities and Evidentiary Data

The following is provided in response to the NWCCU Standards 2.C.1, 2.C.9, and 2.C.10. The cited standards generally address assessment of academic courses and programs. Specifically the NWCCU's recommendations to Montana Western were concerned with developing student learning outcomes and evidencing a commitment to assessment across the curriculum (developmental coursework, general education program, and academic programs).

This section documents Montana Western's assessment efforts and presents data demonstrating improvements. The collective activities carried out by the provost, Faculty Senate, the assessment committee, the general education committee, the developmental education subcommittee, and academic departments serve as evidence of Montana Western's commitment to assessing undergraduate education, experiential learning, student success, and student completion throughout the curriculum. The membership of campus committees engaged in accreditation, assessment, and strategic planning is included in Appendix A.

### Assessment Committee

The provost and leaders of the Faculty Senate established an assessment committee in August 2013. Using a guide written by Barbara E. Walvoord, *Assessment Clear and Simple* (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed., Jossey-Bass, 2010), key faculty and administrative leaders from across campus developed a charge, a list of membership, and a three-year plan for the committee ([Exhibit 10](#)). In its early stages of development, the Assessment Committee, made extensive use of a consultant, Dr. Sylvia Moore. Dr. Moore knew the campus from her previous experience as Deputy Commissioner for Academic, Research and Student Affairs for the Montana University System. The Assessment Committee met first in September 2013 and continues to meet as needed to guide and reinforce a re-energized faculty commitment to assessment of student learning. A full account of the actions taken and guidance provided by Dr. Moore and the Assessment Committee are available to faculty on the campus learning management system, Moodle. The following bullets summarize a few committee accomplishments between September 2013 and March 2014.

- Worked with the provost to require all general education courses to include student learning outcomes in course syllabi by Block 4, 2013.
- Developed guidance for annual program assessment of learning outcomes ([Exhibits 11, 12 & 13](#)).
- Offered four workshops during fall 2013 and three workshops during spring 2014 to assist faculty in developing and assessing student learning outcomes.
- Developed an electronic survey to collect assessment data on general education student learning outcomes. The survey was designed to assist faculty and the General Education Committee with assessment of course specific student learning outcomes (SLO) and the

Liberal Education and America's Promise (LEAP) Essential Learning Outcomes (ELO). A beta version of the SLO/ELO survey was administered at the end of Block 4. A revised SLO/ELO survey will be administered at the end of each block during the spring 2014 term.

- Maintained a faculty resource site in Moodle that documents the actions of the Assessment Committee, provides guidance on assessment of student learning outcomes, and promotes a culture of assessment.

In addition to the accomplishments listed above, the committee completed its *Report to Leadership* ([Exhibit 14](#)) which summarized campus-wide assessment activities in 2012-2013, reported initial progress on assessment activities in 2013-2014, and offered recommendations. A few findings from the Report to Leadership (pg. 1, 2 & 3) are duplicated below. These select findings document assessment actions and activities conducted during 2012-2013 and are related to Strategic Goals A, B, and C stated for Priority 1 of Experience the Difference (see Table 3).

- The General Education Committee voted unanimously in Fall Semester 2012 to adopt the LEAP ELOs as the learning outcomes for General Education at Montana Western. Montana Western already had endorsed the goals and learning outcomes for each of the Montana University System core content areas: Natural Sciences, Social Sciences/History, Mathematics, Communication, Humanities/Fine Arts, and Cultural Diversity. (<http://mus.edu/Transfer/MUScore.asp>)
- The Assessment Committee provided departments with a paper template for reporting on their department assessments of student learning [[Exhibit 13](#)]. Those reports are posted on the Provost's Moodle site. Montana Western's School of Education, Business, and Technology already have implemented assessment of learning outcomes as part of their specialized accreditations.
- For 2012-13, institutional research reports on census, retention, and completion, added to the understanding of the assessment committee. Census for fall 2013 remained relatively stable at 1,364 FTE, down just 2.5% from fall 2012. Retention of first-time full-time students from fall 2012 to fall 2013 also was essentially stable, and the impact of Experience One is reflected in the 6-year graduation rate for those seeking bachelor degrees that has increased by 18% [percentage points not percent] since the transition was made in 2005.
- Data of concern are the reports of total credit hours at graduation with Montana Western graduates with bachelor degrees averaging 144 hours total credit accumulation. As the IR office helps contribute data for Montana Western's participation in Complete College America, credit accumulation will be monitored more proactively. The goal will be to get students to move forward steadily to obtain needed credits while still helping students refrain from taking unnecessary credits that could increase their costs.

These bullets from the Assessment Committee’s Report to Leadership document findings from one year of assessment. The following is provided as additional institutional evidence of the longitudinal impacts of Experience One. Table 4 shows Montana Western has experienced increases in enrollment, retention, and degree completions since adoption of Experience One in 2005. Montana Western’s fall-to-fall retention rates for the fall 2008 cohort were similar to the MUS averages for baccalaureate and associate students. Montana Western’s fall-to-fall retention rates for the fall 2012 cohort were higher than the MUS averages for baccalaureate and associate students.

Student Success Metrics	Academic Year				% Increase from AY01 to AY13
	2000-2001	2004-2005 <sup>a</sup>	2008-2009	2012-2013	
Montana Western:					
Fall census headcount <sup>b</sup>	1160	1146	1190	1447 <sup>c</sup>	25%
Fall census FTE	990	1023	1097	1399	41%
Headcount to FTE ratio	89	89	92	97	9%
Baccalaureate students:					
Fall-to-spring retention (%)	82	88	90	88	7%
Fall-to-fall retention (%)	53	62	75	69	30%
Degree completions (#)	148	144	148	203	37%
Associate students:					
Fall-to-spring retention (%)	71	87 <sup>d</sup>	80	80	13%
Fall-to-fall retention (%)	43	60	62	62	44%
Degree completions (#)	33	48	30	49	48%
Montana University System:					
Baccalaureate fall-to-fall retention (%)	NA	NA	76	77	NA
Associate fall-to-fall retention (%)	NA	NA	62	59	NA

Source: UMW Registrar and the Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education. <sup>a</sup>Last year prior to Experience One. <sup>b</sup>Enrollment is based on 15<sup>th</sup> day census. <sup>c</sup>Highest recorded fall enrollment since the 1920s. <sup>d</sup>Last year of FIPSE freshman pilot.

Table 5 shows Montana Western’s six-year graduation rate has increased from 27 percent for the fall 2004, baccalaureate cohort to 45 percent for the fall 2007, baccalaureate cohort. The six-year baccalaureate graduation rate has increased 18 percentage points since adoption of Experience One. Graduation rates for the associate cohorts do not show similar improvement. There are several reasons for the low graduation rates for associate students. Between 2000 and 2007, the majority (greater than 50-67%) of Montana Western’s associate students were enrolled in the early childhood program, which is intentionally designed to accommodate the needs of part-time students. By definition, part-time students are not included in the two- and

three-year graduation rate calculations. The remaining associate cohort students (less than 20 per year) have commonly been admitted into a two-year program if they did not fully meet college admission requirements for mathematics and writing proficiency (See page 8 of catalog for provisional admission policy, [Exhibit 8](#)). Once developmental students complete their gateway courses, 100-level general education courses in mathematics and writing, many of them transfer up to a four-year program and never complete the two-year program in which they were initially admitted. Associate cohort graduation rates improve by extending the time-to-degree to seven years: 29% for 2000, 27% for 2004, not yet available for 2007.

It is challenging to track associate cohort graduation rates because many of the students initially admitted into two-year programs require developmental coursework, which extends the time-to-degree, and many two-year students transfer up to four-year degree programs at Montana Western without ever completing a two-year degree. Also, the overall number of associate cohort students is small (less than 20 per year) resulting in misleading percentages. Montana Western recognizes the unique challenges of the associate degree cohort and has taken actions to better enable and document student success. These actions are more fully described in the Developmental Education section of this report.

Table 5. Graduation Rates for First-time, Fulltime Freshmen

Graduation Metrics	Fall Cohort		
	2000	2004 <sup>a</sup>	2007
Bachelor Cohort:			
4-yr graduation rate (%)	4	10	18
6-yr graduation rate (%)	23	27	45
Associate Cohort:			
2-yr graduation rate (%)	0	0	0
3-yr graduation rate (%)	7	0	0
Transfer up <sup>b</sup> (%)	0	20	52
Combined Cohorts:			
150% Graduation Rate	22	32	36

Source: UMW Registrar. <sup>a</sup>Last year prior to full adoption of Experience One. Freshman cohort was enrolled in block classes fall 2014. <sup>b</sup>Change from associate to bachelors without completing the associate degree.

In summary, the Assessment Committee has aggressively carried out its responsibilities to support the campus assessment efforts. Its efforts have been aided by its membership—three members sit on the General Education Committee, two members are department chairs, and one member oversees one of the campus’ specialized accreditations. Additional members bring expertise in institutional research, student success strategies, and NWCCU accreditation. To date, the committee’s work has centered on implementing frequent, regular, and substantive assessment of student learning outcomes and student success throughout the curriculum. The Assessment Committee’s work is just beginning, but it has had its intended



effect. The campus is engaged in a rich and vibrant dialogue regarding appropriate indicators of student learning; the campus is collecting data on levels of achievement of intended learning outcomes, and the campus is improving on existing systems for evaluating these data.

### General Education

Montana Western's General Education program presents options for study that help students develop a breadth and depth of intellect to become more effective learners. Students are required to complete 32-credits distributed among six general education categories: written and oral communication (4 credits), mathematics (4 credits), behavioral and social sciences (8 credits), expressive arts (4 credits), literary and artistic studies (4 credits), and natural science (8 credits). Students are also required to demonstrate technology literacy. The program's purpose, as described in the 2013-2014 Catalog ([Exhibit 8](#)), is to

- introduce all students to the core arts and sciences disciplines,
- prepare students for university-level thinking,
- help students develop the skills and knowledge necessary for lifelong learning,
- give each student a foundation in democratic values, and
- foster engaged participation in a global society.

Recommendation One from the 2010 Comprehensive Year-One Evaluation report was concerned with the establishment and assessment of identifiable student learning outcomes for the general education program. The recommendation was supported by citing NWCCU Standard 2.C.1, which requires academic programs to culminate in achievement of clearly identified learning outcomes. Montana Western acknowledges this omission and hereby reports on the actions taken by the General Education Committee to adopt and assess general education learning outcomes.

Montana Western's General Education Committee is a standing committee authorized by the Faculty Senate Articles (Section 1, [Exhibit 15](#)). The voting membership includes seven tenured or tenure-line faculty representing each academic department. The nonvoting membership includes one student and the provost or the provost's appointee. The committee's charge, as stated in the Faculty Senate Bylaws (Section H, [Exhibit 15](#)), is to

- review and clarify the goals and objectives of general education,
- determine the extent to which existing general education requirements meet these goals and objectives,
- propose revisions of the general education curriculum to improve its ability to meet perceived needs, and
- explain general education to students and faculty.

To assure Montana Western stays attentive to assessment of the entire general education curriculum, the provost further charged the General Education Committee with preparing an annual report of general education learning outcomes. The first report is due April 2014 and

will focus on the committee's actions to establish an assessment of general education student learning outcomes.

The General Education Committee meets eight times throughout the academic year, once per block. The following bullets summarize a few committee actions accomplished between September 2013 and March 2014.

- Forwarded a curriculum proposal to Faculty Senate to adopt the Liberal Education and America's Promise (LEAP) Essential Learning Outcomes (ELOs). Faculty Senate formally passed the curriculum proposal adopting the LEAP ELOs during fall 2013.
- Assisted departments with development of student learning outcomes for all general education courses. All general education instructors were required to include student learning outcomes (SLOs) in course syllabi and map their student learning outcomes to the LEAP ELOs by Block 4. Per Montana University System requirements, 80 percent of the student learning outcomes for each class must align with the course outcomes published on the MUS Common Course Numbering (CCN) website ([http://mus.edu/Qtools/CCN/ccn\\_default.asp](http://mus.edu/Qtools/CCN/ccn_default.asp)).
- Developing a consistent approach for using the LEAP ELO rubrics to assess the broad impact of the general education program on student learning. The LEAP ELOs include inquiry and analysis, critical and creative thinking, written and oral communication, quantitative literacy, information literacy, teamwork, and problem solving.
- Reviewed results of the Assessment Committee's Block 4 beta survey of SLOs and ELOs. Results of the discussion were used to improve the survey for Block 5.
- Four members of the General Education Committee attended the AAC&U Conference *General Education and Assessment: Disruptions, Innovations, and Opportunities* at the end of February 2014. All conference and associated costs were allocated from Montana Western's accreditation and assessment budget.

General Education Committee actions planned for the remainder of the 2013-14 academic year include:

- Assign faculty subcommittees to assess learning outcomes in the six general education categories (February). The Assessment Committee will provide each general education category subcommittee with SLO/ELO survey results for Blocks 5 and 6. Each general education category subcommittee will prepare a written report to the General Education Committee by the end of March.
- Review subcommittee reports and survey results to assess the broad impact of general education on student learning.
- Suggest modifications of the program or needed institutional supports.
- Prepare and submit an annual general education assessment report to the provost by the end of April ([Exhibit 11](#)).

In summary, the General Education Committee is actively engaged in its assessment responsibilities. The committee's actions are aided by its overlapping membership with the Assessment Committee. To date, the General Education Committee's work has centered on

- immediate adoption of the LEAP ELOs for the general education program,
- development of student learning outcomes for all general education courses, and
- preliminary assessment of the Assessment Committee's SLO/ELO survey results.

Initial assessment efforts are being carried out by general education category subcommittees. Walvoord (2010, p. 88) recommended departments take responsibility for assessment of general education programs; however, she also recognized departmental responsibility initially may not be possible (p. 96). Future General Education Committee efforts will enlist greater departmental involvement in annual assessment. The General Education Committee also recognizes that Experience One advantages Montana Western's use of high impact teaching practices. These practices include, but may not be limited to service learning/community based learning, writing intensive courses, common-intellectual experiences (international travel, honors courses), diversity/global learning, first year experiences, learning communities, undergraduate research, internships, capstone courses and projects, and integrated approaches of multiple high impact practices. Future assessment efforts will include assessment of high impact teaching practices in the general education program.

### Developmental Education

Recommendation Three from the 2010 Comprehensive Year-One Evaluation report was concerned with assessment and improvement of Montana Western's developmental mathematics and writing courses in order to heighten student competence in quantitative reasoning and written communications. The evaluators' concern, as stated in the Spring 2013 Year Three *Resources and Capacity* Peer-Evaluation Report ([Exhibit 3](#), p. 3) was:

The University of Montana Western acknowledges that issues with developmental math still exist. Further progress is needed to address the recommendation that UMW received in 2010.

Montana Western accepted the concern and herein reports on the institution's progress in addressing Recommendation Three (2010 Comprehensive Year-One Evaluation). In doing so, Montana Western notes the new NWCCU Standards for Accreditation cited to support Recommendation Three, Standards 2.C.9 and 2.C.10, relate to the general education component of undergraduate programs, not developmental coursework.

The evaluators' continuing concern regarding Recommendation Three was supported by quoting the following paragraph from the 2013 Year Three Self-Study (p. 25):

Data garnered from the analysis of 2010 and 2011 graduating student transcripts demonstrates that while 70 percent of each class of true first-time, first-year students requires developmental mathematics, the graduating classes contained only about 20

percent of students who required developmental mathematics. This indicates that the impact of developmental mathematics upon the majority of developmental students, probably coupled with the impact of the current smorgasbord approach to General Education, continues to have serious negative effects upon students and upon the institution.

The findings of this paragraph are based on comparing an average percentage of first-time, fulltime cohorts (reference dates not provided) requiring developmental mathematics against the percentage of all graduates in 2010 and 2011. Regretfully, the methodology used to compare these disparate populations was faulty and the inferences in past reports to developmental mathematics and general education are unsubstantiated.

Using standardized methodologies provided by the Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education (OCHE) and Complete College Montana (CCM), Montana Western formally started tracking the progress of all developmental mathematics and writing students in fall 2007. Six-year graduation rates for the 2007 first-time, fulltime cohort first became available in 2013. Table 7 shows some of the progress metrics used to track incoming freshmen who required remediation for mathematics or writing.

Progress Metrics	Fall Cohort					
	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
<b>Total Incoming Requiring Remediation</b>						
Incoming Freshmen Class	254	234	238	257	260	284
Total Requiring Remediation	160	154	133	165	143	159
% of total requiring remediation	63.0%	65.8%	55.9%	64.2%	55.0%	56.0%
<b>Math Remediation</b>						
Required Math Remediation	139	136	119	146	125	155
% Requiring Math Remediation	54.7%	58.1%	50.0%	56.8%	48.1%	54.6%
Graduated	45	36	8	4	1	0
% Graduated	32.4%	26.5%	6.7%	2.7%	0.8%	0.0%
Still Enrolled	3	16	39	57	45	48
% Still enrolled as of 09/2013	2.2%	11.8%	32.8%	39.0%	36.0%	31.0%
<b>Writing Remediation</b>						
Required Writing Remediation	83	101	79	96	98	85
% Requiring Writing Remediation	32.7%	43.2%	33.2%	37.4%	37.7%	29.9%
Graduated	23	26	4	4	1	0
% Graduated	27.7%	25.7%	5.1%	4.2%	1.0%	0.0%
Still Enrolled	2	8	11	35	39	42
% Still enrolled as of 09/2013	2.4%	7.9%	13.9%	36.5%	39.8%	49.4%

Source: UMW Registrar.

Preliminary evaluation of these data indicate an average of 60 percent of incoming students require some type of remediation—an average of 54 percent required developmental math and an average of 36 percent required developmental writing. The data for 2007 (32.4% for math and 27.7% for writing) and 2008 (26.5% for math and 25.7% for writing) document higher graduation rates than what was reported in the 2013 Year Three Self-Study (~20%). These rates more similarly compare with the combined six-year graduation rate of 36 percent for Montana Western’s 2007 first-time, fulltime freshmen cohort (Table 6).

Further evidence of Montana Western’s success with students requiring developmental coursework is provided by the OCHE. As part of Complete College Montana (CCM), the OCHE has published metrics for success in remedial education (<http://mus.edu/CCM/progress-and-outcomes.asp>). Table 7 summarizes CCM Progress Metric 2 data for Montana Western and compares them against the Montana University System (MUS) averages.

Montana Western’s success rates for first-time freshmen enrolling in developmental coursework and successfully completing gateway courses in mathematics and writing within two academic years are higher than the MUS and national averages. In fact, with just one exception—one campus reported 48 percent success for math in 2011—Montana Western ranked higher than any other MUS campus for successfully progressing students through developmental and gateway coursework for both mathematics and writing.

On the national level, Complete College America (<http://www.completecollege.org/docs/CCA-Remediation-final.pdf>, p. 8) reported only 22.3 percent of students in two-year colleges (fall 2006) and 36.8 percent of students in four-year colleges (fall 2006) completed developmental and associated college-level courses within two years.

Table 7. Percent of all first-time freshmen enrolling in developmental coursework and successfully completing a gateway college course within two academic years.

Fall Cohort	Montana Western		MUS (average)	
	Math	Writing	Mathematics	Writing
2009	57	88	41	50
2010	64	88	41	51
2011	47	98	38	55

Source: OCHE Website. Methodology based on Complete College Montana.

Montana Western credits higher success rates in developmental coursework to the pedagogical strategies advantaged by Experience One. These advantages include small class sizes, high faculty to student ratios, project-based learning, singular focus on instructional material, linked developmental and gateway coursework, and accelerated scheduling. Under Experience One, it is possible for a developmental student to enroll in two, linked developmental and gateway courses—one for mathematics, the other for writing—and satisfy all general education

mathematics and college writing requirements in just one semester. Montana Western's success in progressing developmental students through gateway coursework is an example of how the university fulfills its mission to achieve academic excellence by sustaining a culture of concentrated experiential education.

Despite its success progressing developmental students through gateway courses, Montana Western continues to assess and improve student competence in quantitative reasoning and written communications. The following sections report on the university's administrative and departmental actions to assess and improve developmental education coursework, policies, and learning outcomes.

#### Developmental Education Committee

Montana Western's Developmental Education Committee is an ad hoc committee of the Academic and Administrative Council (AAC). The AAC is under the joint direction of the provost and vice chancellor for administration, finance, and student services. The Developmental Education Committee was formed during the 2012-2013 academic year. Its membership includes department chairs from mathematics and English, the director of student success, the assistant provost, the director of e-learning, and the registrar. The developmental education committee is charged with reviewing institutional retention and persistence data for developmental students, comparing campus policies and success metrics to other MUS campuses, assessing student success in Montana Western's developmental education program, assessing student success in gateway courses, and developing policy recommendations for the consideration of Academic and Administrative Council. The following bullets summarize actions taken by the committee within the last year.

- One member participated in the MUS Developmental Education Reform Taskforce, which was initially convened in December 2012. The taskforce was asked to research and survey current practices in developmental mathematics and writing throughout the MUS and draft a recommendation for further BoR policy development. The group presented its report to the BoR on May 17, 2013 ([http://mus.edu/board/meetings/2013/May2013/TwoYear/DevEdTaskForce\\_ExeSummary\\_a1.pdf](http://mus.edu/board/meetings/2013/May2013/TwoYear/DevEdTaskForce_ExeSummary_a1.pdf)).
- Continued advising policy of encouraging students to apply for associate's degree even if seeking a baccalaureate degree. The *Teacher Education Program Handbook* (p. 47) also strongly recommends candidates complete an associate's degree. Graduation fees are waived for associate degree seeking students.
- Reviewed emerging institutional and system data generated in response to MUS's Complete College Montana Initiative (<http://mus.edu/CCM/default.asp>).

## Developmental Math

At the time of the spring 2013 year-three visit, the Department of Mathematics was initiating its seven-year program review. A full report of findings will be completed in 2014. The following bullets summarize departmental actions taken in response to ongoing assessment efforts and prior NWCCU recommendations.

- A full-time mathematics faculty member was hired in fall 2011 to further enhance and teach the developmental curriculum. Another full-time instructor was reassigned to specialize in the same area. These actions created a higher level of program consistency. In the past, the department relied more on part time and adjunct faculty to teach developmental mathematics classes, which led to a curriculum that was prone to frequent change and was difficult to assess. The situation has improved by these full-time faculties.
- The developmental math faculties have created consistent learning outcomes and course materials for the existing developmental math class, M 095 Intermediate Algebra. Common course materials include a shared text, workbook, and series of YouTube videos that demonstrate key curricular concepts. Developmental faculty have used the standardized curriculum since spring 2013.
- In fall of 2011, M 090 Introductory Algebra, was added to the developmental mathematics curriculum. Students who score below a given threshold on their standardized test (440 for SAT math or 18 for ACT math) are placed into M 090. The developmental math faculty created consistent learning outcomes and course materials for M 090 in a fashion that mirrors what they did with M 095.
- In 2013, the department started offering linked sections of M 090 and M 095. Linked courses offer students an opportunity to complete their developmental mathematics requirements during the same semester, with the same instructor, and with the same cohort of students. Similarly, the department offers linked sections of M 095 and selected 100-level gateway/general-education courses in 2011. This provides a mechanism that allows students who have developmental math needs to complete their general education mathematics requirement in a similar cohort environment. The success of this approach is documented in Table 7 of this report.

Future goals and priorities for development mathematics include:

- Develop a global placement policy. The current MUS admissions policy (and its statements regarding mathematical proficiency) has served as a *de facto* placement policy for a number of years. However, it fails to address the needs of non-traditional students who have been away from high school for a number of years (or failed to complete it in the first place). The department wants a placement policy that remains consistent with our admissions policy, but allows an alternative placement tool such as the COMPASS exam. Progress on this goal is pending further development of MUS developmental education reform policies. The MUS convened the Developmental Education Reform Council in fall 2013. One of the council's goals is to create a common placement system using multiple measures ([http://www.mus.edu/board/meetings/2013/Nov2013/TwoYear/DevEdCouncil\\_A1.pdf](http://www.mus.edu/board/meetings/2013/Nov2013/TwoYear/DevEdCouncil_A1.pdf)). The council is expected to present its recommendations to the BoR in fall 2014.
- Create a common gateway assessment used in all sections of M 095.
- Develop, publish, and implement a comprehensive assessment plan that measures program success in meeting the learning outcomes established for the program. This plan will include the use of a common design for a gateway exam used across all sections of developmental mathematics courses. It will also involve an online tool that allows instructors to report on the degree to which their students meet the student learning outcomes adopted for M 090 and M 095. Finally, it will involve the collection and analysis of institutional data (with the aid of the registrar) to measure student success longitudinally through the developmental mathematics courses and the gateway, general education courses they lead directly into.

### Developmental Writing

The following bullets summarize actions taken by the English Department in response to its ongoing assessment efforts and prior NWCCU recommendations.

- A full-time rhetoric and composition faculty member was hired in fall 2011 to further develop and teach the developmental writing curriculum.
- All adjunct, tenured, and tenure-track English faculty teach composition classes.
- The English Department has established common student learning outcomes for WRIT 095 Developmental Writing and WRIT 101 College Writing. Per Montana University System requirements, 80 percent of the learning outcomes align with the course learning outcomes published on the MUS Common Course Numbering (CCN) website ([http://mus.edu/Qtools/CCN/ccn\\_default.asp](http://mus.edu/Qtools/CCN/ccn_default.asp)).
- In 2008, the department started offering linked sections of WRIT 095 and WRIT 101. The courses are co-requisites offered over two consecutive blocks. The success of the linked approach is documented in Table 7 of this report.
- The English Department uses a standard writing handbook, *Easy Writer* (Lunsford, 2014), for all WRIT 095 and WRIT 101 courses.



- One English faculty participated in the Placement and Assessment Work Group of the MUS Developmental Education Reform Taskforce during spring 2013. The workgroup was charged with researching current MUS assessment/placement models in developmental math and writing, researching their effectiveness, identifying and researching alternative assessment/tools, and making recommendations based on their findings. The taskforce presented its report to the BoR on May 17, 2013 ([http://mus.edu/board/meetings/2013/May2013/TwoYear/DevEdTaskForce\\_ExeSummary\\_a1.pdf](http://mus.edu/board/meetings/2013/May2013/TwoYear/DevEdTaskForce_ExeSummary_a1.pdf)).
- The English Department meets regularly throughout each term and has developed a grading rubric for WRIT 095 and WRIT 101 writing assignments.

Future goals and priorities for developmental writing include:

- Further refine the shared grading rubric for WRIT 095 and WRIT 101 writing assignments.
- Develop standardized end-of-term assignments for WRIT 095 and WRIT 101.

### Academic Programs

Recommendation Two from the 2010 Comprehensive Year-One Evaluation report was concerned with assessment of student learning outcomes throughout the curriculum. The evaluators recommended Montana Western take immediate steps to implement frequent, regular, and substantive assessment of learning outcomes in all academic programs. The recommendation was supported by citing NWCCU Standard 2.C.1, which requires academic programs to culminate in achievement of clearly identified learning outcomes.

Montana Western's academic programs have complied with this recommendation and graduate learning outcomes for all academic programs are published in the 2013/2014 Catalog. Additionally, under the direction of a consultant, Dr. Moore, the university implemented Walvoord's (2010, p. 59-79) recommendations for annual departmental assessment. Guidance for annual program assessment is posted in Moodle under Assessment and Accreditation ([Exhibits 11 & 16](#)). The process is summarized below and will be fully implemented in spring 2014.

- Courses offered as part of a degree program must include student learning outcomes in the syllabi and list the graduate outcomes that align with those student learning outcomes.
- All academic programs hold an annual departmental assessment meeting in April to discuss course and program assessment data.
- Departments identify key courses and/or key events in each program to assess program graduate outcomes. Departments are to report on at least one direct and one indirect measure of student learning. Direct measures of student learning might include

assignments, tests, and portfolios. Indirect measures of student learning might include graduate school and job placements, employer surveys, professional certifications, etc.

- Each department is required to submit an annual assessment report to the provost by May 31<sup>st</sup>. The report includes information about data reviewed, conclusions reached, actions planned, and identification of resource or information needs.

Consistent with Wolvoord’s recommendations, Montana Western’s annual departmental assessment is designed to build on what is already in place, identify issues of concern, take action on those concerns, and be sustainable. Ultimately this approach ends in departmental actions that incrementally enhance student learning. The annual departmental assessment process is not designed to replace the seven-year program review mandated by BoR Policy 303.3 (<http://mus.edu/borpol/bor300/303-3.pdf>).

All of Montana Western’s academic programs conduct comprehensive program reviews consistent with the BoR policy. Table 8 summarizes the seven-year review schedule. The university expects the results of the annual learning outcomes assessment to inform the comprehensive seven-year program review.

Table 8. Seven-Year Program Review Schedule

Department	Most Current Review	Next Review
Biology	2011	2018
Business (IACBE Accreditation)	2009	2016
Education (NCATE Accreditation)	2008	2015
English	2009	2016
Environmental Science	2012	2019
Equine Science	In progress	2021
History, Philosophy and Social Science	2010	2017
Mathematics	In progress	2021
Visual Arts	2009	2016

It is important to recognize that Montana Western maintains specialized accreditation for its education and business programs. The teacher education programs are accredited by the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE). The business programs are accredited by the International Assembly for Collegiate Business Education (IACBE). Past NWCCU evaluators have recognized the Education Department, Business Department and the History, Philosophy and Social Sciences Department for their exemplary assessment of student learning outcomes.

Equine Science initiated its program review in fall 2013. Mathematics completed its internal review in fall 2013 and has scheduled an external evaluator to visit campus during Block 8. Both programs should complete their seven-year program reviews by fall 2014.

## Summary of Campus Assessment Efforts

Montana Western prepared this report in response to a letter it received from the NWCCU on July 24, 2013. The letter referred to prior NWCCU recommendations concerning (a) mission fulfillment and (b) assessment of developmental education, general education, and academic program learning outcomes. This report describes the university's commitment to its mission and core values of undergraduate education, experiential learning, student success, and student completion. This report also documents the university's efforts to establish measurable indicators of institutional achievement and to implement frequent, regular, and substantive assessment of learning outcomes in all academic programs.

In 2005, Montana Western fully committed itself to Experience One. The institution changed its mission statement and course scheduling model. It hired a chancellor with teaching and leadership experience at a block school. It revised courses, programs, policies, and catalogs to support implementation of Experience One. It has twice rewritten its strategic plan to hone its commitment to experiential education. It added student support programs (advising and the learning center). It added course sections, faculty, and passenger vehicles (more vehicles were necessary to pursue off-campus, experiential-learning opportunities). It upgraded classroom facilities, invested in faculty development, and prioritized general-fund spending to support academic goals. Experience One is an institutional brand that combines an alternative course schedule with a constructivist teaching philosophy—both the schedule and the educational philosophy discourage lecture-based teaching and encourage project-based, student learning.

Montana Western has created a distinctive niche in public higher education—a niche purposefully designed to enhance undergraduate student success. The intended impact of Experience One on student success is proven by increased enrollment, increased retention, increased persistence, increased degree completion, increased graduation rates, and better than state and national rates of completion in developmental and gateway courses within two academic years. Other impacts of Experience One include higher rankings in the U.S. News & World Report of Best Colleges and recognition by the Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE) and the Carnegie Foundation for teaching excellence. The CASE and Carnegie Foundation recognized one Montana Western faculty in 2009 with the U.S. Professor of the Year award; additional faculty were recognized in 2010, 2011, 2012, and 2013 with Montana Professor of the Year awards. Montana Western's commitment to and success with student learning has perhaps seemed to overshadow its obligation to assess student learning outcomes. The institution acknowledges the NWCCU recommendations it received in 2010 and it has taken action to redress the causes for concern.

The details of Montana Western's actions relative to establishment of student learning outcomes and program assessment are presented in this report. The following list highlights accomplishments from the past year.

- Montana Western administrator attended the AAC&U LEAP States Summit in July 2014.
- Consultant hired to assist with establishment of general education and academic program assessment processes.
- Campus Assessment Committee formed in September 2013.
- Tactical objectives and indicators for institutional achievement were developed to accompany the 2014 strategic plan, November and December 2013.
- Faculty Senate approved LEAP Essential Learning Outcomes for the General Education Program, fall 2013.
- All general education faculties were required to include student learning outcomes on course syllabi by Block 4, 2013.
- A faculty accreditation and assessment resource site was established in Moodle, November 2013.
- A SLO/ELO assessment survey was beta tested at the end of Block 4.
- The 2014 strategic plan, Experience the Difference, was approved in February 2014.
- Four faculty attended an AAC&U conference, *General Education and Assessment: Disruptions, Innovations, and Opportunities*, at the end of February 2014
- The SLO/ELO assessment survey will be administered four times throughout the spring 2014 term (Blocks 5 through 8).
- The General Education Committee is making progress on its annual review of LEAP ELOs.
- Academic departments are poised to conduct annual program and student learning outcomes assessment in April 2014.

In summary, Montana Western has rededicated itself to embracing assessment of student learning outcomes throughout the curriculum. The institution's efforts predate receipt of the NWCCU's July 2013 letter, and the resulting processes have culminated within the past ten months. Montana Western expects future evaluators to note full compliance with the previously cited NWCCU standards.

## Appendix A. Key Planning and Assessment Committees

### **Assessment Committee (Provost's Committee)**

- Ms. Ilene Cohen
- Mr. Seamus Manley (Student)
- Dr. Delena Norris-Tull
- Ms. Anneliese Ripley (Chair)
- Dr. Laura Straus
- Dr. Judy Ulrich
- Ms. Charity Walter
- Ms. Jessica Winans
- Dr. Eric Wright

### **Developmental Education Subcommittee under Academic and Administrative Council**

- Dr. Shane Borrowman (English Department)
- Ms. Ilene Cohen (Student Success, Chair)
- Ms. Anneliese Ripley (Interim Assistant Provost)
- Ms. Charity Walter (Registrar)
- Ms. Jessica Winans (e-Learning)
- Dr. Eric Wright (Mathematics Department)

### **Executive Committee**

- Dr. Richard Storey (Chancellor)
- Ms. Susan Briggs (Vice Chancellor for Administration, Finance, and Student Affairs)
- Dr. Karl Ulrich (Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs)

### **General Education Committee (Faculty Senate Committee)**

- Ms. Bri Draper (Student Senate)
- Dr. Erik Guzik (Business and Technology Department)
- Mr. Seamus Manley (Student Senate)
- Dr. Steve Mock (Environmental Sciences Department, Co-Chair)
- Dr. Laura Straus (Education Department)
- Dr. Judy Ulrich (Fine Arts Department)
- Dr. Aaron Weinacht (History, Philosophy, and Social Science Department, Co-Chair)
- Dr. O. Alan Weltzien (English Department)
- Dr. Eric Wright (Mathematics Department)

### **Strategic Planning Taskforce (Membership Appointed by Chancellor)**

- Ms. Liane Forrester
- Dr. John Hajduk
- Dr. Vikki Howard
- Mr. Seamus Manley (Student)
- Mr. Kent Ord
- Ms. Anneliese Ripley
- Dr. Karl Ulrich (Chair)

### **University Council (Strategic Planning & Budget Committee)**

- Mr. Matt Allen (Admissions)
- Dr. Michelle Anderson (Faculty Senate)
- Ms. Alyse Backus (Public Relations)
- Ms. Susan Briggs (Administration, Finance, and Student Affairs)
- Ms. Ilene Cohen (Student Success)
- Dr. Dana Cotton (Faculty Senate)
- Ms. Jamie Cutshall (Student Senate)
- Mr. Bill Dwyer (Staff Association)
- Ms. Roxanne Engellant (Foundation)
- Ms. Liane Forrester (Business Services)
- Dr. John Hajduk (Faculty)
- Ms. Nicole Hazelbaker (Student Affairs)
- Ms. Ricki Jones (Financial Aid)
- Ms. Shelly Kessel (Secretary)
- Dr. Jack Kirkley (Faculty Association)
- Mr. Seamus Manley (Student Senate)
- Mr. Ryan Norse (Athletic Director)
- Dr. Delena Norris-Tull (Faculty Association)
- Mr. Kent Ord (Marketing)
- Mr. Dan Payne (Facility Services)
- Mr. Mike Piazzola (Residence Life)
- Ms. Catherine Redhead (Admissions)
- Ms. Anneliese Ripley (Academic Affairs)
- Dr. Tyler Seacrest (Faculty Senate)
- Mr. Will Shirley (Student Senate)
- Dr. Richard Storey (Chancellor and Chair)
- Dr. Laura Straus (School of Outreach)
- Dr. Karl Ulrich (Academic Affairs)
- Mr. Scott Wade (Information Technology Services)
- Ms. Charity Walters (Registrar)