

Evaluation of RevUp's Course Sharing Initiative

I. Executive Summary

What was the initiative? A key element of the \$25 million-dollar RevUp Montana initiative focused on increasing access to advanced manufacturing programs by expanding availability of online and hybrid programs, focusing specifically on isolated rural students and others without physical access to a college that offered RevUp's lab-heavy target programs. To provide that access RevUp aimed to implement a model wherein a "teaching college" would make online coursework available to students at "enrolling colleges" and students would periodically complete lab work at Assessment Centers geographically dispersed throughout the state. A student's native institution would remain their transcript institution simplifying the student's enrollment, financial aid and transcript processes.

What were the results? After significant delays in implementation due to a myriad of factors (both internal and external), and a systems-level decision to limit the pilot, cost-sharing and administrative processes were established. In Fall Term 2016, five programs (machining, industrial maintenance, industrial electronics, diesel technology and entrepreneurship) were made available to students at four enrolling institutions. Roughly a dozen students made use of these opportunities.

What are the implications? While piloting course sharing did not reach near the scale hoped for in RevUp, the model highlighted the potential to expand program offerings, increase student access, reduce student and institutional operational costs and mitigate inconsistent demand for programs across the state by aggregating cohorts, particularly in low enrollment institutions. This seems to have opened up opportunities in Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training IV (TAACCT) (HealthCARE MT) in which four programs are actively being shared between institutions, including: medical assistant, surgical technology, pharmacy technician and radiologic technologist. The model offers significant opportunities to expand the breadth of training opportunities to students without forcing them to relocate.

II. Background on the Initiative

From the RevUp Montana application:

Using a common delivery system, each [RevUp] stacked credential features interactive, online curriculum that is coupled with consolidated practical training to fulfill each of the trades-oriented programs. The project creates significant efficiencies by utilizing single faculty facilitators to deliver online components to state-wide student cohorts. Students complete the practical portions of the curriculum at Practical Assessment Centers located conveniently throughout the state, if a student's nearest college does not have the lab resources or faculty to conduct assessments. This systemic approach allows our two-year college system to efficiently improve access and accelerate training for dispersed Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA)-eligible populations and meet the urgent needs of employers in these two key industries.

The original intention was that Flathead Valley Community College (FVCC) would translate its existing TAACCT-funded latticed advanced manufacturing programs (machining, industrial maintenance and industrial electronics created in TAACCT Round II) into online programs. Montana State University Northern (MSUN) planned to do the same with its diesel technology program and Missoula College agreed to create three online courses in entrepreneurship.

Four colleges (MSUN, Flathead Valley Community College, City College and Helena College) would provide the associated lab component of advanced manufacturing courses (a role termed "Assessment Centers"). MSUN's



diesel technology programs, looking primarily to partner with colleges in North Dakota, would require partner colleges to maintain their-own diesel lab. Missoula College's entrepreneurship courses did not require a lab component.

It is possible for students from one institutions to enroll in courses at another institution through "consortium agreements". Course Sharing, as piloted in RevUp, was seen to have several advantages over this process. (1) Consortium agreements are put in place on a student-by-student basis – making it challenging to scale. (2) There is no revenue sharing in consortium agreements, meaning there is no incentive for colleges to promote the opportunities. Within the framework created in RevUp, colleges more or less split revenue, which seems the more sustainable approach in Montana's competitive college environment.

III. Initial Goals

Implementation of a course sharing system would require the creation of a framework to govern the proposed cost sharing, course enrollment, etc. and create processes for sharing student data and grades between institutions. Administratively, RevUp sought to facilitate a process to gain consensus on a course sharing framework and gain approval to implement that framework.

On the programmatic side, RevUp sought to: (1) assist three "teaching colleges" (FVCC, MSUN and Missoula) complete and gain approval to offer the necessary online/hybrid programs, (2) engage any interested state institutions in establishing themselves as a "enrolling college" for these programs. RevUp also sought to explore options to expand online/hybrid in welding, energy technology, and industrial safety.

IV. Adjustments/Challenges/Road Blocks

FVCC's original advanced manufacturing course design kept the lab and theoretical components of the programs co-dependent – therefore still necessitating student access to physical labs. Subsequent revisions by FVCC and the willingness of MSUN to offer chunked lab experiences in Havre over the summer helped address this issue.

Policy-level challenges arose that delayed implementation of the proposed state-wide, shared-course model. These challenges included: (1) new substantive change policies by Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU) increased costs; (2) gaining United States Department of Labor (USDOL) permission-to-purchase and developing a framework to mitigate liability concerns associated with buying equipment through one consortium member (all necessary equipment budget was included in FVCC's budget) that would be used at other institutions; (3) building the buy-in from senior leaders who had differing opinions about the most appropriate model - leading to a need for systemic leadership on the issue to gain consistency and scalability of the model, and; (4) identifying and gaining buy-in to the technical infrastructure required to share student data and revenue between colleges. Due to issues associated with procurement/transfer of equipment, City College felt it could not offer machining-related training and Highlands College volunteered to serve in this function. Helena chose not to serve in any capacity.

The Office of Commission of Higher Education (OCHE) accepted the mantle of helping govern a course sharing pilot, but limited that pilot to four institutions (FVCC, MSUN, Missoula and GFC MSU) resulting in City and Highlands College losing the ability to offer lab courses within the course-sharing context and all other colleges lost their ability to function as enrolling colleges. Fort Peck Community College was added when it became apparent there was demand for online programming from MSUN.

Missoula and Bitterroot College initiated independent manufacturing programs/courses in response.



V. Outcomes

Administratively: A Montana Collaborative Programs Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was created (Appendix 1) and agreed upon that provide guidelines for cost-sharing. RevUp partnered with the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) to pilot WICHE Internet Course Exchange (ICE), a service that provide the back-end administration for enrollment, data sharing and revenue sharing. At the scale of course sharing accomplished during RevUp (roughly a dozen students) some Registrars, shared they believed the process required to implement WICHE ICE to be unnecessary. Further Registrars expressed they felt that if there was ongoing interest in course sharing that institutions within the Montana University System had the capacity to create a comparable administrative system that wouldn't require the \$6,000 annual cost of WICHE ICE.

Programmatically: FVCC, MSUN and Missoula College all completed the development of online/hybrid course offering. FVCC had the lion's share of this work in RevUp, creating three new manufacturing stacked credential pathways. Six student's external to FVCC (Missoula, MSUN) enrolled in FVCC's online/hybrid courses, though FVCC also found a market for online/hybrid courses amongst students in its own service area. Five students from Fort Peck Community College enrolled in MSUN's hybrid diesel offerings. One student (GFC MSU) participated in Missoula College's entrepreneurship course.

VI. Implications

While piloting course sharing did not reach near the scale hoped for in RevUp, successful implementation of the model highlighted the potential of such a model to increase student access and create administrative efficiencies across the system. Research suggests online delivery cuts the costs of education in half, though few institutions choose to charge less (Craig, 2015), meaning widespread expansion of online courses is one way to reduce costs and increase student Return on Investment. Seventy-seven percent of academic leaders believe that learning outcomes of quality online education are the same or superior to face-to-face instruction (Sloan Foundation, 2013). In Montana, online education also offers significant opportunity to reach student populations without physical or financial access to training without burdening these students with the considerable costs of relocation. Course sharing could help alleviate duplication, and mitigate the impacts of inconsistent program demand at individual institutions by aggregating of a student cohorts in courses/programs. This could help maintain a richer diversity of programming even at lower-enrollment institutions. RevUp Montana has created a framework and process that allows institutions to split revenue and FTE, as has been accomplished successfully in other states.

VII. Current Plans for Sustainability/Next Steps

There are no know plans to continue coordinated course sharing, though multiple institutions have created ad hoc course sharing arrangements as a means of expanding program opportunities available to their students. For example, in TAACCCT IV (HealthCARE MT) four programs are actively being shared between institutions, including: medical assistant, surgical technology, pharmacy technician and radiologic technologist.



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MONTANA COLLABORATIVE PROGRAMS (MCP)

OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER OF HIGHER EDUCATION

This memorandum of understanding (MOU) summarizes agreements between institutions within the Montana University System; the Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education and the Montana Board of Regents of Higher Education to optimize the use of resources and maximize educational opportunities by promoting collaborative programs in which individual courses/programs are offered by two or more campuses. We are entering into this agreement to better serve students and to mutually benefit our institutions. This agreement builds upon Montana Board of Regents of Higher Education Policy 303.9 – Collaborative Programs.

Under this agreement a student enrolled at a Primary Institution (i.e. Enrolling College) would have an opportunity to enroll in specific courses offered by a Secondary Institution (i.e. Teaching College) within the Montana Collaborative Programs (MCP) framework. The Primary Institution remains the transcribing institution, allowing seamless use of financial aid to support access to courses which enable completion of a program of study. Revenue will be split between institutions, as described below, to mutually benefit the individual institutions involved.

It is noted that this this collaborative programming or course sharing is being piloted in conjunction with two large federal TAACCCT grants that will pay the initial costs of establishing the course sharing framework (\$7500 annual consortium membership fee and initial set up at \$2,000 through Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE)). Should the pilot prove successful and it is determined that institutions would like to continue collaborative programs, several options to sustain the effort exist:

- An MUS institution could create a database comparable to WICHE-ICE that would allow student data and financial exchange between institutions
- Participating institutions could continue to pay the annual WICHE-ICE membership fee
- OCHE could continue to pay the annual WICHE-ICE membership fee, or
- The costs could be passed on to students by charging an additional 15%/seat (passed on to WICHE) or reducing institutional revenue by 15%/seat (and passing the difference to WICHE)

The following understandings will guide this effort, until modified or amended.

1. Purpose and goals

Through the Montana Collaborative Programs Montana's colleges and universities will cooperate to promote successful undergraduate and graduate educational experiences for students who wish to enroll in specific courses/programs offered at another MUS institution, or one of Montana's tribal colleges, in order to complete a program of study.

The goals of this partnership are to:

- Improve student access, success, and program completion.
 - Enable student access to courses available at two or more institutions.
- Use resources at institutions more efficiently and effectively.
- Aggregate student cohorts to increase efficiency of instruction.
- Expand student options for college-level services and curriculum.
- Improve collaboration between MUS institutions.

2. Roles

- **Montana's Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education (OCHE) will:**

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- Establish, maintain and update the framework that will govern the MCP, including related communications with participating institutions.
- Approve courses/programs that will be included in the MCP. These determinations will be made by an OCHE-appointed MCP subgroup, taking into account the unique need, demand, for collaborative program offerings and the ability of the proposing institution to provide quality online instruction – using a standard evaluative rubric.
- Oversee the contract between Montana colleges, universities and tribal colleges and WICHE that guides implementation of WICHE ICE, enabling transfer of student data and financial data between institutions.
- **The Primary Institution(s)** (i.e. Enrolling College) will:
 - Gain approval, as the transcribing institution, to offer the course/program through traditional approval processes (pursuant to Montana Board of Regents Policy 303.9 – Collaborative Programs, Section 3, Part A.)
 - Cross-list appropriate MCP courses.
 - Utilize WICHE ICE to provide students the opportunity to enroll in MCP courses.
 - The Enrolling Institution manages seat requests, entering student information data, and enrolling/un-enrolling students on the course rosters.
 - Provide student advising to promote access to MCP courses.
 - Allow their students to enroll at Primary Institution's (i.e. Enrolling College) published tuition and fee rates.
 - Allow the course to be counted towards the student's tuition "flat" spot.
 - Allow the course to be included in the student's course load for financial aid purposes.
 - Bill students with a single tuition & fee statement.
 - Collect all tuition & fees under established practices of the enrolling campus, internally process and fund any tuition & fee refunds associated with a withdrawal after the 15th class day.
 - Handle all withdrawals and refunds under enrolling campus practices and timelines.
 - Report FTE as of 15th class day to include their students enrolled as such in MCP courses at another campus (this represents a shift in Montana Board of Regents of Higher Education Policy 303.9 – Collaborative Programs to more equitably distribute the impact of revenue between institutions).
 - Award and hold student transcripts.
 - Provide all associated student support services required by the campus course enrollees, including providing services in a manner that supports effective participation in courses aligned with the Secondary Institution's academic calendar.
- **The Secondary Institution(s)** (i.e. Teaching College) will....
 - Agrees to offer/hold at least 25% of seats in MCP courses to students from other colleges until a week prior to the start of term.
 - Agrees to respond to requests for available MCP course seats within 48 hours.
 - Agrees to not cancel course instruction for courses prior to one week before the start of term or that have at least 50% or 7 total students enrolled in the course.
 - Maintain WICHE ICE platform and necessary academic course documentation to provide the enrolling college accurate information and the ability to serve students in a timely manner.
 - The Teaching Institution manages course offerings in their catalog, activates seats for term courses to be offered, grants seats for courses, and enters grade/s upon course completion.
 - Allow students to participate through a restricted entry process without separate application, admittance or transcript requirements of the teaching campus.

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- Allow the enrolling campus to maintain and report the FTE, but separately identify and acknowledge the student credit hour production of the teaching faculty at the department level.
 - Alert the enrolling campus academic administration of any student misconduct concerns or regular academic access/participation concerns in the course.
 - Honor the teaching-and when possible- the enrolling campus timeline for assessment, feedback to the enrolling campus, and posting of grades.
 - Allow the enrolled online students to engage in a course evaluation in a similar manner as other teaching campus students do.
 - Honor Primary Institution (i.e. Enrolling College) business and academic practices whenever possible.
 - Provide online student access to the course LMS and to related support and training services, as well as library resources and other online student services necessary from the teaching campus in order engage the student in the full online learning experience.
 - Accept that online enrollees in any particular course may include a mix of teaching campus students and students from other MUS, Tribal and/or CC campuses participating in the MCP.
 - Handle internal revenue distributions through established teaching campus channels in accord with local practices.
 - Gain appropriate approvals for all course, program and DE fees and share information about the fee structure with all enrolling colleges.
- **The Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE)**, via contracted services, will:
 - Provide technical and support services enabling secure transfer of student records and financial transactions between institutions that share a relationship under the MCP.
 - Train (ICE PICs-Program Information Coordinators) on each campus.
 - Provided login access to web-enabled database.
 - Provide a user friendly web-enabled database system housed on secure encrypted server and available to member institutions at any time. The system provides access to:
 - An online course catalog, student data information, and course rosters.
 - Student data may be exported and uploaded to university Student Information Systems and/or Learning Management Systems and vice versa, enabling sharing of data necessary for both the Primary Institution (e.g. grades) and the Secondary Institution (e.g. directory information).
 - The Secondary Institution (i.e. Teaching College) ICE PIC manages enrollment of member institution students in MCP courses by granting or denying requests made by Primary Institution (i.e. Enrolling Colleges) ICE PICs.
 - Students have access to a public view of the course catalog and detailed course descriptions
 - Coordinate a financial exchange between institutions according to OCHE's MCP guidance described later in this document.
 - WICHE bills the Primary Institution (i.e. Enrolling College), may retain an administrative fee, and rebates the balance to the Secondary Institution (i.e. Teaching College).

3. Recruitment and Admissions

- Recruitment of students will be the responsibility of both primary and secondary institutions.
- Students will be admitted through the admission process using the admission requirements of their Primary Institution.
- Once a student is enrolled in their Primary institution, the Primary Institution will request a seat in the Collaborative Programs course from the Secondary Institution (i.e. Teaching College). The seat may or may not be granted based upon availability.

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- Enrollment in MCP courses will be available up to a week prior to the start of term at the Primary Institution (i.e. Teaching College), assuming all seats are not filled
- Students enrolled in the MCP course will be required as a condition of enrollment in MCP courses to authorize joint access to their student records for both institutions.

3. Tuition and Fees

- Tuition and fees will be based on the courses for which students register and based upon the tuition and fees of the Primary Institution (i.e. Enrolling College); Withdrawals and refunds will be handled by the Primary Institution who received the tuition and fees in accordance with its policies.
- Tuition will be assessed at resident or non-resident rates depending upon the residency classification of the student in relationship to their Primary Institution (i.e. Enrolling College).
- The Primary Institution (i.e. Enrolling college) will remit a flat-fee tuition compensation, based on the lowest credit hour cost amongst MUS consortium member colleges [\$65.00 per credit hour as of January 2016], to WICHE as of 15th class day by the 35th class day, based on the Secondary Institution's academic calendar. The Primary Institution will redeem tuition and fees charged in excess of the flat-fee rate tuition.
- The Secondary Institution (i.e. Teaching College) will internally accept the receipt of the flat fee rate tuition from WICHE, for all students in the course from all campuses, as of the 15th class day by the 35th class day.
- Should the Montana consortium choose to continue a relationship with WICHE after the pilot project, and the consortium should choose the alternative funding structure in which WICHE charges a 15% administrative fee on seats, WICHE will extract that 15% from tuition collected from the Primary Institution prior to remitting funds to the Primary or Secondary Institutions. Otherwise, WICHE's financial role is that of a pass-through.

4. Program Articulation and Advising

- Academic advising will be the responsibility of the Primary Institution, which will select and train academic advisors.
- Issues relating to articulation, class content, or other curricular matters will be resolved by the Chief Academic Officers or their designees at each institution.

5. Registration and Student Records

- Students will register for courses through the regular registration processes at their Primary Institution. Once a student is enrolled in their Primary institution, the Primary Institution will request a seat in the Collaborative Programs course from the Secondary Institution (i.e. Teaching College). The seat may or may not be granted based upon availability.
- The Registrar's Office at the Primary Institution (i.e. Enrolling College) will be responsible for maintaining student records for students with collaborative courses taken through partner institutions.
- Students will be coded and tracked in the Student Information Systems at both institutions.
- Necessary information will be shared between the institutions through the WICHE-ICE database.

6. Financial Aid and Scholarships

- Financial aid will be available for qualified students from their Primary Institution.
- Student financial aid will be made available through their Primary Institution, as determined by the degree seeking status of the student. Compliance information and end-of-term information will be shared between Financial Aid Offices at each institution through data available to ICE-PICs in the WICHE-ICE database.
- Students should be eligible to receive scholarships, subject to application and selection policies of their Primary Institution. Some scholarships may have credit hour or other restrictions.

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7. Student Grievances and Conduct

- Participating institutions agree that students will not be allowed to use another institution's grievance procedures to pursue complaints solely involving another institution and/or its administration, faculty, staff, services or facilities. Instead complaints or grievances shall be referred to the appropriate institution's process or grievance procedures.
- Students participating in the MCP shall comply with the conduct standards at both institutions. Both the Primary and Secondary Institutions may intervene in cases of misconduct, particularly when cases involve health and safety. Students found in violation of conduct codes may receive sanctions from each institution. Institutions reserve the option to decide that only one institution will process a case of misconduct. Institutions will create a process for reporting to the other when the institution has undertaken student conduct actions.

9. Terms and Termination

- This agreement shall not create any rights in any third parties, specifically any students participating in the program. The only parties to this agreement are the participating institutions.
- Amendments to this agreement must be in writing and approved by the designated representative of each institution.
- Either party may terminate this agreement for cause by giving written notice to the designated representative at least 90 days prior to the commencement of a new academic term.

10. Signatures

Presidents/deans/CEOs of 2-year MUS and Tribal Colleges

Clay Christian, Commissioner, Montana Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education