

Common Ground

2011 State of the College Address and Faculty Convocation

August 24, 2011

By: Dr. Dean Joe Schaffer

Welcome faculty, staff, and community supporters of MSU-Great Falls. It is great to have you all on campus again as we look ahead to the start of the new academic year.

Before I begin formally, I would like to take a moment for some special introductions.

Let me start with our newest Faculty and Staff additions to the College:

- **Holly Schott, Dental Clinic Manager (06/02/11)**
- **Bill Willis, Lead Custodian – Maintenance Worker II (07/05/11)**
- **Cheryl Stanley, Instructional Designer (07/18/11)**
- **David Flaherty, Lab Teaching Assistant/Technician (07/25/11)**
- **Tim Obresley, SET Faculty (08/01/11)**
- **Kerry Dolan, Accounting Faculty (08/01/11)**
- **Susan Whatley, Medical Transcription Program Director/Faculty (08/01/11)**
- **Jonathan Rimmel, Graphic Design Technician (08/01/11)**
- **Leanne Frost, Division Director for Developmental Education & Transfer (08/18/11)**
- **Bridgette Pence (Recruiter 03/28/11), Pathways Advisor (09/01/11)**
- **Christine Perkins, Pathways Advisor (09/11/11)**

We also have some special community members joining us today, including members of the Dean's Advisory Council:

- **Deb Evans**
- **Laura Goldhahn**

The Chairman of our Development Board, **Brad Talcott** is with us today.

Key Community Leaders and some of our strongest partners in attendance include:

- **Steve Malicott**
- **Tom Alfrey**
- **David Crum**
- **Brett Doney**
- **Richard McDowell**
- **Melissa Wideseth**
- **Mary Sheehy-Moe, former Dean/CEO**

While we are saying hello to so many new people, this year we will be saying goodbye to a very special person. Mary Ellen Baukol has announced her plans to retire to me effective this coming April. Mary Ellen worked for MSU-Great Falls from 1989 to 1995, and then returned in her current position in 2000. She has collectively dedicated 17 years of her life to this campus. I know I speak on behalf of the entire campus community when I say her contributions are greatly appreciated and she will be missed. Please join me in recognizing Mary Ellen for her years of services at MSU-Great Falls.

Thank you all for joining us today.

Let me begin my presentation with the current state of MSU-Great Falls.

I'll specifically address areas of institutional effectiveness, budget and fiscal resources, important internal happenings, and a glimpse of the external environment impacting the College.

Perhaps not surprising to many of us, participation at MSU-Great Falls continues to increase. Last year we witnessed another record enrollment, with a 7% increase in FTE.

In the past four years our FTE has increased an amazing 37%.

After having shown a general trend upward in the last few years, persistence rates for MSU-Great Falls first-time full-time students dropped to 54% of the fall 2009 cohort returning for the fall 2010 term.

Because of the small sizes of entering cohorts at MSU-Great Falls, there is quite a bit of variation in the persistence rate from year to year. If we look at 3-year running averages of persistence rates, these differences smooth out, and we see a general trend for increasing student persistence.

There is a similar trend for our first-time, part-time students, however they persist at a lower rate than do our full-time students.

Compared to the other 280 community colleges across the nation who participated in the National Community College Benchmark Project, our fall-to-fall retention rate for entering students in Fall 2009 who persisted to Fall 2010 was higher than 84% of those schools.

In terms of productivity and workforce development, the College has truly been a success story. It is clear the campus community has bought into the completion agenda.

In just three years the number of workforce degrees, or Associate of Applied Science, Certificate of Applied Science, and Professional Certifications have skyrocketed.

We have witnessed a 55% increase in workforce degrees/certificates awarded. And this hasn't simply been a reflection of increased enrollment – the number of these credentials awarded has grown at four-times the rate of enrollment. This is truly impressive.

In terms of benchmarking, we have gone from being considerably lower than our peer group to now breaking away well ahead of where our peers are on this important measure.

Even with the current recession and difficult economic conditions, our graduates tend to find employment in their field at a higher rate than those institutions we benchmark against.

While our graduates in-field job placement rate dipped slightly last year, it has stayed relatively consistent over time, and certainly has not decreased to the magnitude of our peer institutions.

This calculation of placement does not exclude students who complete a degree or credential intended for entry into the workforce but decide to simply continue their education. If we remove those students who complete and then continue school, the in-field job placement rate for our graduates increases to 77% in 2010/2011.

As many of you know, increase student participation and completion of programs leading towards transfer to a four-year degree is a strategic priority in the College's strategic plan. Transfer degree completion is also an important measure of our overall institutional effectiveness.

Similar to our growth in workforce degree completions, transfer degrees, or Associate of Arts and Associate of Science degrees have grown considerably over the past years.

A 36% increase in the past three years, and an incredible 101% increase since 2005/2006.

Again, this is not simply a byproduct of increasing enrollment – the number of transfer degrees awarded has increased at twice the rate of enrollment since 2005/2006.

Although transfer degree completion is on the rise, last year the percent of our transfer students who left the College with 12 credits or more and enrolled at a four-year institution actually decreased.

While we are doing a better job of helping our students earn the Associate of Arts or Associate of Science degrees, we have not made any substantial improvement to how many of these students successfully navigate the transfer process.

In the coming years we must work with the Montana University System and our private college partners to increase articulated programs and resolve systems issues that perhaps are making the transfer process problematic for our students.

Even with the lower percentage transfer rates, MSU-Great Falls continues to be at the top of the two-year institutions in regards to 2-year transfer bachelor's degree owners. We swap the top honor with Flathead Valley Community College from year to year.

Across the nation Community Colleges are struggling with historically high enrollments in developmental math, compounded by consistently marginal success rates of students in these courses. This one area alone has risen to prominence amongst federal agencies, political leaders, and many leading education-related foundations and philanthropists.

This is also an area where we at MSU-Great Falls feel we can do better, and this past year in the review of our strategic plan we have agreed to add this as a new strategic priority.

On average 58% of the MSU-Great Falls students who enrolled in developmental math courses in the last five years were successful (completed the course with a C- or higher). The rates in math developmental coursework at MSU-Great Falls are similar to the median rate of our peers. In other words, on average we are doing as well as everyone else.

After three years of decline, student success in developmental writing courses is climbing back toward the College's historical high – increasing over 10% from FY09 to FY10.

In general, more students at MSU-Great Falls are successful in developmental writing courses than developmental math courses.

Over the last five years about 70% of students in these courses have been successful.

In the falls of 2006 and 2007 MSU-Great Falls had significantly higher success rates than peer institutions in developmental writing courses; these rates dropped substantially in the next two fall terms, but increased in fall 2010 to 74%.

One of the areas I am most proud of in our recent past has been the welcoming of the Great Falls Public Schools Adult Basic Literacy Education, or ABLE program to our campus. While we

cannot take credit for their impressive work, I do like to think the environment we create here has had some impact on their results.

And the results have been impressive. After locating on campus, the number of GED clients ABLE has served has increased by 54%!

More impressively, since 2009, the number of GED graduates has increased a staggering 145%.

Even the number ESOL students has increased significantly – 33% since 2008.

This is a perfect example of the power of cross-collaboration between secondary and post-secondary education. I am looking forward to the future and seeing how adult basic education grows here on the MSU-Great Falls campus.

I mentioned previously that two of our four strategic priorities deal with developmental education and transfer programming. The other two pertain to engaging more adult students as well as engaging more high school aged students.

Another area where the College shines is in our work with adult students. Adult student participation and completion has increased significantly over the past three years.

When we benchmark our student population to our peer institutions, we find that on average MSU-Great Falls has a much higher percent of adult students than other colleges in our peer group.

MSU-Great Falls also has the highest percent of adult students than any other two-year college in Montana.

For these reasons, I believe that the College can celebrate the accomplishment of this strategic plan priority!

With regards to our strategic plan priority of engaging more high school students in college courses, we have experienced only marginal improvement since the 2006-2007 academic year. After a three year decline, we saw a considerable increase in the number of high school students dually enrolled, but then witnessed a decline last year.

Much of this can be attributed to the relative lack of stability in programming as a result of state-wide conversations and changes to dual credit and dual enrollment. We also believe in part this is a result of key turnover in some of the high school counselors we have long histories of working with.

As we look forward, our partnership with the Montana Digital Academy, as well as some focused efforts we'll taken on in the coming years, will surely help us recover and succeed in this priority area.

I want to shift gears slightly now and briefly discuss the state of the College's fiscal affairs. I believe we are all well aware of the budget challenges the campus has faced over the past two biennia. Through prudent planning, collaborative budget development, and a concerted focus on smart spending, the College has positioned itself to be able to make some strategic investments because of our savings, efficiencies, and smart reallocation of resources.

Many of these investments and reallocations are inherent in the campus' reorganization plans set in motion last spring. I can tell you that they are on target and in areas we need to invest in.

When we compare ourselves to our peer institutions with our spending per FTE by function, we find that traditionally we have spent more than our peers in just two areas: Instruction and Public Service. Our purposeful and continued investment in instruction is something that sets us apart, and we'll continue that commitment.

But looking at other key areas such as student services and institutional support, the College has expended significantly less than our peer institutions. To reconcile this, much of our reorganization strategy has been to invest in programs, services, and people that will directly impact students in these two areas.

In considering the budget for Fiscal Year 2012, and what we will submit to the Board of Regents for approval in September, the College continues to meet our own internal expectations for investment, but also the expectations of the Regents themselves. The Board sets two primary goals for how it expects the campuses to invest their money.

First, the Board's target for spending on instruction is 50%. MSU-Great Falls continues to meet this mark, and this year we anticipate spending 52% of our budget on the instructional category.

Second, the Board has set a target of 70% for spending on Instruction, Academic Support and Student Services, or those areas that directly impact students. Again, the College has exceeded this target with an anticipated investment of 73% on those three areas.

As measures of internal efficiency and a focus on using our resources where they impact students most, MSU-Great Falls is in strong fiscal health.

Another measure of efficiency, is our spending per student FTE. MSU-Great Falls has consistently been efficient in this regard, charting the lowest or second lowest expenditures per student FTE in the Montana University System (UM Helena has been the other).

Even with the considerable expense associated with our high-cost health care and energy programming, the College has kept its spending below the 2-year college average, and well below the Montana University System average for the past four years. We anticipate this trend to continue in the coming year.

Last, let me touch on a historical perspective of our overall budget. While we have witnessed minor fluctuations over the past years, the College has continually received approximately 60% of its funding through direct state appropriations, and 40% through student tuition.

Thanks to a continued commitment by the Board of Regents, tuition at the two-year colleges like MSU-Great Falls has been frozen for the past four years, and will be again for this biennium. This commitment to making College affordable should be celebrated and with much thanks given to the Regents.

Moreover, the Board has made a priority to reallocate state appropriations to keep the two-year institutions whole. Although the legislature last spring funded the University System at a lower level for this biennium than last, the reallocation of state funds, as well as some aggressive enrollment projections, creates a picture of slight increase in our overall budget for FY12.

Nearly all of this increase is a result of the Regent's sponsored pay plan for all employees of the Montana University System.

Next, I would like to touch briefly on some of the major internal organizational and external highlights pertaining to the current state of the College.

Most of us are aware of the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities' new accreditation standards. Moving away from a decennial (ten year) accreditation process, the Commission has adopted and employed a new septennial (seven year) process that is built around the concept of continuous improvement and the notion of "living accreditation." The new standards require institutions to engage in the accreditation process on an annual basis, and in this first round, some institutions like MSU-Great Falls, are moving through the seven year process in an accelerated timeframe – for us, five years.

Last spring, a team of faculty and staff helped prepare our Year One accreditation report. We have received the Commission's findings based on our report and the evaluation team's review of it. The report came with two recommendations, neither of which are surprising. The first, is to finalize the College's indicators of mission fulfillment, or what we call our Core Indicators of Institutional Effectiveness. The second, is to finalize our student learning outcomes assessment process. Specifically the Commission has said the College must now "provide evidence that the students who complete its educational courses, programs, and degrees...achieve identified

course, program, and degree learning outcomes.” Both of these will be addressed in our plans for the future.

After years of change, last spring we began a final reorganization plan that I referenced earlier. This reorganization will allow us to position the campus and our collective resources as a final alignment of our structure to meet the purpose of helping our students succeed. I will go into the details of how the reorganization will play out in the coming years in a few moments.

Finally, if you haven't been on campus much this summer, you are probably surprised to see how our facilities have changed. This fall we will open a newly renovated food court, we have completed our Simulated Hospital and will start programming in it, and we have now nearly completed the new advising center space. Many of you have also asked me about the status of the Child Development Center on campus. The project is still moving forward, and we have substantially completed the center's architectural design. The project is waiting on final cost estimates to determine the level of additional fundraising necessary to put the center into construction. Our timeline is to have Regent's approval of the project in November and to be breaking ground early next spring.

Externally, the College will also be impacted by key areas. Probably most significant is the continuation of the State's two-year agenda titled College!Now. Most of you are familiar with College!Now and the fact that it is one of seven state initiatives funded by the Lumina Foundation for Education. College!Now has an aggressive agenda that ultimately aims to help Montana engage more individuals in the state's two-year colleges, and ultimately increase the level of college attainment of Montanans.

I want to take this moment to update you on a few key aspects of the College!Now initiative that will impact MSU-Great Falls. First, is a historical milestone recently achieved when the Board of Regents approved a state-wide Mission and Vision statement for two-year education in Montana. Second, at their most recent meeting, they also approved a 25 month work plan that outlines the process for extending the comprehensive community college mission to all five colleges of technologies. Although in most ways we already embody the comprehensive community college mission here at MSU-Great Falls, one aspect of this plan will have significant impacts on this campus. That is the rebranding of all five colleges of technology. This component alone could result a new name, and new image for this campus.

Let me highlight a few other things as they pertain to resources and development on campus. Another component of College!Now is to implement performance-based funding into the state and system's allocation models. The details have to be worked out, but there seems to be general support and momentum behind this concept and it is likely performance funding will impact the way in which we receive our state support in the future.

We also have some changes coming our way with regards to our philanthropic activities. MSU-Great Falls and the MSU Foundation have been working to forge new territory and establish a formalized partnership that will let us ramp up our development efforts at an accelerated pace. Related to these conversations, the MSU-Great Falls Development Board has initiated the process to launch the College's first ever scholarship endowment campaign. This aggressive agenda, while still in its early stages, will seek to raise \$1.2 million dollars to put more scholarships in the hands of our students. I am looking forward to getting started on the campaign and hope that many of you will join me in that effort.

It is clear that MSU-Great Falls is in a sound state and thriving, even with the challenges we have and will face in the coming years. How we approach the future though, will determine what mark we leave upon it. Thus, for the remainder of our time I would like to shift the focus to the College's plans for the immediate and proximate future. To do this effectively we need to take a brief journey through the past.

I believe most of us would agree that MSU-Great Falls has gone through considerable change in the recent past. In my preparation for today, I was able to converse with many of you in reflection of exactly how much we have changed.

We are essentially at a midpoint in a decade of transformative change that has positioned the College to be centered on the **common ground of student success**. To this stage we have focused our work on changes to the organization's foundational structures. We have built our structure and processes on the philosophy of continuous improvement. Our change has been both big and small, but all of it very purposeful and significant.

Our change, and subsequent achievements have occurred in five foundational areas: (1) Governance and structure; (2) Institutional Effectiveness; (3) Student Learning; (4) Student Support; and (5) Partnerships.

Let me take the next few moments and highlight some of these accomplishments.

The foundation of our institution, much like the trunk of a tree, is our governance and structure. In this one area alone, the College has witnessed considerable change and achievement in the past five years. During this time we have:

- Established our Curriculum Committee (June of 2006)
- Reorganized the growing academic departments into academic divisions (September of 2006)
- Hired our first Division Directors (September 2006)

- Formed the College Planning, Budget and Analysis Committee, or CPBAC, as our Shared Governance Body (September of 2007)
- Established a New Mission, Vision and Value Statements (May of 2008)
- Formally created our Faculty Senate (December 2008) and
- Created the Dean's Advisory Council (April 2010)

Another area where the College has witnessed considerable productivity and achievement is in the area of institutional effectiveness. For example, over the past five years we have:

- Piloted our first attempt at a new budget development and planning model (September of 2007)
- Formally established our Core Indicators of Institutional Effectiveness (May of 2008)
- To meet the new NWCCU standards, we adopted our four Core Themes (May of 2008)
- Institutionalized an integrated model of planning, budget, and assessment of institutional effectiveness (September of 2008)
- Published the first MSU-Great Falls Performance Report Card (April of 2010)
- Hired the College's first Executive Director of Institutional Research and Planning (January of 2011)
- Created the Office of Institutional Research and Planning (January of 2011)
- Implemented an innovative new Academic Program Review protocol (June of 2011)

Student learning is at the very heart of our purpose and avocation. Since 2006 the College has embarked on a very aggressive campaign to establish a comprehensive, faculty-driven outcomes assessment model. During this time we:

- Sent our initial team of faculty and administration to Alverno College for Student Learning Outcomes training (June of 2006)
- Formed the Outcomes Assessment Team, or OAT (July of 2006)
- Conducted our initial Faculty Training in assessing student learning (August of 2006)
- Defined the College's Eight Institutional Abilities (November of 2006)

- Implemented a comprehensive plan to improve student success in the sciences (November of 2007)
- Formally adopted the College's eight abilities (February of 2009)
- Completed Phase I of our Student Learning Outcomes assessment process, aligning program, division and degree outcomes to our eight institutional abilities (May of 2010)
- Completed Phase III of our Student Learning Outcomes assessment process, aligning course objectives to program, division, and degree outcomes (May of 2011)
- Initiated the timeline for Phase II of our Student Learning Outcomes assessment process where we will assess program, division, and degree outcomes by our institutional abilities (May of 2011)

The College has also witnessed considerable progress in the arena of student support services. Consider that we have accomplished the following in the past five years:

- Hired our first Chief Student Affairs Officer (August of 2006)
- Constructed and created the College's Student Central (January of 2008)
- Held the first Anatomy & Physiology Inspiration Night (December of 2009)
- Held the first-ever Science Rodeo (March of 2010)
- Piloted the College Studies 102 Course titled Navigating MSU-Great Falls (January 2011)
- Established the MSU-Great Falls Veterans Center (January of 2011)
- Formally institutionalized the MSU-Great Falls Development Board to increase student scholarships and support (May of 2011)
- Merged the Library and Distance Learning into the new Division of eLearning and Library Services (May of 2011)

Finally, in regards to building strategic partnerships with our colleagues in the community, public schools, and four-year colleges and universities, we have had some incredible success stories. For example:

- We have launched and led work of the Great Falls Workforce Development Initiative, a community collaboration between businesses, primary, secondary, and postsecondary education (March of 2008)

- Formed the Bridging Opportunities group comprised of school counselors, post secondary student support personnel, and community members to build a college-going culture in Great Falls (September of 2008)
- Moved the ABE program from Paris Gibson Education Center to MSU-Great Falls (December of 2009)
- Exposed over 800 Middle School students to our campus in the first 7th Grade Tours (April of 2010)
- Entered into a renewed and reinvigorated partnership with MSU-Northern (July of 2010)
- Hired a Cooperative Academic and Transfer advisor to help students transition to MSU-Northern programs (September of 2010)
- Made initial visits the MSU-Bozeman and its colleges for articulation agreement development (May of 2011), and
- Entered into an agreement to fold the Great Falls Public Schools NiteCap programming into our Professional and Continuing Education program (July of 2011)

It is clear we have gone through considerable change and have achieved enormous milestones. Thus, the College is now poised, with all of us on common ground, to engage purposefully and collaboratively in the remainder of this decade focused on Student Success.

In the coming year we will be aggressive about becoming more than an average institution, we are going to tackle, and successfully overcome those areas that other institutions have not, cannot, or will not – Our accomplishments in these areas will set us apart.

We will finish this decade of student success, guided by a strong operational plan – titled *Common Ground* – and this plan will comprise the remainder of my comments this morning and the focus of our interaction for this afternoon.

The development of the *Common Ground* plan has been catalyzed by three main influences:

1. Our own institutional change and purposeful redesign over the past five years, culminating with the reorganization plan initiated last spring
2. The assessment of our own evidence and data as it pertains to student success. This was brought to a head after a College team participated in the Entering Student Success Institute last year.

3. The assessment of the research evidence. Columbia University's Community College Research Center has conducted exhaustive analysis of the research on community colleges and the practices of high-performing organizations.

Most all of us are familiar with the first two, but let me talk about the latter for just a few moments.

The Community College Research Center's (CCRC) *Assessment of Evidence Series* examined the bulk of research pertaining to community colleges. The CCRC's work in this area has resulted in four general recommendations to guide colleges. These include:

1. Colleges should ensure broad engagement of all faculty becomes the foundation for policies and practices to increase student success, including active faculty involvement in student support programs and services.
2. Colleges should work to simplify the structures and bureaucracies that students must navigate.
3. Colleges should be encouraged to align course curricula, define common learning outcomes and assessments, and set high standards for those outcomes.
4. Colleges should collect and use data to inform a continuous improvement process.

Jenkins' (2011) research identified seven practices of highly effective organizations. MSU-Great Falls is currently underway in many of these regards, and yet more work is necessary to ensure we are employing all seven of these practices in a concerted and coherent manner. To realize the transformational power of these practices, and to be effective, they must be implemented in concert, not isolation, and at scale. The seven practices are:

1. **Strong Leadership:** Inclusive leaders, across the organization, who are results oriented
2. **Focus on the Customer:** Student Centeredness
3. **Functional Alignment:** "institutional program coherence" or interrelation of programs for students (curriculum, instruction, assessment, climate, etc.)
4. **Process Improvement:** continued analysis of organizational processes to ensure programs and services improve over time
5. **Use of Measurement:** measurable goals, assessment, evaluation at all levels to inform process improvement and management decisions

6. **Employee Involvement/Professional Development:** employee understanding of organizational goals, and developed to lead the necessary reforms
7. **External Linkages:** Connections to K12 and four-year colleges and universities

We must now turn our efforts towards an aggressive approach to accelerating our progress to becoming a high-performing institution with regards to student success. To date we have established the foundation, structured the organization, and now we have identified the work remaining in six primary areas. The *Common Ground* plan articulates these areas into six goals and accompanying tasks we will accomplish.

Interdisciplinary teams of faculty and staff, led by one of your peers, will be formed and responsible for tackling the goals and tasks identified in the plan. I am pleased to announce that we have already identified our project team leaders – a collection of exceptional individuals who will help shepherd the Common Ground plan from start to successful finish. They will be identified as I work through the various goals and tasks associated with the plan.

Our first goal is to **Set and Achieve Institutional and Student Success Goals**. To this end we will establish clear, measureable goals for improved student success and institutional effectiveness. These will be communicated broadly and measured consistently.

Ken Wardinsky will lead this team that will focus on all four tasks associated with this goal. These include:

Task A. Establish a new indicator that directly measures students' success through the analysis of successful course completion, looking at the percent of students who earned a C- or higher in all coursework.

Task B. Establish FY12 goals for the College's Core Indicators of Institutional Effectiveness. Communicate these via a special focus IR newsletter during early fall term, with continued communication through a variety of modes (blurb in Weekly News, video screens, Facebook, etc.)

Task C. Identify the 10 courses with the smallest percentage of successful student completions, and the primary gatekeeper courses with below-average rate of student success (institutional average in FY10 is 77%), and establish multi-year goals for improvement in these rates.

Task D. Create and maintain a SharePoint site where institutional reports (e.g., core indicator reports, enrollment reports, survey reports, etc.) can be shared with the campus

community. Institutional Research will also start a documentation process for all reports so that any data used in reports can be replicated.

Our second goal is to “Close the Loop” on the Assessment of Student Learning: We will systematically align institutional/instructional expectations, instructional activities, and the assessment of student learning and institutionalize a process for capturing and analyzing student learning data.

Our first team for this goal, lead by Susan Cooper, will focus on the first three tasks associated with this goal. These include:

Finalize the establishment of common student learning outcomes for all courses at the College (e.g., all ANTH 100 courses have common outcomes regardless of instructor or modality of delivery).

Design and/or identify common assessment protocols for measuring student learning on the established learning outcomes (e.g., all ANTH 100 courses would employ the same assessment protocols for measuring student achievement of the common learning outcomes).

Utilizing an institutionally adopted format, create rubrics for assessing the various levels of student learning on common learning outcomes for every course and program offered at the College.

The last two tasks associated with this goal will have a team led by Bruce Gottwig. This team will specifically:

Task D. Research, identify, and employ a college-wide system for storing student learning outcomes data and longitudinally tracking those data to track instructional improvement and target needed interventions to improve student success.

Task E. Implement the process for conducting assessments, recording student achievement of learning outcomes, and reporting those results.

Goal III. Strengthen Student Support Services and Programs: We will establish intrusive student support mechanisms that will (1) create social relationships for students, (2) help students clarify aspirations and enhance their commitment, (3) develop the “College Know-How” in students, and (4) help make college life feasible for our students.

Goal IV. Enhance and Strengthen the Learning Process through Curricular and Pedagogical Reforms: Teaching is central to our mission, and thus it plays the largest role in whether or

not our students succeed. We will reform and innovate in those areas with the greatest need and potential for increases student success.

Goal V. Strengthen External Linkages with K12 and University Partners: We will work to improve the relationships and interconnectivity between the College and our primary partners in the K12 and four-year university sectors.

Goal VI. Identify Key Points of Success and Challenge Our Students Face: We will establish interdisciplinary teams to track cohorts of entering students (first-time and transfers) along the continuum of initial engagement to student success to identify where students face irrevocable challenges in their educational journey.

This is an aggressive agenda, but a necessary one if we are to finish our transformation in this decade. And I want to stress that this work is work we have already begun, and is a natural continuation of our previous efforts. They will help us continue our growth from the Common Ground of student success.

We'll continue and finalize the changes to our governance and structure, as we implement the remainder of the campus reorganization of last spring.

We'll continue our work on institutional effectiveness as we finalize our Core Indicators of Institutional Effectiveness, establish goals for these for the coming year, set goals for improvement on our "top 10" and gatekeeper courses, and create new credentials for recognizing the completion of the general education and pre-health sciences cores.

Our work in improving and assessing student learning will also continue as we establish assessment protocols, have course student learning outcomes rubrics approved by curriculum committee, implement a technological solution for collecting and assessing student learning data, adopt a common institutional grade reporting system, find a way to track student participation and attendance in all courses, provide formative evaluation of student progress, reform developmental programming, and create ways to assess and remediate necessary computer skills.

We will continue to build our student support structure through the completion of our child development center, establishing the new advising center and advising process, implementing a robust, mandatory student success course for all new students, and improving the front door experience for our students through an extended orientation process.

Finally, we'll continue to sustain and grow our existing partnerships with our employers, business and industry, while focusing efforts on strengthening partnerships with

educational entities. We'll place our newly hired pathways advisors in the Great Falls Public Schools, we'll use them to conduct orientation and placement testing for high school students, we'll create a process for managing articulation agreements, and forge new agreements with existing or new partner campuses.

When we have completed our work and finished this decade focused on the common ground of student success, we will have finished our transformation into one of the premier community colleges, certainly in Montana, and perhaps throughout the west. This campus is already starting to set itself apart and become known for innovation and producing results.

With your collective efforts on the goals associated with this plan, I have no doubt we'll become the model for effective higher education of the future.

I am truly looking forward to working with you on this endeavor.

It is going to be an exciting year.

Thank you.