

# GREAT FALLS COLLEGE AD HOC REPORT



**GREAT FALLS  
COLLEGE**  
MONTANA STATE  
UNIVERSITY

Submitted to the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities on September 8, 2026

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## Introduction

Last year, Great Falls College submitted a request for an additional location, and it was approved by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities on October 3, 2025 (Appendix A). The additional location is located at Gallatin College, 100 Swingle Building, Bozeman, MT, which is on the Montana State University Bozeman campus (Gallatin College is an embedded two-year college of Montana State University Bozeman).

The implementation date for this additional location was fall 2026 (course start date was August 24, 2026) and allows dental hygiene students to attend synchronous online didactic courses delivered from Great Falls College while being physically present at the Swingle Building for more than 50% of the total program credits. In addition to the online coursework, students participate in face-to-face laboratory sessions and clinical experiences from the Swingle Building that are taught by faculty employed by Great Falls College. Beginning in fall 2026, the dental hygiene students located in Bozeman are required to attend courses, face-to-face laboratory sessions, and clinical experiences for more than 50% of the total credits in the program. During fall 2025 and spring 2026, the College first offered the Bozeman option for dental hygiene where the students in Bozeman attended courses, face-to-face laboratory sessions, and clinical experiences from the Swingle Building for less than 50% of the total credits in the program.

There have not been any major institutional changes at Great Falls College that have impacted this additional location.

## Implementation Status

### Educational Offering

#### Changes to the program

Beginning fall 2026, clinical and lab courses are delivered entirely face-to-face at the Gallatin College off-site facility. These include hands-on skill development, patient care, and simulations. The courses that are, or will soon be, taught in person at the Gallatin College location are DENT 102 Preclinic, DENT 151, 251, 252, 281 Clinic I through IV, DENT 122, 125 Radiology Labs I and II, DENT 240 Local Anesthesia Lab, DENT 130 Dental Materials Lab (See [catalog](#) for additional course details). Students will spend 232 days on-site at the Gallatin College location over the two-year program for the clinical and lab sessions. Therefore, approximately 60-70% of credits would be face-to-face/in-person. The remainder of the courses will be provided in a hybrid model where the students would gather as a cohort in a designated classroom at Gallatin College with access to a large tv monitor, desks, and instructor support to attend the Great Falls College didactic courses online and synchronously. These synchronous online courses would be approximately 30-40% of the credits of the two-year program courses.

### Methods of program assessment

The Dental Hygiene Program utilizes a robust assessment framework that integrates both formative and summative assessments to support student development and evaluate learning outcomes. Students engage in a variety of assignments and evaluations designed to measure their progress over time. Regarding program assessment and effectiveness, the Commission on Dental Accreditation requires accredited programs like our hygiene program to establish program goals with metrics and provide examples of continuous review of these goals. For example, the program uses board pass rates, graduate surveys, and specific program student learning outcome data to evaluate one of the program's goals, "to provide comprehensive curriculum in dental hygiene that reflects current practice and incorporates a variety of health care settings." As part of the process, the program must be able to show that students at the Bozeman site are meeting these goals at a similar rate to the Great Falls site. If any of these metrics drop below a benchmark, the program will take steps to implement a corrective action plan to meet these goals. The program is required to produce two previous years of these reviews at every site visit. They are also required to provide multiple examples of action plans and the results of these plans.

In addition to an ongoing review of program goals measuring student achievement, the program also reviews program student learning data every semester. This data will now include the Bozeman site. The curriculum is structured so that key concepts and skills are introduced, reinforced, and ultimately assessed for proficiency at the end of each instructional sequence. Students engage in a variety of assignments and evaluations designed to measure their progress over time. Assessment data is reviewed each semester and analyzed alongside institutional data to identify trends and areas for improvement. When modifications to the curriculum or instructional strategies are implemented, these changes are recorded and tracked to determine their impact on student performance. This continuous improvement process ensures that the program remains responsive to student needs and committed to enhancing educational quality.

Student achievement data is compared to the main campus, and adjustments are made to create an equitable experience on both campuses. For example, during our first-year students in Bozeman were using a different system to capture dental x-ray images. After the first semester, it was determined that the students need the same system as our Great Falls College campus because they were not meeting course level student learning outcomes at the same level as the GF students. We used equipment fees to purchase the new system. To determine the need, the program reviewed both instructor and student feedback, student image quality, student skill evaluations, and the number of retakes due to machine errors (this is a quality control mechanism we require for patient safety). The program also hired an adjunct to hold open labs this spring in Bozeman to assist students with learning how to use the new equipment and to practice their radiology skills. These labs were not offered to students at Great Falls because they did not need extra practice. The program continues to monitor these skills using assessment tools to determine if additional activities or support will be needed for these students.

## Resources and Capacity

### Student services

Great Falls College maintains a robust and well-established student services infrastructure designed to support both online and face-to-face learners. These services include academic advising, tutoring, counseling, disability support, library access, and technical assistance, all of which are accessible to students regardless of their physical location. The college currently supports two other academic programs operating out of the Swingle facility on the Bozeman campus. As such, the infrastructure and support systems are already in place to accommodate students participating in distance learning from this site. The addition of Dental Hygiene students at the Bozeman location has not required any new or expanded student service.

This expansion has had no adverse implications for the rest of the student body. The college's existing systems are fully capable of supporting the additional cohort, ensuring that all students—whether on the main campus or at a remote site—receive equitable access to the resources they need to succeed. Students can utilize the student services at the Great Falls campus, such as academic advisors, financial aid, and dental hygiene tutors. Beginning in the 2026-27 fiscal year, a Perkins grant-funded liaison at the Swingle Building will help coordinate services for students, refer students to appropriate resources on the Great Falls campus, and provide assistance in navigating situations that occur on the Bozeman campus.

### Facilities and equipment

The Gallatin College site is a fully functional dental clinic located at Gallatin College in Bozeman, Montana, on the Montana State University campus. The site was selected for its turnkey readiness and alignment with Commission on Dental Accreditation (CODA) standards. The facility provides adequate clinical, laboratory, sterilization, and instructional space to support a cohort of five students.

Since implementation of the site, several changes have occurred related to facilities and equipment. While the clinic was operational at the time of occupancy, the program encountered a greater need for equipment replacement, repairs, and facility maintenance than originally anticipated. As equipment was evaluated and utilized for instruction, additional purchases were necessary to address aging equipment, maintain clinical functionality, and ensure compliance with programmatic accreditation requirements. For example, two dental chairs from the Great Falls campus were relocated to the Bozeman site after existing chairs were determined to be nonfunctional and beyond repair.

### Faculty and staff

The program has successfully secured qualified personnel to support the current Bozeman cohort. At present, the site is staffed by two adjunct faculty members, one of whom serves as the on-site clinical supervisor responsible for oversight of clinical instruction, student supervision, educational experiences, and quality assurance for the five students enrolled in the Bozeman cohort. Initially, front office responsibilities were going to be supported through a

Gallatin College health science student or student worker assisting with patient scheduling and check-in activities. However, as the Bozeman location became established, the institution recognized the need for a full-time position to support the operational and student service needs of all Great Falls College Health Science programs located at the Swingle facility, of which there are currently three. During this transition period, the college utilized an existing employee to serve as the Bozeman liaison, providing on-site support and ensuring continuity of services. This interim solution allowed the institution to maintain operations while developing and recruiting for a permanent full-time on-site liaison position.

An evaluation of operational and educational needs identified the necessity for additional dedicated personnel. The program is currently hiring a full-time site coordinator to manage front office operations, coordinate patient services, support students and faculty, and assist other Great Falls College Health Science programs located at the Swingle Center. This position will provide increased operational stability and ensure consistent support services at the site.

Program evaluation has also demonstrated that full-time faculty are necessary to support continued growth, maintain educational quality, and provide increased consistency in instruction and student support. Through funding provided by the Rural Health Transformation Program (RHTP) grant, the college will add two full-time faculty positions dedicated to the Bozeman location. These positions will strengthen academic oversight, curriculum delivery, student advising, assessment activities, and clinical education while supporting future program expansion.

All faculty and staff assigned to the Bozeman location are employees of Great Falls College and are evaluated using the same institutional policies, procedures, and performance expectations as personnel located on the Great Falls campus. Academic oversight remains centralized through the Dental Hygiene Program Director and the Health Science Division administration, ensuring consistency in curriculum delivery, assessment practices, student outcomes, and compliance with Commission on Dental Accreditation (CODA) standards.

Clearly defined academic controls are maintained through centralized curriculum management, standardized course materials, common learning outcomes, uniform grading and assessment processes, faculty calibration activities, and ongoing review of student learning outcomes and program effectiveness. Clinical instruction, competency assessments, and program policies are consistent across all locations and are monitored by program leadership to ensure equivalent educational experiences for all students, regardless of site.

As the program expands, the RHTP grant will also support the addition of an Educational Coordinator to provide oversight and coordination across multiple locations. This position will further strengthen continuity, consistency, and quality assurance among sites while maintaining compliance with accreditation standards. The Great Falls campus will continue to serve as the primary instructional hub for curriculum development, assessment, faculty collaboration, and

overall academic governance, ensuring that all satellite locations operate under the same academic standards and institutional controls.

## Budget and Enrollment

### Enrollment Status Compared to Proposal

Current enrollment is consistent with the program's implementation plan. The Bozeman site currently enrolls one cohort every other year. Beginning in 2028, the program will transition to admitting a new cohort annually, which is expected to increase enrollment and improve long-term program sustainability. Currently, the program does not anticipate a significant enrollment gap. In fact, the program has already observed prospective students in the Bozeman area delaying application until the next cohort opens, indicating continued demand for enrollment opportunities. Additionally, workforce data and regional dental hygiene employment trends continue to demonstrate a strong need for graduates throughout Montana.

*Table of Expenses and Revenue Projections and Actual Values*

| Expenses              | Projected Values    | Actual Values       | Revenue             | Projected Values   | Actual Values      |
|-----------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Enrollment            | 5 students          | 5 students          | Revenue from Clinic | \$600.00           | \$1,450.00         |
| Equipment             | \$40,000.00         | \$114,783.09        | Program Fees        | \$2,780.00         | \$2,780.00         |
| Personnel             | \$106,848.84        | \$120,470.11        | FTE                 | \$60,785.00        | \$60,785.00        |
| Travel                | \$500.00            | \$11,274.78         |                     |                    |                    |
| Maintenance & Repairs | \$2,250.00          | \$16,288.25         |                     |                    |                    |
| Parking               | \$875.00            | \$1,072.20          |                     |                    |                    |
| Subscriptions         | \$0-unanticipated   | \$1,083.52          |                     |                    |                    |
| <b>TOTAL</b>          | <b>\$150,473.84</b> | <b>\$264,971.95</b> | <b>TOTAL</b>        | <b>\$64,165.00</b> | <b>\$65,015.00</b> |

### Plans to Address Enrollment Gaps

Because enrollment demand remains strong, the institution does not anticipate a significant gap between projected and actual enrollment. However, the transition to annual cohort admissions beginning in 2028 will further strengthen enrollment stability and improve access for students in southwest Montana. Ongoing recruitment efforts, community partnerships, and workforce demand for dental hygienists will continue to support enrollment goals.

## Revenue and Expense Comparison

Actual expenses exceeded projected expenses primarily due to startup costs that were not fully anticipated during the proposal phase. These costs included significant facility repairs, maintenance requirements, equipment replacement, and technology needs necessary to support instruction and clinical operations at the Bozeman location. While these expenditures resulted in costs higher than originally projected, they represent largely one-time startup investments rather than recurring operational expenses.

## Institutional Plans to Address the Financial Gap

The institution has implemented several measures to address the variance between projected and actual expenses. The Bozeman site has now been incorporated into the college's established equipment replacement and preventative maintenance schedule, similar to the Great Falls campus. This system will allow for more accurate budgeting and long-term planning moving forward.

In addition, the institution has secured funding through the [Rural Health Transformation Program \(RHTP\)](#) grant, which will provide support for faculty and staff positions, travel, and other operational costs for five years. The grant funding will allow the program sufficient time to become fully established while reducing the impact of startup costs on institutional resources. Once these initial expenses have been addressed and annual enrollment increases beginning in 2028, the program is expected to generate sufficient revenue to support ongoing operating expenses without creating a long-term financial gap.

The institution remains committed to supporting the Bozeman location as a critical component of expanding access to dental hygiene education and addressing workforce shortages across Montana.

## Conclusion

The future of the Bozeman dental hygiene site is strengthened by the recent award of the Rural Health Transformation Program (RHTP) grant. This funding provides the resources necessary to expand personnel, enhance educational quality, and support the long-term stability of the program. The grant will support the addition of two full-time faculty members and one staff position dedicated to the Bozeman location, helping ensure students receive the academic and clinical support needed for success.

In addition to supporting the Bozeman site, the grant creates an opportunity to expand dental hygiene education to two additional satellite locations across Montana. To maintain Commission on Dental Accreditation (CODA) standards related to consistency, quality, and oversight across multiple locations, the program plans to add an Educational Coordinator who will provide

leadership and ensure continuity of curriculum delivery, student experiences, and assessment practices among all sites.

This expansion will allow the program to build a sustainable educational model that blends distance and face-to-face instruction while increasing access to dental hygiene education in rural and underserved areas of Montana. Collaboration among the three sites will allow faculty expertise, instructional resources, and educational activities to be shared across locations, helping to improve efficiency and reduce operational costs associated with satellite site delivery.

The Great Falls campus will continue to serve as the primary instructional site, enrolling approximately 25 students annually and functioning as the hub for curriculum development, faculty collaboration, assessment, and program oversight. Together, the Great Falls campus, Bozeman site, and future satellite locations will position the program to meet Montana's growing workforce needs while maintaining high educational standards and expanding access to dental hygiene education throughout the state.

## Appendix A

October 11, 2025

Eleazar Ortega  
Executive Director, Institutional Effectiveness  
Great Falls College Montana State University  
2100 16th Avenue South  
Great Falls, Montana 59405-4909

Dear Eleazar:

Following the recommendation of the external peer review panel, the Executive Committee of the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities' (NWCCU) Board of Commissioners approved the request from Great Falls College Montana State University (GFCMSU) for a new additional location effective October 3, 2025. This includes the Additional Location:

- Gallatin College located within the Montana State University Bozeman campus at 100 Swingle Building, Bozeman MT 59717-3260 which offers the following program:
  - Associate of Applied Science (AAS) Dental Hygiene (93 Semester credits; available face-to-face, available via distance education)

Accordingly, this change is now included under your institution's accreditation.

Please be advised that Federal regulations and NWCCU policy require a site visit within six months of implementation of the additional location. With an intended implementation date of Fall 2026, GFCMSU is required to submit an ad hoc report and host a site visit in Fall 2026. This visit will address the effectiveness of program implementation and any changes in implementation from the submitted program proposal.

Please keep this acknowledgement in your records. Thank you for keeping NWCCU apprised of the developments at GFCMSU.

Sincerely,



Gita Bangera  
Senior Vice President

cc: Stephanie Erdman, Dean/CEO Great Falls College Montana State University  
Clayton T. Christian, Commissioner of Higher Education, Montana University System  
Mellissa Thoreson, Director of Institutional Evaluation and Planning, NWCCU