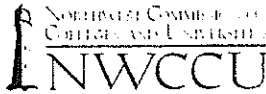


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CHANCELLOR'S OFFICE



July 24, 2013

Dr. Richard Storey
Chancellor
The University of Montana - Western
710 South Atlantic
Dillon, MT 59725-3598

Dear Chancellor ^{Richard} Storey:


On behalf of the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities, I am pleased to report that the accreditation of The University of Montana – Western has been reaffirmed on the basis of the Spring 2013 Year Three *Resources and Capacity* Evaluation which was expanded to address Recommendation 1 of the Spring 2011 Year One *Mission and Core Themes* Peer-Evaluation Report and to again address Recommendations 1, 2, and 3 of the Spring 2010 Comprehensive Peer-Evaluation Report.

In reaffirming accreditation, the Commission requests that the University address Recommendation 1 of the Spring 2013 Year Three *Resources and Capacity* Peer-Evaluation Report and again address Recommendation 1 of the Spring 2011 Year One *Mission and Core Themes* Peer-Evaluation Report and Recommendations 1, 2, and 3 of the Spring 2010 Comprehensive Peer-Evaluation Report in an Ad Hoc report with a visit in Spring 2014. A copy of the Recommendations is enclosed for your reference.

In making this request, the Commission finds that Recommendation 1 of the Spring 2013 Year Three *Resources and Capacity* Peer-Evaluation Report and Recommendations 1 and 3 of the 2010 Comprehensive Evaluation and Recommendation 1 of the Spring 2011 Year One Evaluation are areas where The University of Montana – Western is substantially in compliance with Commission criteria for accreditation, but in need of improvement. However, the Commission determined that Recommendation 2 of the Spring 2010 Comprehensive Evaluation Report is now an area where The University of Montana – Western does not meet the Commission's criteria for accreditation. According to U.S. Department of Education Regulation 34 CFR 602.20 and Commission Policy, *Commission Action Regarding Institutional Compliance Within Specified Period Policy*, the Commission requires that the University take appropriate action to ensure Recommendation 2 is addressed and resolved within the prescribed two-year period.

If you have questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,


Sandra E. Elman
President

SEE:rb

Enclosure: Recommendations (2010, 2011, 2013)
Policy: *Commission Action Regarding Institutional Compliance Within Specified Period*

cc: Dr. Brian Price, Assistant Provost

Year Three *Resources and Capacity* Evaluation
Spring 2013
The University of Montana – Western
Recommendation

1. 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 (Standard 1.A.1, 1.B.2).

Year One Peer-Evaluation Report
Spring 2011
The University of Montana - Western
Recommendations

1. 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 Experience One, and usefully guide the University in its self-study activities (Standard 1.A.2).

2. Though important progress is being made as the institution refines its Experience One program for first-year students, the University has yet to develop a coherent general education program with identified student learning outcomes. The Commission recommends that necessary steps be taken to address general education student learning outcomes (Standard 2.C.10).

Comprehensive Evaluation Report
Spring 2010
The University of Montana - Western
Recommendations

1. The evaluation committee recommends that the University develop and implement procedures necessary to accomplish the following:
 - Provide students with a substantial and coherent general education program with identifiable student learning outcomes (Policy 2.1).
 - Establish program assessment procedures based on these outcomes (Standard 2.B.2).
 - Implement the assessment procedures and use the results to improve the achievement of student learning outcomes (Standard 2.B.3).
2. While the committee 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 committee therefore recommends that the institution take immediate steps to implement frequent, regular and substantive assessment of learning outcomes in all academic programs. Furthermore, the committee 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 (Standard 2.B.1, 2.B.2, 2.B.3 and Policy 2.2).
3. As the University acknowledges, many entering students are underprepared for college-level learning in math and writing. Therefore the committee recommends that the institution continue to assess and improve its developmental mathematics and writing courses in order to heighten student competence in written communication and quantitative reasoning (Standard 2.B.3, 2.C.6).

Commission Action Regarding Institutional Compliance Within Specified Period Policy

If the Commission determines that an institution it accredits is not in compliance with a Commission standard for accreditation or an eligibility requirement, the Commission will immediately initiate adverse action against the institution or require the institution to take appropriate action to bring itself into compliance within a time period that shall not exceed: (1) twelve months, if the longest program offered by the institution is less than one year in length; (2) eighteen months, if the longest program offered by the institution is at least one year, but less than two years, in length; or (3) two years, if the longest program offered by the institution is at least two years in length.

The Commission may extend the period for compliance noted above should it reasonably expect that, based upon the institution's progress toward meeting the Commission's standard for accreditation or eligibility requirement, the institution will come into full compliance within a reasonable timeframe. Should an institution deem that as a result of mitigating circumstances it is not able to comply with the standard for accreditation or eligibility requirement within the specified period of time, the institution may submit a written request to the Commission for additional time to come into compliance with the standard for accreditation or eligibility requirement. The request is to be submitted prior to the time limit for corrective action set forth by the Commission, provide a detailed explanation of the reasons why the institution cannot comply with the standard for accreditation within the designated time period, and demonstrate that the institution is making good progress in meeting the standard for accreditation. Following a review of the request, the Commission will make a determination as to whether the institution has based its request on valid reasons. If the Commission determines that the institution has substantiated good cause for not complying within the specified time period and is making good progress to come into compliance, the Commission will extend the period for achieving compliance and stipulate requirements for continuing oversight of the institution's accreditation during the extension.

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