

Helena College University of Montana

Year Seven | Standard One

Evaluation of Institutional Effectiveness

Self-Evaluation Report | Spring 2024

*A report prepared for the
Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities*

**HELENA COLLEGE**
UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA

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INSTITUTIONAL OVERVIEW

Helena College University of Montana is an independently accredited two-year college affiliated with the University of Montana and governed by the Montana Board of Regents. Founded in 1939, the College has served Helena and the surrounding region for over 80 years, offering certificates and degrees, as well as short-term training and community enrichment courses.

Community

Helena sits at the southern tip of Lewis and Clark county in southwest Montana. It lies just west of the Continental Divide near the headwaters of the Missouri River, approximately 100 miles from three of the state's larger cities (Missoula, Great Falls, and Bozeman). The [2022 Census estimate](#) lists the population of Helena as 33,885, up 20% from the 2010 census. The Helena micropolitan area, which includes all of Lewis and Clark and Jefferson counties, is home to 83,760 residents, spread over 5,000 square miles.

Helena is state capital and the seat of government. Because of this, the State of Montana is the area's largest employer. The federal government also has a large presence, as Helena is home to the Fort Harrison VA Medical Center and training facility for the National Guard. Other major employers include Boeing Montana, St. Peter's Healthcare, Pioneer Aerostructures, Carroll College, and the Helena Public Schools. Helena sits near the headwaters of the Missouri River approximately 100 miles from three of the state's larger cities (Missoula, Great Falls, and Bozeman).

Students

As an open enrollment institution, Helena College is committed to providing access to postsecondary education for the entire community. The college typically enrolls students from Lewis & Clark, Jefferson, and Broadwater counties, though a few programs attract students from across the state of Montana and a small percentage from other states. Many students consider themselves place-bound when they first come to Helena College, seeking an education that will lead to a promising career within in their community or that they can complete without relocating to a town or city with a four-year institution. Students also arrive at the college with a number of external commitments, such as childcare or existing employment they cannot give up. Fifty percent of degree-seeking students enroll part-time, and 40% are enrolled in at least one course that could be completed online.

Total enrollment for fall 2023 was 1,496, about half of those being dual enrollment students. Fifty-eight percent of the student body is female, and the average student age is 21, though 21% of students are 25 or older. Approximately 12% of students identify as American Indian, Alaska Native, Asian, Black/African-American, Hispanic, or Multi-Racial. Sixty-four percent of degree-seeking students receive financial aid of some sort, and 42% of degree-seeking students are eligible for the Federal Pell Grant. Nearly a third of the students are first-generation college students. The [HC at a Glance](#) web page provides additional information about current students.

Campuses and Programs

Helena College offers the following credentials through its programs located at two campuses in the Helena community. There are also small program cohorts in Hamilton, MT, and at the Montana State Prison in Deer Lodge, MT. The following credentials are offered:

- Associate of Arts (AA)
- Associate of Science (AS)
- Associate of Applied Science (AAS)
- Certificate of Applied Science (CAS)
- Certificate of Technical Studies (CTS)

The Donaldson campus is the primary facility, housing the majority of administrative operations, student support services, and the CEC, as well as the following programs:

- Nursing (Licensed Practical Nursing and Registered Nursing, LPN program also offered in Hamilton, MT)
- Accounting and Business (fully online program)
- Information Technology and Programming
- General Education and Transfer programs (option to complete online, 15 articulation agreements in place with partner institutions)
- Cosmetology

The Airport Campus houses the industry and trades career technical education programs, with key administrative personnel located in the building, as well as rotating student support services staff. Students attend at the Airport Campus for these programs:

- Industrial Welding and Fabrication
- Automotive Technology (also offered at Montana State Prison in Deer Lodge, MT)
- Diesel Technology
- Aviation Maintenance
- CNC Machining
- Fire & Emergency Services

Dual enrollment and K-12 partnership efforts are an important part of the college's commitment to educating the community about postsecondary training and career opportunities. In fall 2023, 778 high school students enrolled for college credit through a combination of early college enrollment and concurrent enrollment through 14 partner high schools. Although many students take dual enrollment courses in writing and mathematics, the program has recently begun offering skilled trades and technical education courses and programs to this student population.

Space is provided on the Donaldson Campus to Helena Public Schools for the administration of two of their programs. The Adult Education Center provides support to adults in our community in preparing for and taking the HiSET (High School Equivalency Test). The Access to Success program allows students ages 16-24 who have dropped out of high school the opportunity to return to classes to earn their high school diploma.

In addition to academic programs leading to degrees and certificates, Helena College houses a robust Community Education Center (CEC), which provides community enrichment courses, short-term workforce certification programs, and customized training for employers. In addition, the CEC hosts the Helena Regional Small Business Development Center (SBDC) office through a partnership with the Montana Department of Commerce and the Montana Motorcycle Rider Safety program serving the entire state.

PREFACE

Institutional Changes since 2017

Leadership and Organizational Structure

The college has seen many changes in leadership positions and the overall organizational structure in the last seven years.

Dean/CEO: The long-term Dean/CEO Daniel Bingham retired in June 2017 and was followed by two interim Deans, each appointed by the Montana Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education. Jane Baker served as Dean for six months, followed by Kirk Lacy, who held the position for approximately 18 months. A permanent Dean/CEO, Laura Vosejka, was hired in July 2018, but left less than a year later. In May 2020, then Associate Dean of Academic & Student Affairs Dr. Sandra Bauman was named Acting Dean/CEO, with permanent appointment by the Montana Board of Regents in November 2020.

Academic & Student Affairs: In 2017, there were two administrator positions overseeing academics and student affairs. In late 2017, the Associate Dean of Academics and Assistant Dean of Student Affairs positions were consolidated into the Associate Dean of Academic & Student Affairs. That position was held by Dr. Sandra Bauman from July 2018 until she was named Dean/CEO in 2020. This transition led the College to determine it was better served by creating four executive director positions to ensure administrative capability in these areas. These positions are:

- Executive Director of General Education & Transfer
 - Oversees all general education courses and instructors as well as Business & Accounting, IT & Programming, Cosmetology (added 2023). Oversight of academic support services (Library Learning Hub and eLearning & Faculty Development) added in 2021.
- Executive Director of Career Technical Education & Dual Enrollment
 - Oversees all industrial trades programs and serves as Perkins Grant administrator. In 2023, the K-12 Partnerships department was moved under this position.
- Executive Director of Enrollment
 - Serves as Registrar and oversees recruitment, admissions, records, academic advising, and retention initiatives
- Executive Director of Compliance & Financial Aid
 - Serves as Financial Aid Director, Veterans Certifying Official, and Title IX officer and oversees student conduct

Two departments were also added during this time. The K-12 partnerships department was created in July 2019 to better serve dual enrollment students. A Director of Student Life was added in July 2021 to centralize student activities, health and wellness programming, and case management for students referred for extra support.

Chief Financial Officer: In January 2019, the Assistant Dean of Fiscal & Plant left the College and was replaced by an Acting Assistant Dean of Administrative Affairs, who served until spring 2020. At that time, two retired Vice Chancellors for Finance from Montana University System institutions were brought in to support the college until a replacement could be found. In fall 2020, Helena College entered an agreement with the University of Montana Western to share a position. Through this arrangement, the Vice Chancellor for Administration & Finance at UMW also served as Assistant Dean of Administrative Affairs for Helena College, overseeing business office, IT, human resources, and facilities. In 2023, both institutions determined that this arrangement was not providing adequate support. At that time, the duties at Helena College were split to create the Executive Director of Fiscal Services and the Executive Director of Operations positions.

Committees

Changes were made to improve two institutional decision-making committees. The former Strategic Planning, Assessment, and Accreditation Committee was re-organized, re-focused, and re-named to the Institutional Development, Effectiveness, and Accreditation (IDEA) Committee. The Budget Committee, which served to make recommendations to the Dean/CEO, was converted to the Budget Management Team (BMT) in 2018 to provide a more representative group making budgetary decisions.

In 2022, the **Dean's Campus Advisory Council (DCAC)** was established to include selected directors and the three senate presidents in planning and to improve campus dissemination of information. Unfortunately, the first iteration of the committee did not accomplish the intended goals. The group was expanded in fall 2023 to include all Dean's Cabinet members, all directors, and the three senate presidents. At the first meeting, the collective goals, expectations, and rules of engagement were established by the group to increase active participation.

Campus Communication Strategies

As part of ongoing efforts to improve campus communications and transparency, three new programs have been implemented:

- The **Monday Morning Memo (MMM, [example](#))** is a weekly newsletter sent to all employees, highlighting important information and events on campus. All areas of campus are encouraged to submit content as needed.
- **State of the College Presentations** started in spring 2021, as a way for the Dean's Cabinet to formally report on current projects and priorities. They are held at the end of the fall and spring semesters, with the agenda set by Cabinet members and other campus leaders (such as directors or senate presidents) who have information to share.
- **Open forums** began as monthly opportunities for Helena College employees to ask the Dean questions about any topic of interest. The forums originally had no set agenda to encourage attendees to drive the direction of the discussion, but engagement was limited. They have since been modified, with each forum featuring

one or two Cabinet members or directors. Employees are still invited ask questions on any topic, but most presenters prepare a short update to start the discussion.

Academics

The college has eliminated, changed, and added programs since 2017, in addition to making improvements in delivery of programs.

The **Interior Space Planning and Design** program was eliminated after program prioritization revealed the program was expensive to run with diminishing enrollment. Changes to professional requirements that the college could not accommodate also led to the decision to terminate the program. The **Administrative Support Management** (formerly Office Technology) program was terminated due to declining enrollment, and the **Networking AAS** degree was terminated based on guidance from the Information Technology & Programming Advisory Council.

The **Accounting & Business** program was converted to a fully hyflex format to support greater flexibility in attendance for students, and students now also have the option to complete **AA and AS transfer degrees online**, depending on their pathway. The **Fire & Emergency Services** program was converted from an AAS to an AS with an embedded CAS, which better prepares students for transfer to a four-year program while also creating a more direct route to employment, if desired.

The most significant change has been the addition of a **Cosmetology** program, as it fills a significant need in the state of Montana. While a number of private schools exist, there were no public options for students to obtain this education, and demand is high for licensed cosmetologists across the state. Interest has been high since the program was announced, and the first cohort of students have enrolled for the spring 2024 semester. Also of significance is the college's participation in Second Chance Pell, which has allowed for eligible students at the Montana State Prison to earn a **CAS in Automotive Technology**.

Helena College has also made two notable changes that impact nearly all students. First, developmental education courses, pre-requisites, and placement exams for math and writing were eliminated. Students now self-place into gateway math and writing courses with assistance from their advisors. This decision was partially prompted by COVID-19 restrictions and supported by educational best practice and institutional data (see [Standard 1.C.7](#)). The college has also implemented the Guided Pathways framework in response to comprehensive situational analysis of data following the Ruffalo Noel-Levitz Strategic Enrollment Planning model. In addition to grouping similar programs by meta-major, degree planning sheets have been standardized and streamlined, and first-year seminar courses have been integrated into nearly all academic programs to help students explore educational and career options and understand how to succeed in college.

Student Support Services

As part of ongoing efforts to provide high quality student support services, many programs have been either improved or implemented.

Academic Advising: Prior to 2018, all students worked with a professional academic advisor only for the first semester advising and were then transitioned to a faculty advisor in their chosen major. This proved challenging for several reasons. First, faculty are off contract in the summer and were unavailable to assist students. When students changed majors, they were reassigned to another new advisor, and students often need assistance with questions outside of their academic program.

To improve advising processes, a transition was made to assign a professional advisor to all students to assist with course registration and provide support with other college processes. Faculty, as the subject matter experts, now serve in a mentoring capacity for students in their programs.

Library Learning Hub: The Library Learning Hub was created to centralize academic support services for students. In addition to traditional library resources, students can receive tutoring, academic coaching, and tech help in one location.

K12 Partnership Department: In 2019, the K12 Partnerships department was created to better support our dual enrollment students and ensure an authentic college experience for this population. Before that, dual enrollment was administered among departments with no focus on student advising. Today, this department provides academic advising to all dual enrollment students, conducts a new student orientation for dual enrollment students, and works with concurrent enrollment instructors (those teaching dual enrollment courses in the high schools) to provide training and ensure all outcomes of the course are taught and assessed.

MT10: MT10 is a Montana University System evidence-based student enrollment and completion program. This program, which is modeled after the CUNY ASAP program, includes intensive academic advising, mandatory orientation, a first-year seminar course, requirement to maintain full-time enrollment, and additional financial support.

TRIO SSS: Helena College has housed a TRIO SSS to provide additional support to first-generation and low-income students since 2010. The grant has a 5-year cycle, and we are currently in the fourth year of the most recent grant. Preparations to apply for the next cycle are already underway.

Strategic Plan

The previous strategic plan ended in 2022, and the College spent a year working through a whole-campus exercise to revise the mission, vision, and guiding principles to direct the work of the institution through 2027 and led to the formation of four work groups that set specific strategic goals under each of the four guiding principles: equity, effectiveness, stewardship, and impact.

Response to Requested Items - Recommendation 4

Following the Year Seven Mission Fulfillment and Sustainability Evaluation of Helena College in spring 2017, the NWCCU determined four areas where the College was substantially in compliance with accreditation criteria, but in need of improvement. Three of the four recommendations have been fulfilled. For Recommendation 4, NWCCU requested [ad hoc reports](#) in 2018, 2020, 2020, and a final response to be included in this report.

The original recommendation was revised following the Spring 2020 Ad Hoc Report to focus on utilization of assessment data, as outlined in the 2020 standards:

Use the results of the assessment efforts to inform academic and learning-support planning and practices to continuously improve student learning outcomes.

(2020 Standard 1.C.7)

Ad Hoc Reports

The 2018, 2020, and 2022 ad hoc reports covered progress in working toward compliance with Standard 1.C.7:

- Program-level student learning outcomes were reviewed and updated, where necessary, for every credential.
- The Instructional Council and Strategic Planning, Assessment, and Accreditation (SPAA) Committee (now IDEA Committee) evaluated and re-formed the college's assessment framework, adding institutional competencies and program learning outcomes as core theme indicators.
 - A holistic **mission fulfillment framework** was developed, combining core theme indicators and annual work plans. The first mission fulfillment report was published in 2020.
 - The [2022-2027 Strategic Plan](#) was developed utilizing an inclusive and data-informed process (see [Standard 1.B.2](#)). The IDEA Committee decided to discontinue the Core Themes, incorporating the core theme indicators into strategic goal targets and key performance indicators (KPIs) where applicable.
- **Annual work plans** were implemented in AY 2018-19 to capture alignment of program, department, and committee activities to the strategic plan.
 - Updates are regularly made to the **annual work plan** procedure and interface to improve the quality of plans and support effective goal-setting and continuous improvement practices by all areas on campus.
- Recommendations for improvement to **program reviews** were articulated by the Strategic Enrollment Planning (SEP) steering team. Two ad hoc committees were formed to develop new processes based on those recommendations, one for academic and one for non-academic programs.
 - Academic and non-academic **program reviews** received significant updates in AY 2020-21, with both processes incorporating additional opportunities for feedback and evaluation of the reports by peers and the Dean's Cabinet in support of planning and decision-making.

- Bryon Steinwand, faculty member in the Computer Technology (now Information Technology & Programming) program, began **development of a database** in 2017 to collect and report assessment data.
 - In AY 2019-20, faculty began using the database map course learning outcomes to credential outcomes and to map credential outcomes up to institutional competencies. Many faculty realized their outcomes needed updated, leading to curriculum changes.
- Usage of the **assessment database** increased as improvements were made to its functionality and initial reports were created.
 - Credential-level reports allow easy identification of course outcomes with no connection to credential outcomes.
 - The Executive Council of the [Faculty] Senate (ECOS) established the expectation that all full-time faculty would enter assessment results and document any resulting planned changes for 100% of assessments in 80% of their courses.
 - Initial reports show increase in usage of the database until Spring 2021, when it began to plateau.
 - Approximately 60-70% of planned assessments have been fully completed, meaning results, analysis, and planned changes were entered.
 - Only 30% of all credential learning outcomes have been assessed and met target pass rates.

Following the 2022 Ad Hoc report, the commission responded that Helena College was “substantially in compliance but in need of improvement.”

Progress to Date

In the two years since the last ad hoc report, Helena College has continued to incorporate strategies for putting assessment results to use.

Strategic Plan and Mission Fulfillment

As the college enters the second year of its 2022-2027 Strategic Plan, the IDEA Committee, Dean’s Cabinet, and Dean’s Campus Advisory Council will be able to reflect on the first mission fulfillment progress report and identify future priority areas of focus. Rather than selecting individual defining characteristics or strategic goal targets from across the plan, the Dean’s Cabinet decided to focus on one guiding principle (Effectiveness, Stewardship, Impact, or Equity) for each of the next four years. Stewardship was selected for AY 2023-24, as the Dean’s Cabinet and BMT increasingly see a need for data-informed resource allocation and long-range planning, two key practices under that guiding principle.

Employees have been encouraged to set goals aligned to those defining characteristics, the Professional Development Committee is providing professional development centered around that guiding principle, and the strategic goals in that area are receiving extra focus. Although Stewardship does not have any strategic goal targets or KPIs specifically addressing student achievement, it is anticipated that improvements in this essential area will positively impact the college’s capacity to support students.

Annual Work Plans

Annual work plans have proven to be a valuable tool for academic and non-academic programs, as well as senates and committees, to engage in annual planning and assessment and to document the impacts of their efforts on student learning and support services. All annual work plan goals and results are presented in an [interactive dashboard](#). Three notable examples from AY 2022-23 are listed below, with provided in [Standard 1.C.7](#):

- The Fire & Emergency Services program used feedback from internships at local volunteer fire departments to improve the process. The degree pathway was updated to move the first-year internship into the spring semester so that all students have enough time to complete membership requirements.
- Mathematics faculty documented the results of newly-implemented self-selection practices on math course placement. Data indicated pass rates with self-placement were equal to or greater than pass rates with pre-requisites, so the decision was made to continue self-placement.
- Communications, humanities, and fine arts faculty visited each other's' courses and shared written observations with each other. These provided helpful feedback on classroom practices and resulted in letters of recommendation for tenure and promotion portfolios.

Program Review

The improvements made to the academic and non-academic program review processes have placed an increased emphasis on how assessment has been used to make improvements to teaching, learning, and learning-support practices.

Academic program reviews include a section about student learning, where faculty are asked to describe how assessment is completed within their programs and explain significant curriculum or assessment changes that occurred during the five-year review period. For example, the Director of Nursing explains how the department incorporates assessment into their regular planning processes:

At the end of each semester the faculty meet to discuss and plan for the next. Part of this review is discussing what worked well and what needs improvement. The faculty discuss which assignments they will keep and how those meet the course or program outcomes.

The entire program review is meant to guide faculty through a comprehensive assessment of their program, resulting in at least one recommendation for improvement. These recommendations are expected to be supported by evidence presented in the program review, with needed resources clearly outlined. Reports and recommendations are now read and discussed by both an Academic Program Review Committee (APRC) and the Dean's Cabinet. The APRC, which is composed of four faculty and three directors (representing enrollment services, fiscal services, and institutional research), provides feedback on the report and helps the faculty strengthen recommendations prior to submitting the report to the Dean's Cabinet. The Dean's Cabinet works with the program faculty to outline feasible strategies and determine responsibility for carrying out the recommendations. These conversations help campus leadership to understand the state of each program, and to

ensure realistic recommendations for improvement are thoughtfully and intentionally articulated.

Non-academic program reviews follow a similar process, with report sections and prompts crafted specifically for the type of work carried out by student support and administrative programs. Report authors are asked to reflect on their collaborations and dependencies within the organization and explain how they assess their effectiveness in serving identified stakeholders, which often includes faculty or students. For example, the Financial Aid Office describes their processes:

The effectiveness of the FAO is measured in a variety of ways. These can be the number of presentations, offered both on and off campus, ...[t]he amount of aid disbursed, on-time reporting and reconciliation, as well as number of calls, emails, chats, and face-to-face interactions with parents and students...Data is necessary to ensure decisions are made that are best for operations and processes put into place.

The reports are first read by other program directors as a form of peer review, and are ultimately reviewed by and discussed with the Dean's Cabinet, similar to the academic program reviews. More detailed explanations of how results from these programmatic assessments have been used are in [Standard 1.C.7](#).

Recommendations appear in the annual work plans of the areas with primary responsibility, where work plan developers are encouraged to indicate how work plan goals support program review recommendations. Some technical issues with the database have made rollout of this process somewhat inconsistent, so data is not yet available.

Assessment Database

As described in detail in [Standard 1.C.5](#), instructors document target success rates for all course learning outcomes in the college's **assessment database**. For any assessment, particularly when the results fall below the target, faculty are able identify possible changes to curriculum, instruction, or assessment. In January 2023, a field was added for faculty to describe the results of those planned changes. Below is an example of a completed course outcome assessment from PSYX 100:

- **Course Learning Outcome:** Describe how psychology is applied in real world situations.
- **Assessment Results:** Reached target of 80% with 82.61% passing assessment.
- **Analysis:** Passing percentage is lower than it has been.
- **Planned Changes:** Will renew a previous assignment that seemed to have corresponded to improved grades.
- **Planned Changes Results:** Passing grades improved. Intervention successful.

More examples are provided in Appendix A. More details about how the college uses information from learning outcomes assessments to improve teaching, learning, and student-support practices are provided in [Standard 1.C.7](#).

STANDARD 1: STUDENT SUCCESS AND INSTITUTIONAL MISSION AND EFFECTIVENESS

Standard 1.A.1

The institution's mission statement defines its broad educational purposes and its commitment to student learning and achievement.

Eligibility Requirements 1, 2, 3, 6

Helena College Mission

Helena College supports our diverse community by providing the paths and tools necessary to assist learners in achieving their educational and career goals.

The college's mission statement was revised as the first step in establishing a new strategic plan for 2022-2027. The Institutional Development, Effectiveness, and Accreditation (IDEA) Committee, in partnership with the Dean/CEO, hosted a series of campus-wide discussion sessions to provide an opportunity for all employees to give their input and share in conversations about the college's values and priorities. These conversations also led to an updated vision statement and the establishment of four core values, or guiding principles, which serve as the pillars for how the college works to fulfill its mission and achieve its vision. Many of the words in the mission statement were carefully selected for their ability to communicate the college's broad scope and celebrate its strengths and unique offerings, both in for-credit programs and the non-credit programs offered by the CEC.

For example, the term "diverse community" encompasses the wide variety of individuals and groups served by the college while leaving room and flexibility for those to shift as our external environments change. The college's community currently includes degree-seeking students of all ages and walks of life, both in career technical education and general transfer; high school students taking courses for college credit; community members earning short-term credentials or learning a new skill or hobby; regional industry and employers; and the greater Helena area.

As a two-year college, Helena College embraces its role in helping students on their path to success, whether that be transfer to a four-year institution, entry into a new career, or growth in their current field. For example, the college partners with local employers and school districts to expose K-12 students to career opportunities and help them get a jump-start on their educational journeys. The college has also adopted the Guided Pathways model to provide clear and straightforward degree planning sheets that help all students complete programs effectively and efficiently in pursuit of their career goals. The CEC facilitates paths for career growth, not just in their provision of non-credit credentials such as phlebotomy and certified medical assisting, but as key providers of workforce development, specialized training, and continuing education courses in a variety of fields.

Finally, the use of the term "tools" is especially important to college staff and faculty, as the college strives to meet the unique needs of every student that enters its doors. Helena College is an open enrollment institution, and students enroll with varying degrees of preparation for

college and with varying situations outside of the classroom. Services such as the financial aid department, advising, and the Library Learning Hub (which includes tutoring and academic coaching) and programs like TRIO and MT10 offer students the individualized support they need to be successful at Helena College.

There is broad institutional support for the new mission and vision statements, largely due to the intentional effort to give all employees the opportunity to contribute. The mission statement, together with the vision statement and guiding principles, provides a strong framework for the college's new strategic plan.

STANDARD 1.B IMPROVING INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

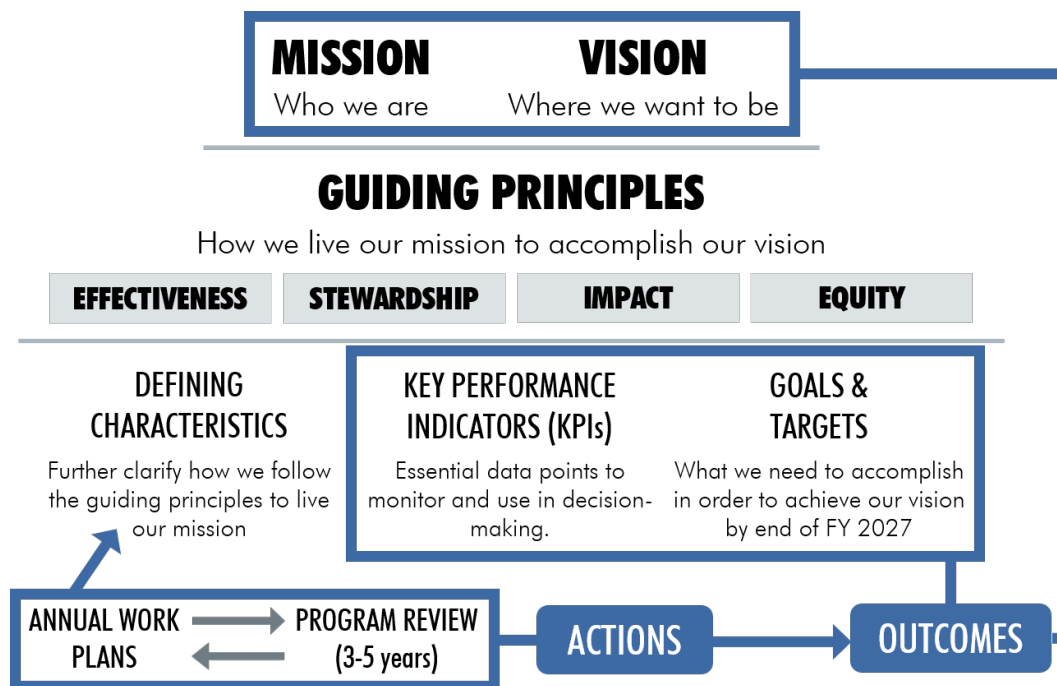
Standard 1.B.1

The institution demonstrates a continuous process to assess institutional effectiveness, including student learning and achievement and support services. The institution uses an ongoing and systematic evaluation and planning process to inform and refine its effectiveness, assign resources, and improve student learning and achievement.

Eligibility Requirements 4, 5, 6, 19

Helena College has made great strides in assessing institutional effectiveness in the last seven years. The college has made improvements to existing practices and established additional processes for regularly and systematically evaluating how the work carried out by all areas of campus impacts student learning and achievement. The overall process is outlined in Figure 1 below. The college is also actively working to incorporate these measures of institutional effectiveness into planning and resource allocation to better support continuous improvement of the institution’s operations, systems, practices, and outcomes.

Figure 1. Mission Fulfillment at Helena College



Strategic Plan and Mission Fulfillment

[Helena College’s 2022-27 Strategic Plan](#) forms the foundation for assessment at the institutional level. The inclusive process behind the development of the plan is described in

more detail under [Standard 1.B.2](#). Under the plan, three components contribute to mission fulfillment:

1. Alignment of annual work plan goals to defining characteristics of each of the four guiding principles, and general positive progress toward these goals at the end of the year;
2. Systematic analysis of key performance indicators (KPIs); and
3. Annual evaluation of progress toward strategic goal targets.

This model was established by the IDEA Committee under the previous strategic plan in 2018 and relied on annual work plan goal alignment to strategic goal objectives as well as analysis of the performance of the core theme indicators of achievement. Alignment of work plan goals to the strategic plan has been a valuable way to capture the work completed across campus and demonstrate how it supports the college's mission, so IDEA decided to continue it under the new plan with goals aligned to the defining characteristics. Many of the former core theme indicators of achievement were incorporated into the new plan as strategic goal targets or KPIs. A table of core theme indicators mapped to the new strategic plan can be seen in Appendix B.

The IDEA Committee is responsible for monitoring, evaluating, and reporting on these metrics. The committee plans to publish an annual mission fulfillment report to document results of the analysis, share recommendations for improvement with the Dean's Cabinet, and keep the entire campus community apprised of progress on the plan. The first mission fulfillment report is published on the [Strategic Planning page](#) of the Helena College website.

Annual Work Plans

Annual work plans enable every academic program, non-academic department, senate, and committee to assess their effectiveness on a yearly basis. Directors, faculty, senate presidents, and committee chairs must set at least three goals for their area, describe the actions that will be taken, identify indicators of success, document the results, determine the final status of the goal (not completed, deferred for another year, in progress, or completed) and outline future actions based on thoughtful analysis of the results. Work plan developers are also asked to reflect on their budgets and expenses at the end of the year. This reflection supports effective resource allocation, as it provides a regular and consistent format for each area on campus to document how current assets support their work, identify needed resources, and plan for official budget requests. As mentioned above, each goal must also align with a defining characteristic of one of the four guiding principles of the strategic plan. The IDEA Committee reviews individual plans for quality and evaluates all plans together as a measure of overall institutional effectiveness.

Annual work plans are completed within a homegrown database, providing the ability to pull reports and analyze the data, both at varying organizational levels, and over many years. Cumulative reports of work plan goals and final statuses are provided to program directors for their three- or five-year program reviews (discussed in detail below) and data on all work plans is compiled into a [dashboard](#) and [report](#), shared with IDEA Committee, Dean's Cabinet, and all work plan developers.

IDEA Committee uses the information as a primarily qualitative measure of institutional effectiveness – documenting the essential role every area plays in serving students and the greater community. The committee also monitors quality of the plans and degree of completion. Although the primary purpose of work plans is planning and assessment, the committee wants to ensure the plans are taken seriously and progress is being made by plan developers. For this reason, the committee recently added a target for at least 80% of all goals to show at least some positive progress (status of completed or ongoing) at the end of each year.

In addition to a measure of institutional effectiveness, the Dean’s Cabinet also utilizes work plan data to guide institutional planning. In evaluating distribution of goals, the Cabinet identifies priority areas of focus for the coming academic year, encouraging all plan developers to identify goals that support specific guiding principles or defining characteristics. For example, the Cabinet elected to focus on Stewardship for the 2023-24 academic year, prioritizing efforts to improve resource allocation, increase the return on investment in professional development funds, and work towards a long-term planning framework. As a result, there was a 10% increase in work plan goals aligned to this guiding principle compared to AY 2022-23. A sample annual work plan can be seen in Appendix C and a summary of notable work plan goals in support of each defining characteristic can be seen in Appendix D.

Program Reviews

Program reviews support a more holistic and longitudinal analysis of an area’s effectiveness. These comprehensive self-studies are designed to guide academic and non-academic program faculty and directors in a thorough review of the program, including analysis of student success data, financial statements, curriculum, and assessment data. Processes for both academic and non-academic program review have been re-designed as a part of the college’s response to [NWCCU’s recommendation following the 2020 Mid-Cycle Review](#).

ACADEMIC PROGRAM REVIEW

Academic programs have completed program reviews for nearly 20 years, but they have long been viewed as busy work to be completed by administrators, with little involvement from faculty. Although academic program reviews are required to be completed every seven years by [Montana Board of Regents \(BOR\) policy 303.3](#), the college follows a five-year cycle. Over the fall 2020 and spring 2021 semesters, the President of Faculty Senate, the Director of Institutional Research, and the developer of the assessment database met with ECOS, members of faculty who recently completed a program review, and colleagues at other colleges to identify ways to improve the academic program review process. Key features of the new process include the following:

- Responsibility for program reviews lies with program faculty, with division directors providing support where necessary
- The program review report is completed within the assessment database, which allows for integration of program review recommendations into area annual work plans. This has eliminated the need for a mid-cycle evaluation.

- An Academic Program Review Committee (APRC) was formed to provide mentorship, review the report, and meet with program faculty to provide feedback and discuss recommendations
 - The committee members include: Director of Institutional Research & Effectiveness (chair), Director of Business Services, Executive Director of Enrollment, two faculty who completed a program review the year before, and two faculty serving alternating two-year terms.
- Program faculty also meet with the Dean's Cabinet to discuss their final report, addressing any concerns that arose and finalizing preliminary implementation plans for recommendations.
- Supplemental reports provide key information in a consistent way to all program faculty, and faculty are encouraged to meet with report providers for context. These reports include:
 - Five-year annual work plan summary
 - Professional development report for all program faculty
 - Five-year budget summary
 - Summary of student success data, labor market information, and financial contribution margins
 - Summary of assessment activities and mapping of student learning outcomes
- Expansion of recommendations section to include success targets, a preliminary implementation strategy, and needed resources. There is also space within the database for the Dean's Cabinet to respond to recommendations.

Four programs have completed a program review under the new process, with an additional three completing theirs this year. Initial informal response has been positive, with faculty expressing appreciation for the support received and leadership complimenting the opportunity to meet with faculty about the state of their programs. Small changes have been made following each cycle, and the Director of Institutional Research & Effectiveness plans to complete a more thorough evaluation of the process in the summer of 2024, gathering feedback from faculty, APRC members, and the Dean's Cabinet.

Academic program reviews are published on the college website and [reports for the Montana Board of Regents](#) are posted on their website, as well. Documents outlining the process and rotation for academic programs, as well as the most recent program reviews for each area can be found on the [Academic Program Review page](#) of the college website.

NON-ACADEMIC PROGRAM REVIEW

Changes to the non-academic program review process had an even greater impact. For many years, non-academic programs were asked to complete program reviews following the same template as the academic programs. Many programs struggled to find value in the process and failed to produce meaningful reports, if any report was completed at all. Because there were no outside entities requiring reports for student support and administrative areas of campus, there was little incentive to ensure reports were submitted. In September 2020, a committee was formed to consider ways to tailor the program review process for non-academic program areas. This committee was made up of directors of four student support departments: K-12 Partnerships/Dual Enrollment (chair), Financial Aid, Library Learning

Hub/Tutoring, and TRIO Student Support Services. The resulting process was approved by the IDEA Committee to go into effect in May of 2021 and included a number of changes meant to tailor the experience to non-academic program areas. Highlights include:

- Moving from a five-year report cycle to a three-year cycle with no mid-cycle report. Non-academic program areas felt that more frequency is necessary to maintain momentum in continuous improvement.
- Programs are loosely grouped by like function in the rotation.
- The report is completed in the assessment database and has been restructured to include seven sections meant to move non-academic program areas through an intentional evaluation of their effectiveness. The final section includes program recommendations and a preliminary implementation plan.
- A revised timeline more aligned to the non-academic program cycle and the institutional budgeting cycle. Programs are notified of their selection for the process at the beginning of summer and submit final reports in February of the following year.
- A series of bi-weekly workshops guide directors through writing the report and provide an opportunity to talk through the process with their peers.
- A peer review has been incorporated, providing the opportunity for directors of other programs to provide feedback and develop a better understanding of work across campus.
- Program directors discuss their final report with the Dean's Cabinet, addressing any concerns and finalizing a strategy for carrying out recommendations.

This spring will mark the end of the third year under the new process, at which time all student support and administrative departments at Helena College will have completed a program review, a first time for many of them. Although few welcome a year of more work, directors who have undergone a program review expressed satisfaction with the new process, both in being provided a framework to carefully evaluate their departments, and in the opportunity to work through it with peers. The Director of Institutional Research & Effectiveness will also be evaluating the non-academic program review process more formally, focusing on the content of the report and the timeline.

Both the academic and non-academic program reviews culminate in a set of recommendations for continuous improvement. These recommendations are assigned to a primary responsible party, often—but not always—the program faculty or directors. These recommendations then appear in annual work plans for the areas with responsibility for them. For each work plan goal, developers can indicate whether the goal supports one of the assigned program review recommendations, explain the connection, and ultimately document successful completion of the recommendation. This feature was developed with the intention of keeping program review recommendations front of mind and allowing for more regular documentation of progress toward longer-term goals. Technical challenges have prevented full implementation of this feature, but the IDEA Committee is looking forward to reviewing data when it is available.

A guide to the current process, the current rotation schedule, and the most recent program reviews for each area can be found on the [Non-Academic Program Review page](#) of the college website.

Assessment of Student Learning

Faculty continuously assess student learning as a measure of their effectiveness in the classroom, and they regularly make improvements to curriculum and instruction practices based on the results of their assessments. Helena College also sees the importance of being able demonstrate that students have gained the knowledge and skills it aims to impart, and has set student achievement of credential learning outcomes and institutional competencies as KPIs in the [2022-2027 Strategic Plan](#) (see full document link in left menu).

In 2017, the college began development of an assessment database to collect information about assessment activities in a consistent manner and support the college in demonstrating achievement of learning outcomes at the course, credential, and institutional level. Within the database, faculty map course learning outcomes up to credential learning outcomes, which are then mapped up to institutional competencies. For each course or section they teach, faculty identify how each outcome will be assessed by entering at least one planned assessment. At the end of the semester, faculty enter the results of the assessment in aggregate (e.g. 10 out of 12 students passed the assessment), reflect on the results, and articulate any changes they plan to make. In this way, it is possible to present student achievement of credential outcomes by rolling assessment pass rate information up to the credential level. It is only within the last year or two that sufficient data has been collected in the database to provide meaningful insight, and the challenge now lies in identifying the most appropriate way to present and analyze the information, both to support faculty and their division directors in providing high quality instruction, and to aid the college in measuring achievement of student learning.

A more thorough discussion of learning outcomes assessment can be found in Standards [1.C.5](#), [1.C.6](#), and [1.C.7](#).

Standard 1.B.2

The institution sets and articulates meaningful goals, objectives, and indicators of its goals to define mission fulfillment and to improve its effectiveness in the context of and in comparison with regional and national peer institutions.

Eligibility Requirement 4

Helena College adopted a new strategic plan in July 2022. [Helena College's 2022-2027 Strategic Plan](#) is the result of campus-wide collaboration, careful evaluation of data, and thoughtful consideration of who the college is, where the college wants to be in five years, and how the college could accomplish its goals. Following a series of listening sessions open to all employees, a new mission statement, vision statement, and four guiding principles were established and approved by the campus. These principles form the pillars of the strategic plan – under each are defining characteristics that further describe what it means for Helena College to live its mission according to that guiding principle, KPIs that help the college

monitor its effectiveness, and strategic goals that guide the college towards achieving its vision. These three components of mission fulfillment were drafted by four work groups, one for each guiding principle led by a steering team composed of the chairs of each work group. The IDEA Committee built upon the drafts to finalize the defining characteristics and set meaningful and measurable KPIs, goals, and targets through a deliberate consideration of trends in data, internal and external environments, and comparison with peer institutions at the state, regional, and national level. The plan was finalized by the Dean's Cabinet in April 2022 and became effective July 1, 2022, though a few challenging targets remain to be set.

IDEA Committee plans to assess mission fulfillment annually by evaluating progress on established metrics, sharing recommendations for improvement with the Dean's Cabinet, and keeping the entire campus community apprised of progress. This information will be presented in a [mission fulfillment report](#).

The mission, guiding principles, and defining characteristics in the strategic plan represent the shared values and priorities of the entire college, and they were written with the intent that all employees would see their work and contributions reflected throughout. In their annual work plans (discussed in more detail in [Standard 1.B.1](#), every academic program, non-academic department, senate, and committee must articulate at least three goals for the year and align each to a defining characteristic. Although no specific objective exists to measure distribution of goals, the IDEA Committee and the Dean's Cabinet evaluate the alignments each year to gain an understanding of trends, changes, and gaps in areas that may need to be addressed. As a part of mission fulfillment, IDEA Committee has set a target for at least 80% of goals each year to show positive progress (final status of completed or in progress).

Twenty-eight KPIs outline metrics that are essential for the college to monitor, but are not long-term strategic goals. They are divided among the guiding principles, between two and eight KPIs for each. Many of these KPIs were core theme indicators of achievement under the 2018-2022 strategic plan, and each has been carefully reviewed for relevance and measurability, whether they were part of the former strategic plan or new for 2022. Targets for each of these indicators were set by the IDEA Committee after careful analysis of longitudinal data, comparison to state and regional peers where possible, consultation with specific campus stakeholders, and consideration of best practices. KPIs, along with targets and rationales for each, can be seen in the [full strategic plan document](#) available on the college website.

The college's eight strategic goals grew out of discussions held at the all-campus listening sessions and within the strategic planning steering team and work groups. These goals represent essential priority areas of focus for the college to maintain and improve institutional effectiveness, and are organized by guiding principle. No goal is the responsibility of any one person or department on campus, though each goal is assigned a Cabinet member for monitoring progress and generally ensuring recommendations are carried out.

As the college begins to tackle long-term planning and development of a data-informed resource allocation model, it is expected that aspects of both will be informed by strategic goals and KPIs and will align to the guiding principles and defining characteristics of the plan.

Benchmarking

As mentioned briefly above, IDEA Committee used comparisons to pre-existing lists of state, regional, and national peers to set targets for KPIs and strategic goal targets. The college does not currently have a systematic process for benchmarking data on a regular basis, but IDEA did undertake an important first step towards such a practice in AY 2022-23 by establishing a new set of peer institutions to be used in future comparisons.

As a recipient of Title IV funding, Helena College reports institutional data to the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), and has utilized the ability to identify a custom comparison group for the annual Data Feedback Report since 2012. The first custom list was comprised of the other two-year institutions in Montana and a second group in 2016 was expanded to colleges in the Rocky Mountain/Pacific Northwest regions, though there is no record of the criteria for selecting the schools. Because of the amount of time that had passed since the peers were last evaluated, and because no documentation existed to support the selection, the IDEA Committee decided to develop its own process for identifying peer institutions.

The committee ultimately settled on a weighted scoring system combined with professional knowledge of similar institutions to identify a list of institutions that more closely resembled Helena College. The process is outlined in Appendix E. The new list of eight regional and eight national peer institutions is presented in Table 1 below:

Table 1. List of Current Regional and National Peer Institutions for Helena College

Regional Peers	National Peers
College of Eastern Idaho* Idaho Falls, ID	Hazard Community and Technical College Hazard, KY
Flathead Valley Community College* Kalispell, MT	Henderson Community College Henderson, KY
Great Falls College Montana State University* Great Falls, MT	McDowell Technical Community College Marion, NC
Klamath Community College* Klamath Falls, OR	Nashua Community College Nashua, NH
Lake Region State College Devils Lake, ND	Pine Technical & Community College Pine City, MN
Mitchell Technical College Mitchell, SD	Spoon River College Canton, IL
Northwest College Powell, WY	Washington State Community College Marietta, OH
University of New Mexico – Taos Taos, NM	West Virginia Northern Community College Wheeling, WV

* NWCCU member institution

The IDEA Committee has presented its process and the resulting list of peer institutions to the college, and many employees have expressed eagerness to utilize these peers in their own work, either as a source for comparison of student performance metrics or as places to begin research into how similar colleges handle different challenges or situations. The college's custom peer comparison list was updated in IPEDS and the 2023 Data Feedback Report was just received at the end of January 2024. IDEA is looking forward to comparing Helena College's performance on standard IPEDS metrics to this new list of peers and identifying new ways to incorporate benchmarking into measuring institutional effectiveness.

Standard 1.B.3

The institution provides evidence that its planning process is inclusive and offers opportunities for comment by appropriate constituencies, allocates necessary resources, and leads to improvement of institutional effectiveness.

Eligibility Requirements 4, 19

Helena College has long operated under a shared governance model and has made significant efforts in the past few years to make institutional planning processes more inclusive of necessary constituencies, inform the allocation of resources, and focus on institutional effectiveness. Planning at the institutional level often begins at the Dean's Cabinet and is supported by committees with diverse membership representative of all areas and job classifications on campus. Annual work plans provide the framework for departmental and committee planning, which rolls up into an aggregate report for review and evaluation by the Dean's Cabinet. Advisory councils provide valuable opportunities for employers to provide input into planning for academic programs, and a new Campus Advisory Council is being formed to invite key community members into the planning process.

Institutional Planning

The Dean's Cabinet serves as the leadership team for the college and is comprised of administrators with oversight of all areas on campus, responsible for keeping their departments informed of Cabinet activities and bringing questions, concerns, or suggestions back to the group. Due to the smaller size of the institution, Cabinet meeting agendas can sometimes be taken up with managing day to day operations and addressing issues as they arise, but the group does set aside time in the summer and winter to evaluate progress on the strategic plan, identify priorities for the coming semester, and discuss plans for carrying them out. Notes from the most recent planning session are in Appendix F. One of the priorities identified for this year is to spend time developing a more intentional and holistic planning cycle that utilizes key measures of institutional effectiveness to support long-term planning and resource allocation.

The Dean's Cabinet also hosts two types of events each semester to provide updates and gather feedback from employees. A State of the College presentation is held at the end of the fall and spring semesters, which provide a structured format for Cabinet members, department directors, or committee chairs to share important updates, with time for questions at the end. The Cabinet also hosts monthly open forums during the fall and spring semesters, each focused on one or two departments at the college. A Cabinet member or department

director provides updates and facilitates discussion with attendees to answer questions or gather input and perspective from those outside the department. Both of these events can be attended in person or via Teams, and are often recorded. Employees have identified both of these as valuable additions to the college planning process.

Institutional committees at Helena College strive to include members from all relevant areas on campus and at all levels of classification. The Faculty Senate, Staff Senate, and the Associated Students of Helena College each represent and serve a specific group within the college community, while three additional committees bring together representatives of different groups to accomplish important work and support planning.

The [Dean's Campus Advisory Council](#) (DCAC) was established in the spring of 2022 to include more directors in planning and decision-making, though a lack of focus and engagement prompted a refresh in the fall of 2023. The group now includes all Cabinet members, directors, and senate presidents, and the collective goals, expectations, and rules of engagement were established by the group during its first meeting. It is likely that the DCAC will be incorporated into the institutional planning cycle currently in development.

The [Budget Management Team \(BMT\)](#) is currently focused on increasing transparency around budget management, as well as incorporating measures of institutional effectiveness into the annual and long-term resource allocation processes. The new chair of the committee, the Executive Director of Fiscal Services, has invited a faculty and staff representative to join the Cabinet members, Director of the Community Education Center (CEC), and Director of Facilities on the team, with the expectation that all members will represent their areas and keep them informed, while maintaining a focus on building a responsible budget that benefits the college as a whole. The team's priorities for the next few years include: increasing campus-wide understanding of current budget processes; developing a contribution margin for academic programs as a first step in a data-informed resource allocation model; and building institutional capacity by anticipating and planning for significant future expenses. This will include establishing three-, five- and ten-year capital asset management and replacement plans while also helping the college plan for new employees and essential but expensive software upgrades and acquisitions.

The college's inclusive planning practices are best exemplified in the development of the [2022-2027 Strategic Plan](#). It is the result of campus-wide collaboration, careful evaluation of data, and thoughtful consideration of a variety of perspectives from across campus. Led by the IDEA Committee, the effort began in spring 2021 with a series of listening sessions open to all employees, which resulted in a new mission and vision statement, as well as the development of four guiding principles, which form the pillars of the plan. Four work groups were then established, bringing together representatives from all areas of campus and types of employment to analyze relevant data and discuss each guiding principle in detail. Each group was led by a member of the strategic planning steering team, which met regularly to share updates and ensure there were no gaps or unnecessary duplication. The work groups finalized defining characteristics of each guiding principle, which further describe what it means for Helena College to live its mission and proposed strategic goals to guide work in support of achieving the college's vision. IDEA Committee built upon the work groups' efforts and established eight strategic goals, each with at least one measurable target, and twenty

KPIs to provide additional measures of student success and institutional effectiveness. Many of the strategic goals, KPIs, and targets for both are set with the consideration of relevant areas on campus. For example, KPI IM-1 (part of the Impact guiding principle) was separated into dual enrollment and early college headcount enrollment following discussions with staff in the K-12 Partnerships department, and targets for each reflect enrollment goals for the area.

Area-Level Planning

Directors, faculty, committee chairs, and senate presidents are responsible for carrying out area-level planning, primarily in the form of completing annual work plans, which are discussed in detail in [Standard 1.B.1](#). Long-term planning occurs in the non-academic and academic program review processes, also covered more thoroughly in [Standard 1.B.1](#). These three- and five-year self-studies result in recommendations for continuous improvement, which may fall under the responsibility of the area completing the review or may require institutional support in the form of collaborations or additional resources. Program reviews are discussed with the Dean's Cabinet, where recommendations are fine-tuned to meet the needs of the area while balancing institutional priorities. Final recommendations are assigned an area with primary responsibility for carrying them out. The recommendations appear in the annual work plans for assigned areas, and they have the option to tie their annual goals to these recommendations, thereby breaking long-term goals into incremental steps.

Involvement of External Constituencies

External constituencies are formally involved as members of [advisory boards](#) for career technical education programs at the college, which serve as vital connections to local businesses, industry, and the community. As outlined in [Policy 200.3](#), faculty, staff, and directors for each program are responsible for recruiting members with relevant experiences, knowledge, or perspectives to support program success, growth, and development. Councils meet at least once in an academic year, though they may meet more frequently if the need arises. Input from advisory councils is used by program faculty and directors to inform course and program content, evaluate effectiveness, and plan for future growth or changes.

It has become increasingly apparent that successful planning for the institution as a whole will require more formal connections to all communities that the college serves. The Dean/CEO, together with the Executive Director of Career Technical Education, is currently working to assemble a [Community Advisory Council](#) to fill this need. The board will be comprised of community representatives not only from business and industry, but also from partner school districts, community organizations, current students, and alumni. The board will meet quarterly and will begin by utilizing the federal [Perkins V Comprehensive Local Needs Assessment](#) as a framework to evaluate local and regional needs, develop programs, and identify areas where targeted improvements can lead to increased opportunities for student success.

Standard 1.B.4

The institution monitors its internal and external environments to identify current and emerging patterns, trends, and expectations. Through its governance system it considers such findings to assess its strategic position, define its future direction, and review and revise, as necessary, its mission, planning, intended outcomes of its programs and services, and indicators of achievement of its goals.

Eligibility Requirement 4

Helena College employs a variety of strategies to gather information about both its internal and external environments to inform planning and resource allocation. The Dean's Cabinet planning days currently serve as the primary setting for evaluation of this information (see [Standard 1.B.3](#)), though the group has also recently begun to incorporate time for strategic discussion into its weekly meetings. The Campus Advisory Council has also recently been revitalized with a goal of bringing leaders from across campus together to discuss trends and issues impacting the college as a whole and a newly-formed Community Advisory Council will convene community members to accomplish a similar purpose from a different perspective.

Internal Monitoring

As described in [Standard 1.B.2](#), many of the college's KPIs were selected for their suitability in understanding trends and patterns in institutional effectiveness, stewardship of resources, and equitable student achievement. Targets for the KPIs and the strategic goals were set based on historical averages for the institution in comparison with state or national peers, and with the consideration of important external factors.

Annual work plans and program reviews, both discussed in [Standard 1.B.1](#), are reviewed by the IDEA Committee and the Dean's Cabinet to help members of these groups understand the priorities, successes, and challenges faced by each area on campus. Work plans are evaluated in aggregate for their alignment to the strategic plan and overall success of goals, though supervisors also review the plans for the areas they oversee three times a year. Program reviews are now presented to the Dean's Cabinet, where the faculty or directors work with leadership to set ambitious but realistic recommendations for improvement in each area. This is also an opportunity for areas to request needed resources, though formal procedures incorporating this information into resource allocation are still under development.

INSTITUTIONAL SURVEYS

Institutional surveys provide valuable insight into aspects of student and employee engagement, wellness, and perceptions of campus culture. Responsibility for analysis of survey results and development of actions in response can vary, though the college makes an effort to publish summaries for each survey to a [dedicated page on the website](#). The college administers six surveys on a regular schedule, as outlined in Table 2:

Table 2. Institutional Surveys

Survey	Frequency	Last Administered
Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE)	Every three years, spring semester	Spring 2022
Survey of Entering Student Engagement (SENSE)	Every three years, fall semester	Fall 2022
Campus Climate Survey (self-administered, adapted from EAB survey)	Every three years, spring semester	Spring 2021
College Employee Satisfaction Survey (CESS, Ruffalo Noel Levitz)	Every three years, fall semester	Fall 2021
National College Health Assessment (NCHA, in partnership with Healthy Colleges Montana)	Every two years	Spring 2023
Healthy Minds Survey (led by Montana's Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education [OCHE])	TBD by OCHE	Fall 2023

Student engagement surveys (CCSSE and SENSE) have been administered since 2011 to help the college understand how students perceive and participate in their college experience. The amount of data available from the surveys has proven to be challenging to manage and the college has struggled to identify an effective strategy for creating changes based on the results. Most recently, the Director of Institutional Research & Effectiveness has led various groups in activities to analyze and discuss the data. Of particular value were the workshops held in spring 2023, when employees worked in groups to review CCSSE survey data disaggregated by different student populations, including age, gender identity, first generation status, and enrollment status. Although no specific actions resulted from the activity, many employees indicated they came away from the activity with a better understanding of how the student experience at Helena College can vary, and a commitment to incorporate their new knowledge into future plans for improving student success.

The Campus Climate Survey was administered to students and employees for the first time in spring 2021, with plans to distribute it again in the second half of the spring 2024 semester. Following the first administration, the Diversity & Inclusion Committee evaluated the results and presented a report to the Dean's Cabinet, along with recommendations for continuous improvement in the areas of diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging. The following have occurred in response:

- Increased awareness in the College's harassment and discrimination procedures,
- Prioritization of student wellness as an essential responsibility for the new Director of Student Life position

- Increased communications about resources to support employee wellness, including professional development opportunities and promotion of the employee assistance program
- Development recruitment and hiring best practices by the Institutional Diversity Officer and Human Resources Generalist to better reach and serve employees from underrepresented groups

College leadership has utilized the College Employee Satisfaction survey since 2015 to understand how best to support employees. Results from this survey, which has consistently seen high response rates from full-time permanent employees, enable the Dean's Cabinet to identify strengths and prioritize challenges to address. The 2021 survey results were encouraging, as overall satisfaction with employment at the college has increased from the previous administration, and it did not decrease for any survey items. Challenges include financial resilience and transparency, communication, and onboarding procedures. Fiscal Services is currently working to educate the campus on the budget processes and develop clear, data-informed processes for resource allocation. Official channels of communication have been promoted and streamlined, and the Dean's Cabinet plans to evaluate onboarding practices in the coming year.

Student and employee wellness surveys have served not only the Student Life department at the college but are also supporting statewide efforts at supporting student well-being. Helena College utilizes the findings from the National College Health Assessment (NCHA) to inform peer-to-peer health and wellbeing programs that meet the needs of its unique students. NASPA-Certified student Peer Educators work with the Director of Student Life to promote sustainable behavior change at the individual, campus, and community levels. Program examples include increasing capacity of the Helena College Campus Food Pantry and basic needs resources, creating a Naloxone (Narcan) prevention education partnership with the Helena Indian Alliance, annual tabling events for cancer awareness and physical fitness campaigns to increase our campus community's level of physical activity.

External Monitoring

It is essential for the college to remain aware of and actively involved in its external environments in order to fulfill its mission and achieve its vision. College leadership, faculty, and staff from many departments participate in several activities to accomplish this.

Faculty drive external environmental monitoring to ensure their programs remain relevant and support both student and industry needs. As outlined in [Helena College Policy 200.3](#), each career and technical education (CTE) program utilizes an [advisory council](#) to maintain connections with local industry, both to inform program content and to provide information about how our graduates are performing in the workplace. These programs also maintain compliance with industry standards and best practices, as evidenced by the number of industry recognized credentials available to students (see [Standard 1.C.1](#)). Information about advisory council recommendations and alignment with community needs is documented in [academic program reviews](#). These reports also feature an analysis of state and national labor market data for relevant occupations, sourced from the [Career OneStop website](#), a product of the U.S. Department of Labor, Employment, and Training Administration.

Both CTE and general education faculty maintain memberships in professional organizations in order to stay up to date in their fields. Similarly, many directors and staff are members of relevant professional organizations. Additionally, the Montana University System (MUS) facilitates a network of professional representatives from institutions across the state, grouped by roles and/or responsibilities. Many Cabinet members participate in these groups and a complete listing can be seen in Appendix G. General education faculty also serve on [Faculty Learning Outcomes Councils](#) (FLOCs) for the MUS, which oversee the common course numbering efforts and promote consistency and transferability of courses across the various institutions in Montana.

The MUS leverages their position to provide valuable data and research to support colleges in monitoring their external environments. Two notable examples include [robust dashboards](#) featuring student achievement and financial data from all member institutions, and a recent report created in partnership with the Lumina Foundation, [Perceptions of Higher Education in Montana](#). Resources such as these provide Helena College with essential data for understanding its place within landscape of higher education in the state of Montana.

Additional avenues for environmental monitoring include the partnerships that employees form with area organizations (such as [Helena WINS](#) for workforce development), close connections with local school districts, and membership of employees on various community groups and boards, including Kiwanis, Rotary, Leadership Helena, the [Helena Area Chamber of Commerce](#) (Sandy Bauman, Dean/CEO), the [Railroad Urban Renewal Area Tax Increment Financing Advisory Board](#) (Abby Rausch, Director of Marketing, Communications, and Alumni Relations), the [Career Technical Institute](#), and the [Holter Museum of Art](#) (both Robyn Kiesling, Executive Director of General Education, Transfer, and Academic Support).

STANDARD 1.C STUDENT LEARNING

Standard 1.C.1

The institution offers programs with appropriate content and rigor that are consistent with its mission, culminate in achievement of clearly identified student learning outcomes that lead to collegiate-level degrees, certificates, or credentials and include designators consistent with program content in recognized fields of study.

Eligibility Requirement 5

Consistent with its mission to “provide the paths and tools necessary to assist learners in achieving their educational and career goals,” Helena College offers workforce and transfer degrees, transfer pathways, dual enrollment courses for high school students, and non-degree training in a variety of fields with local and national demand. The college awards the following credentials:

- Associate of Arts (AA)
- Associate of Science (AS)
- Associate of Applied Science (AAS)
- Certificate of Applied Science (CAS)
- Certificate of Technical Studies (CTS)

In addition to the degrees listed above, students have the opportunity to earn several industry recognized credentials (IRC) within their program of study, which strengthen the employability of graduates. Several Helena College programs are also designed to prepare students for state or national examinations necessary for licensure to work in the field. IRC and licensure examinations are outlined for all relevant programs in Table 3 below:

Table 3. Industry Recognized Credentials & Licensure Examinations Offered in Helena College Programs

Program	Credential(s) Awarded	Industry Recognized Credentials	Licensure Examinations
Automotive Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AAS • CAS • CTS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Institution for Automotive Service Excellence (ASE) in 8 content areas 	
Aviation Maintenance Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AAS • CAS 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FAA – General, Powerplant, and Airframe
Certified Medical Assistant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-credit certificate 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NHA Certified Clinical Medical Assistant
CNC Machining	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AAS • CAS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FANUC Certified CNC Turning Centers and Machining Centers 	

Program	Credential(s) Awarded	Industry Recognized Credentials	Licensure Examinations
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HAAS Operator Certification Turning Centers and Machining Centers • NC3 in 6 areas of Precision Measurement – Tape and Rule, Slide, Gage, Angle, Micrometer, and Dial Gage 	
Commercial Driver’s License	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-credit certificate 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State of MT Class A CDL
Cosmetology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AAS 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Interstate Council of State Boards of Cosmetology – both written and practical
Diesel Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AAS • CAS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NC3 – Torque, Multimeter, Precision Measuring, and Diesel Scanner Diagnostics • OSHA 10 • MACS 609 • Daimler Get Ahead • Cummins • Allison 1K, 2K, 3K, and 4K 	
Emergency Medical Technician	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-credit certificate 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NREMT
Fire and Emergency Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AS • CAS 	IFSAC Proboard: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fire Fighter I • Fire Fighter II • Hazmat • Driver/Operator Pump 	
Industrial Welding and Fabrication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AAS • CAS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AWS D1.1 FCAW Unlimited Structural Steel Qualification • AWS D1.1 SMAW Unlimited Structural Steel Qualification • API 1104 Pipe Qualification • OSHA 10 	
IT and Programming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AAS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CompTIA Network+ and A+ • ServiceNow Certified System Administrator and Certified Application Developer 	
Licensed Practical Nursing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CAS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Certified Nursing Assistant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NCLEX-PN
Phlebotomy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-credit certificate 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NHA Certified Phlebotomy Technician

Program	Credential(s) Awarded	Industry Recognized Credentials	Licensure Examinations
Registered Nursing	• ASRN	• Certified Nursing Assistant	• NCLEX-RN

All degree-granting programs are regularly reviewed for relevance and applicability of skills and content. Faculty complete comprehensive program reviews every five years, which include evaluation of curriculum and alignment with community needs. Faculty have the ability to submit changes to curriculum or learning outcomes to the [Academic Standards and Curriculum Review Committee](#) (ASCRC) at any point in the academic year, though a deadline is in place for changes to be effective for the upcoming academic year. Curricula for credit-bearing career and technical education (CTE) programs are largely informed by faculty connections with industry, most significantly in the form of [advisory councils](#), which meet at least once a year. [Program licensing and accreditation](#) also ensures adherence to national standards for the Aviation Maintenance Technology and Registered Nursing programs, respectively. Curricula in the non-credit programs are informed by industry standards set by certification exams.

Rigor of course content is established in course and credential learning outcomes. Helena College faculty participate in Faculty Learning Outcome Councils (FLOCs) with the Montana University System (MUS) to maintain [common-course numbering](#) (CCN) across tribal, two- and four-year institutions in the state ([BOR Policy 301.5.5](#)). Common course numbering establishes consistency in courses offered at multiple institutions, especially in the general education core, which in turn supports transferability of courses and ensures students are adequately prepared for upper division coursework. Rigor is also defined in each assessment, where faculty indicate whether student learning is measured at the introductory, reinforcement, or mastery level. Transfer success rates and high transfer GPA ([see the Mission Fulfillment report](#)) indicate that the coursework at Helena College is of appropriate rigor to prepare students for successful transfer.

Helena College works to ensure students intending to transfer are able to do so as efficiently as possible. [Degree maps](#) are maintained for all CTE programs and transfer pathways to four-year institutions in Montana to help students follow recommended course sequences for their degrees. In addition to the FLOCs discussed above, the college participates the [Montana University System course sharing program](#), a valuable tool that gives students additional class options.

Standard 1.C.2

The institution awards credit, degrees, certificates, or credentials for programs that are based upon student learning and learning outcomes that offer an appropriate breadth, depth, sequencing, and synthesis of learning.

Eligibility Requirement 5

Learning outcomes are articulated for each course and credential offered by Helena College, the process for which is outlined in more detail in [Standard 1.C.5](#). Course learning outcomes

are mapped to at least one relevant credential learning outcome. Assessment of the course outcomes is documented for each section of a course, where instructors also designate whether learning is assessed at the introductory, reinforcement, or mastery level. Since 2017, the college has utilized a homegrown assessment database to collect both mapping and assessment of learning outcomes.

The college has also adopted the Guided Pathways framework by creating [degree plans](#) for all programs and pathways to help students progress through the curriculum in the intended order as efficiently as possible. These pathways help the college demonstrate appropriate sequencing, breadth, and depth of learning for each credential. The level of student learning measured by each course outcome assessment (introductory, reinforced, mastery) is carried up to the mapped credential learning outcomes and compiled into a matrix showing where each credential outcome is assessed in an academic pathway. A sample report is shown in Appendix H.

The college and the Montana University System both have policies and practices in place to support instructors in developing learning outcomes and determining the recommended sequencing of courses to promote progressive synthesis of learning.

[HC Policy 200.3](#) outlines procedures to ensure the curriculum of each career and technical program meets industry standards. All academic programs have an [advisory council](#) that meets annually to provide information on upcoming changes, suggestions on program revisions, and feedback on graduates' performance in the workforce. To ensure more consistency in the information received and action taken by academic programs, the college has developed a standard template with common questions for each group (Appendix I). Program outcomes are regularly reviewed and updated using guidance from these advisory boards. In addition, faculty maintain connection to industry groups and receive professional development to stay current in their field to address necessary changes in their curricula.

[Board of Regents Policy 301.10](#) defines general education requirements in Montana. To maintain a robust [general education core curriculum](#) that can be transferred from one institution to another, the Montana University System (MUS) maintains a [Gen Ed Council](#), made up of faculty and academic leaders from all units of the system. This council is responsible for regularly reviewing and making updates to the core as needed. Students hoping to transfer from Helena College to a four-year institution within the MUS can satisfy the gen ed core requirement by completing an AA or AS degree, or they can also complete the Certificate of General Studies to transfer earlier in their educational journey.

Standard 1.C.3

The institution identifies and publishes expected program and degree learning outcomes for all degrees, certificates, and credentials. Information on expected student learning outcomes for all courses is provided to enrolled students.

Eligibility Requirement 5

Learning outcomes for all credentials are documented in the [Helena College Catalog](#), available on the website. Additionally, the college maintains a repository of [Course](#)

[Descriptions and Program Outcomes](#), linked from both the [Student Portal](#) (Academic Support box) and the [Degree Planning](#) page (left menu). The database contains consistent information about all courses, including the course description, required pre-requisites, course learning outcomes, and mapped program outcomes.

Course syllabi also include the course description, course learning outcomes, and mapped program or credential learning outcomes, as well as any institutional competencies covered in the course. Some instructors also provide descriptions of how student learning will be assessed for each outcome. Instructors review syllabi with students in detail each semester, and students always have access to their syllabi through the learning management system (LMS). A sample syllabus is included in Appendix J.

In order to develop and maintain appropriate program outcomes, career and technical education faculty meet regularly with [advisory councils](#), following [Helena College Policy 200.3](#). As part of the Montana University System (MUS), Helena College participates in the [Common Course Numbering initiative](#), which promotes consistency in courses offered throughout the system. Students can easily transfer classes across MUS institutions and trust that their learning at one school is comparable to another within the system. This assists with transferability and helps two-year colleges ensure students are prepared for higher-level courses regardless of campus. Course outcomes were established through convening of faculty groups, and the MUS maintains a [schedule](#) for regular faculty review by discipline.

Standard 1.C.4

The institution's admission and completion or graduation requirements are clearly defined, widely published, and easily accessible to students and the public.

Eligibility Requirement 17

Helena College admissions requirements follow Montana [BOR Policy 301](#) and are explained in the [catalog](#) (pp. 19-25). As a quick reference, the [Admissions and Enrollment](#) page of the website also outlines requirements and necessary materials for different types of students, such as first-time, transfer, or dual enrollment students. Admissions counselors promote the priority application deadline and maintain regular contact with prospective students who have incomplete application requirements. This consistent outreach has led to students completing requirements and registering sooner, which alleviates the typical registration rush in the week before classes start. Upon acceptance to the college, students continue to receive communications about additional requirements and next steps, including any missing application materials (in the acceptance letter, Appendix K) and the New Student Packet (Appendix L) upon acceptance, and the Student Start-Up Checklist (Appendix M) following their first advising meeting.

The nursing program outlines additional requirements for admission in the catalog (pp. 94-98) and in their application and handbooks (LPN and RN), which are available in the nursing department office and on their [program web page](#). Information about the [Cosmetology program](#) is available on the program's page on the college website.

The [Helena College Catalog](#) details all academic requirements and information (pp. 48-55), including graduation requirements on page 53. All students meet with their academic advisor each semester and track progress toward graduation using [degree planning sheets](#) developed for each program.

Students in Montana can also get information on admissions and academic offerings for Helena College and all other MUS institutions on the [Apply Montana portal](#).

Standard 1.C.5

The institution engages in an effective system of assessment to evaluate the quality of learning in its programs. The institution recognizes the central role of faculty to establish curricula, assess student learning, and improve instructional programs.

Eligibility Requirements 5, 12, 13

Role of Faculty

The faculty are central to all curricular decisions at Helena College. Regular review of academic programs and courses occurs through two subcommittees of Faculty Senate: Academic Standards and Curriculum Review Committee (ASCRC) and Academic Program Review Committee (APRC).

The functions of [ASCRC](#) are to:

- Facilitate the planning, development, delivery, and evaluation of the courses and programs offered by the College;
- Ensure the integrity of the College curriculum by communicating its goals, purposes, and outcome measures with consistency, clarity, and efficiency;
- Promote the continuous improvement and enhancement of the College curriculum through dialogue and collaboration with external and internal constituents of the College;
- Provide faculty with a system that contributes to the effective and innovative delivery of skills, knowledge, values, and inspiration;
- Provide a path/direction for the approval of curriculum.

Procedures for submitting new courses or programs, and for making changes to curriculum, course descriptions, or learning outcomes are outlined in the Curriculum Policy and Procedures Manual, linked from the committee page above.

The [APRC](#), composed of four faculty and three directors, reviews final academic program review reports, discusses them with the program faculty to provide feedback, and makes a recommendation to the Dean's Cabinet about the future of the program. [Academic program reviews](#) are an essential component of the assessment process. Completed on a five-year cycle, they are led by the faculty in each program, with support from other offices on campus. The comprehensive self-studies provide an opportunity to review student achievement (including learning outcomes assessment), labor market, and financial data to make recommendations for continued improvement in the program.

Additionally, [Helena College Policy 200.3](#) details the requirements for all academic programs to create, maintain, and activity develop [advisory councils](#). In addition to program-specific advisory boards, Helena College has recently formed a community advisory council made up of selected stakeholders. This group will meet quarterly to provide consultation on community needs and programmatic offerings. The federal Perkins V Comprehensive Local Needs Assessment will be used as a framework to guide discussion.

Assessment of Student Learning

Assessment of the quality of learning within academic programs happens in several ways at the course, program, and institutional level. The two most common forms occur in the assessment database, and in the form of qualitative feedback from students in a course.

ASSESSMENT DATABASE

In 2017, Helena College began developing a homegrown assessment database that would address the continuing challenge of documenting how, when, and where assessment of student learning occurs and how it improves teaching and learning. This database is fully developed and is now used by full-time and adjunct faculty to complete the following tasks:

1. Map course outcomes to credential outcomes (Figure 2) and map credential outcomes to institutional competencies. (Figure 3, see also [Standard 1.C.6](#))
2. Plan at least one assessment for each learning outcome, identifying a target pass rate that demonstrates evidence of student learning and indicating whether any institutional competencies are also assessed (Figure 4).
3. After an assessment has been given, faculty document the results and discuss any planned changes to improve student learning (Figure 5). In order to ensure follow-up on planned changes is not overlooked, faculty can view all outstanding planned changes on their landing page within the assessment database (Figure 6).

Figure 2. Mapping Course Outcomes to Degree Outcomes in HC Assessment Database

Map Course outcomes to Degree outcomes

Course: INTRODUCTION TO PROGRAMMING

Select Course

Select Credential

Credential Software Development

Select Course Outcome

Select Credential Outcomes

- 1 Students will demonstrate knowledge of programming concepts, logic, design and problem solving techniques.
- 2 Write computer programs using Object oriented programming features
- 3 Demonstrate basic information technology skills such as file management, web search, work processing, and spreadsheets.
- 4 Explore career opportunities in the Tech industry and identify pathways to goal attainment.
- 5 Design, develop and implement database solutions to effectively manage and secure data.
-
- 6 Develop a project scope while considering factors such as customer requirements, project costs, return on investment, and internal/external business objectives.
-
- 7 Analyze, evaluate, and implement comprehensive project plans by applying analytical tools, information systems and emerging technologies to improve business processes and eliminate security vulnerabilities.
- 8 Use correct data modeling practices to develop databases designed to support business needs.
- 9 Design, document and implement computer software solutions given definition of a problem and requirements for a solution.
- 10 Work as a team member in a business information system environment to accomplish the goals of a global organization.
- 11 Create safe, reliable, and secure systems free from undefined program behaviors and exploitable vulnerabilities.

[Mapping Home Page](#)

Figure 3. Mapping Credential Outcomes to Institutional Competencies in Assessment Database

Map Degree Outcome to Institutional Competency

Hello Bryon S.

Select Degree/Credential

Select Degree/Credential Outcome

Check Institutional Competencies that Map to above Degree/Credential Outcome

- 1 Develop an understanding for diversity and global awareness
- 2 Apply information literacy across disciplines
- 3 Apply technology literacy across disciplines

[Go to Course Assessment page.](#)

Figure 4. Planned Outcome Assessment Screen in HC Assessment Database

Edit Planned Outcome Assessment (POA)

Selected Course: CSCI194 CT Seminar
Selected Course Outcome: Demonstrate the basic operation of a computer, basic applications, and the Internet.
Degree Outcome(s): Demonstrate basic information technology skills such as file management, web search, word processing, and spreadsheets.
Select Assessment Tool Type:
Assessment Tool Description:
Select Assessment Level:
Assessment Target (percentage):
Select Status:
 Required for all sections
Select Effective Term:

Current Supplemental assessments:
 File management

Institutional Competency:
Supplemental Detail:
Assessment Narrative:
Supplemental Status:

Figure 5. Section Assessment Entry Screen in HC Assessment Database

Edit Section Assessment

Assessment: In lab 8 students create an MVC web application. In lab 10 students create a desktop application., Target: 80
 CSCI206 sec:VB
Total Assessed:
Total Passed:
Assessment Results:
Faculty Analysis:
Faculty Planned Changes:
Select Status:

Figure 6. Faculty Home Page Screen in HC Assessment Database

Helena College Assessment and Curriculum Site Email for help and support Portals ▾

HELENA COLLEGE
UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA

Home Admin College Assessment Curriculum ITAdmin Acad. Assessment

Helena College - Faculty Home Page

Your sections for Spring 2024

CSCI206

CSCI257

CSCI292

CSCI298

ITS165

ITS279

CSCI191

CSCI100

Choose Syllabus format:

Normal (longer format)

New Short format

Syllabus will be emailed to you within 10 minutes.
[Link to Profile Page: Faculty Profile](#)
[Link to Program Profile Page: Program Profile](#)

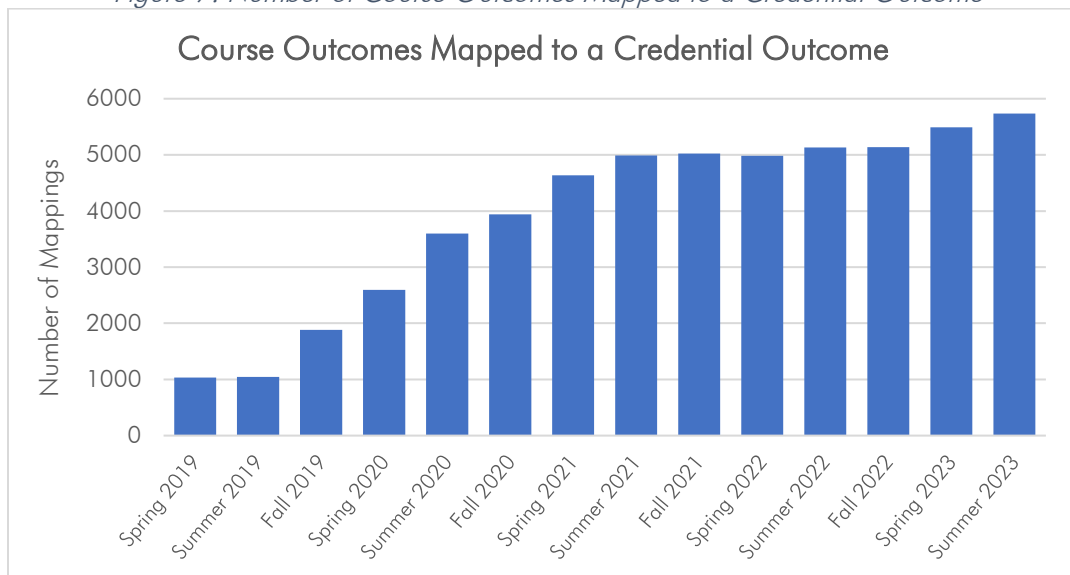
Pending Planned Changes:

- 202230 ITS165 Pending Id:7981
- 202230 ITS165 Pending Id:7983
- 202270 CSCI121 Pending Id:10051
- 202270 CSCI121 Pending Id:10055

Overall usage of the database for student learning outcomes assessment and mapping increased in the four semesters following implementation in spring 2019, and has plateaued somewhat since fall 2021, as can be seen in the three charts below.

Figure 7 shows the number of course outcomes mapped to a credential outcome. As of early fall 2023, the majority of mapping had been completed. There were 312 credential learnings offered, and 2,150 course outcomes. The slight increase in the spring and summer of 2023 is likely due to the addition of outcomes for the new Cosmetology program. With the mapping information in the database, the college is able to produce a matrix for each academic pathway, showing where each course in a degree or certificate pathway maps up to a credential learning outcome. In addition to demonstrating how each course fits into the overall credential curriculum, it is an easy way to identify any credential learning outcomes that do not have any mappings to course learning outcomes (and therefore no assessments), or vice versa. A sample matrix can be found in Appendix H.

Figure 7. Number of Course Outcomes Mapped to a Credential Outcome



As the governing body of the faculty, ECOS sets the expectation for use of the database to document assessment of student learning at the course level. In 2021, ECOS determined that all full-time faculty should use the database to record the results for 100% of course outcome assessments in at least 80% of courses taught each term, and no course could go more than one year without being assessed. Reports were developed to measure individual progress toward fulfilling the first part of this requirement (Figures 8 and 9). They were initially presented each term to the instructor and the Division Director (as supervisor), though this practice has waned in recent semesters. Analysis of assessment completion indicates that these reports may need to be resumed, as compliance has declined from a high of 69% of faculty meeting the expectation in spring 2022 (Figure 10).

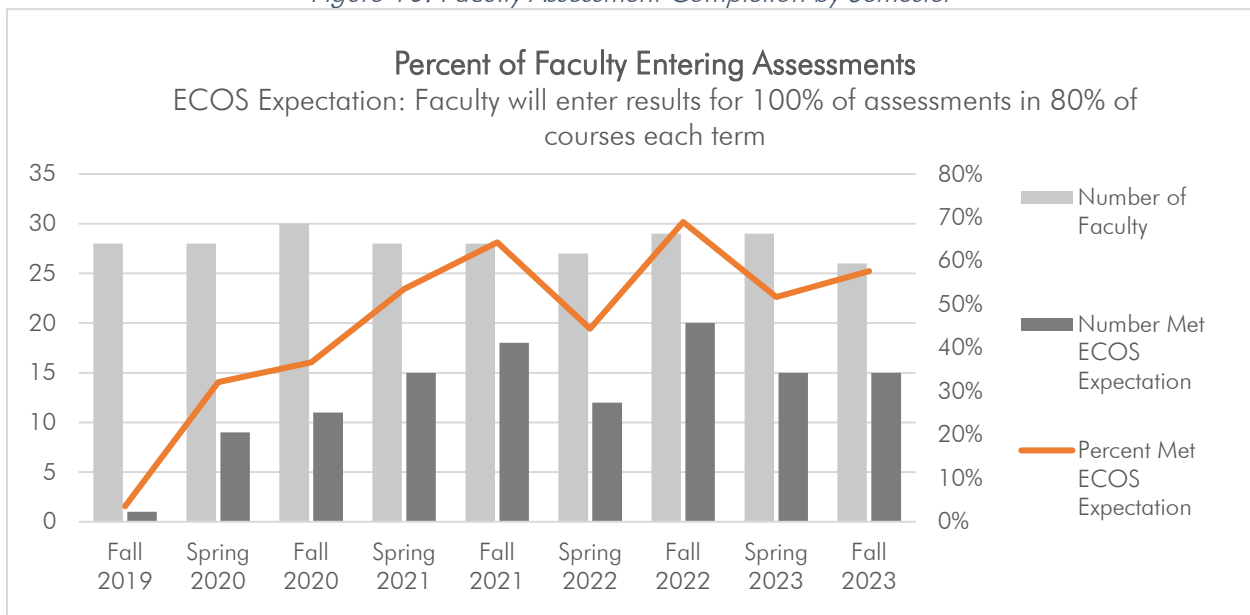
Figure 8. Sample Overall Assessment Completion Report by Faculty Member

Term	Count Courses All		Percent Complete for Term
	Assesments Complete	Count Different Courses	
201970	2	8	25
202030	1	6	16.6667
202070	6	8	75
202130	5	5	100
202130	5	5	100

Figure 9. Sample Detail Assessment Completion Report by Faculty Member

Term	Area	Course	Section	Count Section	Count Section Assessment Met	Count Section Assessment Complete	Section Assessment	Section Assessment Percent Met Target
201970	Nursing	NRSG230	1	4	4	4	100	100
201970	Nursing	NRSG231	1	3	0	0	0	0
201970	Nursing	NRSG231	2	3	0	0	0	0
201970	Nursing	NRSG244	1	3	0	0	0	0
201970	Nursing	NRSG245	1	3	0	0	0	0
201970	Nursing	NRSG256	1	4	0	0	0	0
201970	Nursing	NRSG259	1	4	4	4	100	100
201970	Nursing	NRSG261	1	5	4	4	80	80
202030	Nursing	NRSG135	1	4	0	0	0	0
202030	Nursing	NRSG136	1	2	0	0	0	0
202030	Nursing	NRSG230	1	4	0	0	0	0
202030	Nursing	NRSG244	1	3	0	0	0	0
202030	Nursing	NRSG245	1	3	0	0	0	0
202030	Nursing	NRSG256	1	3	3	3	100	100
202070	Nursing	NRSG140	1	6	3	5	83.3333	50
202070	Nursing	NRSG141	1	5	2	3	60	40
202070	Nursing	NRSG230	1	4	3	4	100	75
202070	Nursing	NRSG231	1	3	3	3	100	100
202070	Nursing	NRSG231	2	3	3	3	100	100
202070	Nursing	NRSG244	1	3	3	3	100	100
202070	Nursing	NRSG245	1	3	3	3	100	100
202070	Nursing	NRSG256	1	3	3	3	100	100
202130	Nursing	NRSG230	1	4	4	4	100	100
202130	Nursing	NRSG231	1	3	3	3	100	100
202130	Nursing	NRSG244	1	3	2	3	100	66.6667
202130	Nursing	NRSG245	1	3	3	3	100	100
202130	Nursing	NRSG256	1	3	2	3	100	66.6667
202150	Nursing	NRSG220	0	6	0	0	0	0

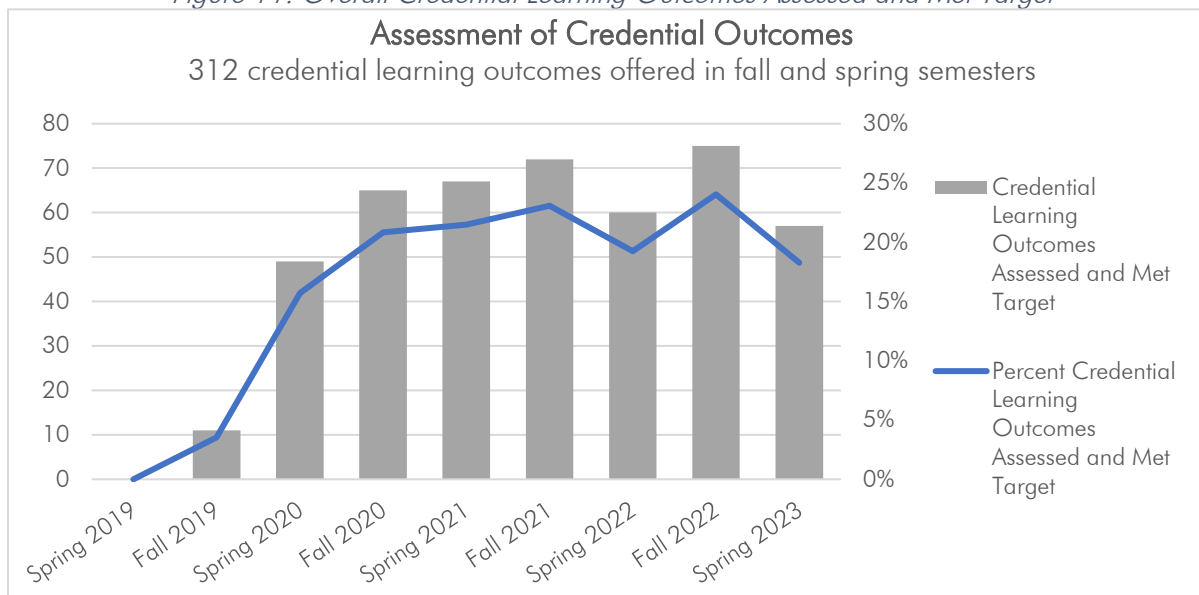
Figure 10. Faculty Assessment Completion by Semester



The ultimate goal of completing all of this work within the assessment database is to be able to demonstrate that students have learned the information and skills articulated in the credential learning outcomes. So far, only very basic reports have been produced to help the

college understand progress in this area. As shown in Figure 11, no more than 24% of all credential learning mapped from courses offered in a semester have been assessed and met the target pass rate. In the next few years, the IDEA Committee and assessment team will work to identify more granular reports, strategies for supporting faculty in recording their assessment data in the database, and an achievable target for this work.

Figure 11. Overall Credential Learning Outcomes Assessed and Met Target



STUDENT FEEDBACK

Anonymous course evaluations are administered for each class offered at Helena College. This information is used by faculty to assess course delivery and other areas for improvement recommended by students. In addition, all candidates for tenure or promotion must include results from class evaluations in their portfolios and describe how they used the information for improvement of instruction.

Standard 1.C.6

Consistent with its mission, the institution establishes and assesses, across all associate and bachelor level programs or within a General Education curriculum, institutional learning outcomes and/or core competencies. Examples of such learning outcomes and competencies include, but are not limited to, effective communication skills, global awareness, cultural sensitivity, scientific and quantitative reasoning, critical analysis and logical thinking, problem solving, and/or information literacy.

Eligibility Requirements 5, 13

Helena College maintains both institutional learning outcomes, referred to as institutional competencies, and a General Education Core curriculum.

Institutional Competencies

As described on the Helena College website, [institutional competencies](#) describe concepts that are central to the academic, professional, and personal success of all Helena College students. Helena College has identified three institutional competencies:

1. The student will learn to recognize and value individual, group, and cultural differences from and within local, national, and global perspectives and contexts.
2. The student will learn to locate needed information, managing and evaluating the extracted information and using it critically and ethically.
3. The student will use appropriate technology to access, manage, integrate, or create information, and/or use technology to effectively accomplish a given task.

Each of these competencies are further defined by specific elements that encompass the fundamental knowledge and skills that all students should achieve and demonstrate upon completion of any degree or credential earned from the institution. The competencies align with the college's mission, are integrated within general education and program-specific curricula, and are introduced, reinforced, and assessed at the course level. Faculty map credential learning outcomes (which have been mapped up from course learning outcomes) to institutional competencies, and they also have the option to indicate if a specific planned course learning outcome assessment also assesses an element of an institutional competency (see [Standard 1.C.2](#) and [1.C.5](#)).

Table 4 summarizes the current mappings from credential learning outcomes to institutional competencies. The college would like to see at least one mapping to each institutional competency for each credential, and it is apparent from this table that work needs to be done in this area.

Table 4. Number of Credential Outcomes Mapped to an Institutional Competency

Credential Level	Credential	Diversity	Information Literacy	Technology Literacy
AAS	Accounting Technology	3	34	88
AAS	Aviation Maintenance Technology		2	2
AAS	Business Technology	31	24	57
AAS	CNC Machining		217	217
AAS	Diesel Technology	28	31	31
AAS	Metals Technology		154	147
AAS	Industrial Welding and Metal Fabrication			25
AS	RN	83		20
CAS	LPN	29	36	17
CAS	Airframe		3	3
CAS	Bookkeeping	10	32	40
CAS	Diesel Technology	18	18	18
CAS	Entrepreneurship	17		49
CAS	Manual Machining		96	96

Credential Level	Credential	Diversity	Information Literacy	Technology Literacy
CAS	Welding Technology	20	58	58
Gen Ed Core	Humanities	15	10	10
Gen Ed Core	Oral Communication	3		
Gen Ed Core	Natural Science		196	103
Gen Ed Core	Social and Psychological Sciences	240	217	47
Gen Ed Core	Written Communication		124	146
Gen Ed Core	Mathematics			
Gen Ed Core	Fine Arts			
Gen Ed Core	Oral Communication			

One known limitation of the current system is that learning outcomes in related instruction courses (mathematics and written and oral communication) for the career technical education programs cannot be mapped to those credential learning outcomes, meaning they cannot ultimately be mapped up to institutional competencies. As the assessment team works to integrate degree and certificate pathways into more database reports, this issue should be resolved. There are also plans to develop a report to show assessments that have been marked as assessing part of an institutional competency, which will provide even more information about student mastery of institutional competencies.

From the information that is currently available, the degree to which students are mastering institutional competencies is encouraging. Table 5 shows the percent of assessments mapped up to an institutional competency that met a target pass rate, both out of assessments that were fully completed, and out of all planned assessments in the database (to support comparison to credential learning outcomes assessment presented in Figure 11 in [Standard 1.C.5](#)). Of the assessments that were fully completed, at least 90% met the target pass rate for each institutional competency, indicating that, of the students whose assessment results were entered, they are mastering these competencies.

Table 5. Assessments Mapped to Institutional Competencies and Percent Met Target

	Diversity		Information Literacy		Technology Literacy	
	Complete	Total	Complete	Total	Complete	Total
Number of Credential Learning Outcomes Assessed	140	497	804	1,252	664	1,174
Number of Assessments Met Target	136	148	740	740	603	606
Percent of Assessments Met Target	97%	30%	92%	59%	90%	52%

General Education Core Curriculum

In addition to the institutional competencies that all students are expected to master upon degree completion, the General Education program follows a core curriculum with learning outcomes that align with [Board of Regents \(BOR\) Policy 301.10](#) and the [Montana University System General Education curriculum](#). This curriculum requires coursework in natural science, social science/history, mathematics, communication, humanities/fine arts, and cultural diversity. For each area of the core, a list of learning outcomes is identified and maintained by the [Gen Ed Council](#). All students earning an AA or AS must complete the entire general education core. Learning outcomes and eligible courses for each of the seven areas are in the academic [catalog](#) on pages 60-62.

For students earning a CAS or an AAS, [BOR Policy 301.12](#) limits the general education coursework to one third or less. At Helena College, all CAS and AAS programs require completion of coursework in mathematics and oral and written communication, as outlined in [BOR Policy 303.1](#).

Standard 1.C.7

The institution uses the results of its assessment efforts to inform academic and learning-support planning and practices to continuously improve student learning outcomes.

Eligibility Requirement 5

Helena College uses the results of several assessment processes to improve academic and learning-support planning and practices, including learning outcomes assessment, analysis of student achievement data, course evaluations, annual work plans, and program review. Special programs, such as the Necessary Narratives initiative developed by TRIO-SSS, have also proven to provide valuable qualitative assessment of how the college is supporting students who could benefit from additional services.

Learning Outcomes Assessment

The data recorded in the assessment database is rich with qualitative evidence of faculty assessment practices leading to improvements in teaching, learning, and learning-support. Due to a gradual roll-out, it took a number of years for meaningful longitudinal data to be gathered and the challenge now lies in making sense of the large quantity of data available while maintaining momentum for faculty participation. Preliminary reports have been developed to show the degree of mapping that has been done, the amount of assessment that has been completed, and the degree to which students are meeting learning outcomes. These are shown and discussed in [Standard 1.C.5](#).

The database has always included a field for planned changes based on assessment results, but it was not until January 2023 that the functionality was added to document the results of those changes. Analysis of these results began after the spring semester, and some needed improvements to the process have already been revealed. Faculty were initially given little guidance on what to enter in the "Planned Changes" field, resulting in a myriad of ways to indicate no changes were planned and making it difficult to quickly identify assessments with

actual changes planned. The database developer added a prompt for faculty to enter a simple “None” if they have no planned changes, which should address this issue.

A closer inspection of all planned changes entered into the database since fall 2019 revealed just over 300 instances of faculty planning changes and following up with the results. In approximately half of the instances, the results were little more than confirmation the planned change was made (e.g., more time spent on subject in class, applied planned changes, etc.). For the other half, however, faculty described the outcomes of the changes they made, both positive and neutral or negative. Many of them were simple statements that a new strategy worked well or that students liked something better, but others provided clear evidence that a change was successful or not. Some examples are provided in Appendix A. The next step in analysis of this data will be to compare assessment results for the same outcome over multiple semesters as a quantitative measure of student learning improvement.

Now that all original functions of the database have been implemented and preliminary reports have been created, efforts shift to finalizing official reports and creating a systematic process for evaluating the data and drawing meaningful conclusions about the quality of student learning as demonstrated in the achievement of credential learning outcomes and institutional competencies. The college is hoping to explore the formation of an assessment committee to oversee learning outcomes assessment going forward. This committee would feature significant faculty involvement and would be tasked with establishing best practices for database use, developing official assessment reports, and analyzing assessment data to identify needed interventions or opportunities for improvement. Ideal reports will demonstrate:

- Faculty participation in the process, including mapping of outcomes and entering assessment data according to ECOS expectations
- Coverage of credential learning outcomes by the courses on the degree pathways with, including appropriate levels of assessment (introduced, reinforced, mastered)
- Coverage of institutional competencies in all pathways
- Student achievement of course and credential learning outcomes, as well as institutional competencies

Student Achievement Data

Outside of learning outcomes assessment at the course and section level, faculty often look to student achievement data, such as course pass rates, to make decisions about curriculum or teaching practices. An example provided by Joyce Walborn, of the math department, illustrates how data, combined with review of best practices provided the basis for improvements in our course offerings:

Complete College America’s (CCA) publication, [*Remediation: Higher Education’s Bridge to Nowhere*](#) (2012) provided data-driven evidence that only 22.3% of 2-year college students complete both remediation and the associated college-level course in two years. In addition, momentum, as defined by CCA, is about helping students gain success early on in their college careers, which increases the likelihood of completing their degree. A major barrier to that early momentum is remediation, or the requirement of enrollment in prerequisite courses prior to gaining access to the gateway course.

At Helena College, one particular gateway math course of interest is College Algebra, a course that at one point required the completion of 3 prerequisite courses prior to enrollment. Prior to 2020, students that were required to take College Algebra as a part of their degree plan had to obtain the necessary score on a math placement test or enroll in a series of prerequisite courses. During the spring of 2020, due to the [COVID-19] pandemic, we were no longer able to administer the on-campus placement exam. As a result, a decision was made to allow students to self-place into either College Algebra or the prerequisite course series. Knowing that there may be students that self-place into College Algebra that are not up to speed on the skills needed for success, just-in-time supports were embedded into the course structure so that all students had the necessary tools to succeed.

Pass rate data was then collected for the next 2 years and compared against pass rate data from the prior 7 years. The average pass rate with self-placement was 85.8% as compared to the 7-year average pass rate with the prerequisite requirement of 80.9%. Based on this data comparison, we removed the prerequisite requirement from College Algebra starting fall 2022. Analysis of data from fall 2022 to present shows a pass rate of 87.0% for College Algebra, providing evidence that the removal of the prerequisite requirement was a sound decision.

Course Evaluations

Faculty also make changes to their courses in response to end-of-semester course evaluations. Veronica Mohrmann, Communications Instructor, describes how she identified necessary changes based on end of semester course evaluations for two courses:

COMX 111

Students expressed that having the group project at the end of the semester and having minimal class time dedicated to the project created barriers to...being able to successfully collaborate on the assignment. Some comments even expressed that the project as a whole felt rushed and that adding another week to work on the assignment would have increased student learning of that particular speaking style. I have since adjusted my courses to have the group project during Weeks 10-13 (instead of weeks 14-16), have extended the group project from three weeks to four weeks, and have a number of class times that are dedicated to group work. I can say these shifts have not only produced better group projects, but now allow me time to observe group collaboration and provide support and feedback for students about how to work together.

Students [also] expressed a desire for multiple class meetings per week in semesters that COMX 111 was offered as a 3-hr in person class or a 2-hr in person blended course. Students noted in course evals that additional meeting times would be helpful in working through the projects and would increase opportunities for speaking activities in class, which students report are very helpful in overcoming anxiety and developing skills. I have now shifted COMX 111 to meet twice per week, which allows more opportunities for scaffolding of project deadlines and creates more opportunities for speaking activities.

COMX 115

In Fall 2023 I opted to try a new textbook, one that is written specifically for 2-year college courses. Although there are chapters in the textbook that I find need extra supplementation, students noted in their course surveys that the adaptive learning tool that supplements the textbook is absolutely valuable. One student commented, "I would say one of the biggest strengths in the course was InQuizitive. This software was so nice for learning and improving. I felt as even though I got a question wrong I was able to learn why and not be punished on the assignment. I felt it overall improved my learning experience." This sentiment was echoed by multiple students and thus influenced my decision to continue using the textbook because this platform is so user friendly and beneficial for student learning.

In terms of course assessment, feedback from COMX 115 surveys always indicate a desire for more opportunities to practice the communication skills we learn about in class. Each semester we do a practical listening exercise because student feedback consistently shows this exercise is valuable in not only getting to know others in the class, but in identifying challenges to effective listening and practicing the active listening strategies discussed in class. I have also decided this semester to change the group project to a deliberative dialogue project that will inherently create opportunities for students to practice skills like civil discourse, active listening and perspective taking and to receive feedback from their peers on the effectiveness of their communication skills. Although I do not yet have information about the effects of this shift, I'm excited to see how it goes!

Annual Work Plans

All departments, committees, and senates complete annual work plans each year (see [Standard 1.B.1](#) for detailed explanation of the process). This provides an opportunity for every area of campus to plan and set goals for continuous improvement. Data used to inform goal setting includes a budget narrative to ensure planning efforts include necessary resource allocation.

Below are some examples of improvements made to academic and learning-support planning and practices, all documented AY 2022-23 work plans:

- The Automotive Technology program held vehicle inspection days for the community, which provided students with hands-on experience inspecting vehicles and working with customers. Instructors observed student interactions and customers were interviewed. Positive response from the community and satisfactory performance on the student part led the instructor to decide to host the event annually.
- The CNC Machining program was recognized as a HAAS certification center, allowing students to earn an important industry-recognized certification.
- The Executive Director of General Education and Executive Director of Career Technical Education implemented practices to improve academic collaboration between the two departments. Both directors found value in communicating regularly, sharing resources, and aligning administrative processes and decided to continue the work.
- The Director of eLearning & Faculty Development improved the faculty onboarding process by creating channels for communication, modifying the format for New

Faculty Orientation, and holding monthly meetings focused on different campus resources. All of the efforts were determined to be successful based on attendance and participation and have been continued for faculty hired since.

- Initial student feedback from students enrolled in new media arts courses indicated student satisfaction with the curriculum and supported the decision to continue the courses and promote the program.
- Fine Arts seminar and capstone courses have been continuously revised to more effectively prepare students for careers in the arts, such as including more diverse guest speakers and identifying more ways to promote student exhibitions in local galleries.
- The Library Learning Hub met with faculty for guidance on updating their library resource guides to be more useful for students. They have identified readily-available educational resources to incorporate into guides and course modules within the LMS.
- Embedded tutoring was shown to be an effective practice for encouraging more students to meet with tutors.

Program Review

Program review provides an opportunity for all academic and learning support areas to reflect on successes and challenges from the past review period. As discussed in detail in [Standards 1.B.1](#) and [1.B.3](#), non-academic departments complete reviews every three years, while academic programs complete them every five years. These self-studies culminate in programs articulating recommended improvements for the next period. The combination of annual plans to provide short-term goals with program review with a longer-term focus allows incremental goals to be part of the planning process.

An example of a nonacademic program review leading to changes over time comes from K-12 Partnerships. Program review was completed in 2021-2022 with four recommendations for improvement. Stephanie Hunthausen, program review author, provides this update:

The first recommendation regarding establishing a K-12 budget has been implemented. After writing the report, I was able to propose a small departmental budget which was approved by the Budget Management Committee. This has helped our department plan our spending apart from the grants that we manage and more effectively assess our needs.

The fourth recommendation related to defining our departmental scope and responsibilities has been tackled in the following ways: this year we are re-writing our departmental mission statement to better reflect our program priorities; we are also re-defining the scope of each position now that we have been restructured (Executive Director of CTE & Dual Enrollment, Assistant Director of K-12 Partnership, Dual Enrollment Coordinator).

Program review also led to significant changes for the Metals Technology program. The program is unique, in that it offers one credential, an AAS in Metals Technology, that is earned by stacking a CAS in Manual Machining with the CAS in Welding Technology. The program faculty are the instructors for each of the certificates, and the review revealed that most instructors and students in the related programs viewed this credential as a bonus,

rather than its own pathways. The recommendation resulting from this first program review for Metals Technology was to begin treating it more like any other program, creating advising materials, promoting the program, and writing annual plans. The program has also created an advisory board in response to this recommendation, ensuring it remains relevant to both students and employers.

Special Programs

Conversations with students and amongst colleagues provide valuable insight into the successes and challenges of the student experience and provide a means for informal assessment of student learning.

Ongoing communication between academic and student services professionals is key to making improvements to student services on campus. Each fall, student service areas hold open forum meetings for the faculty to learn about the services of each department in order to better direct students to appropriate supports. Each spring, all academic departments hold open forum meetings to discuss their academic program, with particular attention on upcoming changes or notes for advisors and admissions counselors.

Since its creation in the spring of 2018, Helena College's audio-storytelling project, [Necessary Narratives](#), has captured student experiences. This project grew out of a desire by staff and faculty to help students articulate their educational journeys and goals in scholarship essays. They have proven to help foster social belonging, celebrate student diversity, and raise awareness about adversity. Additionally, it helps the college reflect on and revise learning outcomes to better meet our students' needs. Though the project has expanded to include narratives from the general population, the majority of the participants are from the college's TRIO-SSS and MT10 programs, both of which serve students who are more likely to experience barriers to completing their degrees. Their stories have directly influenced both the student support services offered at the college and the content of First-Year Seminar courses (COLS 101). The following changes to this course have been made as a direct result of student needs expressed in their narratives:

- Additional support in academic tutoring and coaching: Tutoring added to MT10 COLS 101 sections.
- Learning effective study techniques and better understanding their own learning processes: John Medina's *Brain Rules* (Pear Press, 2008) has been incorporated as a shared read into all COLS 101 sections, a text that explores learning and motivation with accessible and relatable language.
- Financial literacy and help with scholarships. Scholarship essay writing added to the MT10 COLS 101 course.
 - As Jamar said in his narrative, "Montana 10 and TRIO have been the main source of me being able to get through this college career.... They've made it a way for me to pay by bills, they've made ways for me to be connected to scholarships.... They didn't necessarily hold my hand, but they gave me the information I needed and made it very simple to utilize whatever source I needed in order to finish the program, and for that I'm very grateful."

- Mental and social support: Social programs and events bring students together, and TRIO is working to provide telehealth counseling services to their population.

A specific example of the impact of these changes comes from Sandy, a mother of three and full-time state employee. In her narrative, she talked about the power of her support team at the college, and the need for the resources they provided—from educational workshops to the COLS 101 course to high-touch advising. “I’m really grateful I found Helena College,” she said.

These services are even more important for first-generation students. Fayth, a 2022 graduate, said, “It’s kind of surreal graduating. You know, I’m first generation in my family. Nobody else has ever graduated, so that’s kind of a whirlwind of emotions. And it’s kind of hard balancing that... Graduating is literally a whole new world.” To that end, TRIO-SSS often provides workshops and resources for first-generation students, such as a First-Gen panel and open-mic for students, faculty, and staff to share their experiences as the first in their family to attend college.

Standard 1.C.8

Transfer credit and credit for prior learning is accepted according to clearly defined, widely published, and easily accessible policies that provide adequate safeguards to ensure academic quality. In accepting transfer credit, the receiving institution ensures that such credit accepted is appropriate for its programs and comparable in nature, content, academic rigor, and quality.

Eligibility Requirements 5, 13

Montana Board of Regents maintains policies [301.5](#) (Transfer of Credits), [301.5.1](#) (System of Controls), [301.5.2](#) (Outdated Coursework), [301.5.3](#) (Minimum Course Grades), [301.5.4](#) (Single Admissions File), and [301.5.5](#) (Common Course Numbering) that govern transfer of credit within the Montana University System and dictate Helena College policy.

Requirements for admission of transfer students to Helena College are listed in the [academic catalog](#) (p. 21), as is detailed information on transfer of credit (p. 24). To ensure transfer courses are appropriate for programs and are comparable with Helena College courses, admissions counselors work with the faculty, who make the final determination on whether or not to accept a course for credit. Enrollment Services maintains a [transfer equivalency database](#) of course that have previously been evaluated, which students can use to determine how credits from various institutions will be recognized at Helena College. Within the Montana University System, [Common Course Numbering](#) ensures that courses taught at each institution provide the same learning outcomes and are comparable in rigor and quality.

Montana Board of Regents [Policy 301.19](#) defines prior learning assessment, and Helena College processes follow this policy. Students may receive credit for prior learning through multiple means. Credit by examination, documented in the academic catalog (p. 23) allows students to receive college credit for College-Level Examination Program (CLEP) test results, Advanced Placement (AP), and Credit by Exam (CBE) by providing documentation of a nationally recognized procession license or certificate. Additionally, students have the option

to complete a challenge exam to prove mastery of course learning outcomes (catalog, p. 51). The Montana University System has recently joined the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning ([CAEL](#)), which should help the college strengthen its practices in this area.

Standard 1.C.9

The institution's graduate programs are consistent with its mission, are in keeping with the expectations of its respective disciplines and professions, and are described through nomenclature that is appropriate to the levels of graduate and professional degrees offered. The graduate programs differ from undergraduate programs by requiring, among other things, greater: depth of study; demands on student intellectual or creative capacities; knowledge of the literature of the field; and ongoing student engagement in research, scholarship, creative expression, and/or relevant professional practice.

Eligibility Requirements 5, 13

Helena College does not offer graduate programs.

STANDARD 1.D STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

Standard 1.D.1

Consistent with its mission, the institution recruits and admits students with the potential to benefit from its educational programs. It orients students to ensure they understand the requirements related to their programs of study and receive timely, useful, and accurate information and advice about relevant academic requirements, including graduation and transfer policies.

Eligibility Requirement 17

Helena College actively works to recruit and admit students who have the potential to benefit from its educational programs, supports new students to set them up for success.

Recruitment

Student recruitment has typically been driven by Enrollment Services and the Director of Marketing, Communications, and Alumni Relations, though the college is working to eliminate the mindset that recruitment is solely the responsibility of these two departments.

Admissions counselors engage in many typical recruitment activities, such as visiting local high schools and participating in college and career fair tours across the state of Montana. They also provide tours to and meet with prospective students, helping them understand admissions requirements and identifying the program that best fits their interests, skills, and career goals.

The Marketing, Communications, and Alumni Relations department works with local advertising agencies to create and distribute targeted advertising on social media, television, streaming media, and radio. Many of these advertisements feature one program or a group of related programs in an effort to increase awareness of the college's specific pathways to career and transfer opportunities. This department also distributes information about the college's offerings to local high schools in collaboration with the admissions counselors.

The K-12 Partnerships department is responsible for oversight of the dual enrollment program at the college and has been instrumental in raising awareness of the educational opportunities at Helena College among high school students. Following the establishment of this department in the 2019-20 academic year, dual enrollment has transitioned from a necessary administrative burden spread across many departments to a robust program that has seen a 50% increase in enrollment since the fall 2019 semester. Department staff recognize that a positive experience with Helena College dual enrollment is likely to lead to increased interest in attending the college as a degree-seeking student. The department visits area high schools, hosts dual enrollment information nights for students and parents every semester, and has collaborated with the admissions office to implement [shadow days for high school students](#) to get a taste of the trades programs offered at the college.

The college also works with local employers to reach potential students, most recently hosting career pathway information nights with panel discussions or roundtable conversations with

local professionals. The college also partners with local organizations, such as Helena Workforce Innovation Networks ([Helena WINS](#)), an initiative of the Helena Chamber of Commerce, to host career awareness events and participates in the Helena Area Summer Jobs Program, both of which that help students identify and prepare for career pathways in local industries.

Program faculty also work to recruit students with the potential to benefit from their programs, in a variety of ways. For the past three years, the college has partnered with the elementary school directly across the street to adopt all of the fifth-grade students as honorary college students. Students come to campus for a monthly activity focused on one of the college's programs, engage with faculty, and participate in a graduation ceremony at the end of the year. The program encourages students to start thinking about their future as they transition to middle school and enables many students to consider college when they might not have otherwise felt it was a viable pathway for them. Other outreach by faculty includes a summer cyber camp for middle school students led by Information Technology & Programming faculty, faculty planning and judging state Skills USA competitions, an EMT course promoted widely to high school students, and an on-campus experience for high school dual credit welding students to learn forklift operations.

Admission & Placement

As an open enrollment institution, [requirements for admission](#) to most programs at the college are minimal, and are outlined on in the [catalog](#) (pp. 19-25) and on the website for a variety of student types. Both the nursing and cosmetology programs have a limited capacity and significant interest, so they utilize competitive application processes to identify students with the potential to succeed in the programs.

All new students meet with their advisors prior to orientation, when they begin discussing college readiness, which can vary widely. Helena College used to rely on ACT and SAT scores, as well as scores on tests such as the Accuplacer, but now utilizes self-placement via multiple measures to help students identify the most appropriate math or writing course to take. Following best practices outlined by [Complete College America](#), the college has eliminated nearly all developmental or remedial coursework in favor of placement directly into gateway math and writing courses with either corequisite support or embedded tutoring for students who are not completely ready for college-level work. Testimony from a mathematics instructor who led this effort is presented in [Standard 1.C.7](#).

[Orientation](#) is optional but highly recommended for all new, first-time students and those who are returning after an absence of more than two semesters. In fall 2023, 100% of new students at the Airport Campus attended their orientation, while 90% of students in programs on the Donaldson Campus attended. Attendance is typically lower for the spring semester orientations (approximately only 30% of eligible students attend). The event is a cross-campus collaboration overseen by the Orientation Committee, which is comprised of representatives from several student support services departments and one faculty member. The goal of new student orientation is not only to inform students of the expectations of the college's programs and the resources available to support them, but also to foster a sense of community between their peers and build connections with their program faculty. In addition to touring the campus and hearing from key services such as financial aid, student life, the Library Learning

Hub, and the business office, students enjoy a catered lunch with faculty in their program. Feedback is collected after each session (Appendix N) and the committee uses the results to modify the presentations, invited presenters, and the overall schedule agenda. For example, the Director of eLearning was recently added to the slate of presenters after students indicated they wanted to learn more about using the LMS.

Although orientation is similar for all new students, some programs provide additional information to their students where necessary. New student orientation at the Airport Campus, where the college's trades programs reside, features breakout sessions specific to each program. The nursing department also holds an orientation for its students, and the cosmetology program is planning to do this as well. K-12 Partnerships also hosts an orientation for new dual enrollment students each semester.

Advising

Students receive timely, useful, and accurate information and advice about program requirements and their progress from admission through their final semester. All students must meet with their advisor in order to receive their PIN to register for courses for the upcoming semester. In addition to helping students follow [degree planning sheets](#) to choose pathways and courses, advisors also talk with students about graduation requirements or transfer strategies and ensure they are aware of the services available to support them. For example, the Financial Aid department helps students navigate paying for college, whether that be through loans, grants, scholarships, work study, or basic financial literacy. Advisors and faculty both refer students to tutoring and research help available in the Library Learning Hub or to wellness resources through Student Life.

Advising is also mandatory for dual enrollment students taking classes directly through Helena College. In these sessions, K-12 Partnerships staff not only help students choose courses that advance their educational and career goals, but they also teach high school students the responsibilities and expectations of college and share college resources available to them. One of the goals of the dual enrollment program is to guide students to becoming independent and advocating for themselves in their transition to higher education.

The college is continually looking for ways to improve communications between faculty and student support services to ensure students remain aware of their progress and have access to necessary support. During the fall semester, student support services host information sessions for faculty and other employees to learn about current projects and needs in their area. Program faculty host information sessions for employees in the spring to share important information about their programs, such as changes to curriculum, new offerings, or ways their students could use more support.

Standard 1.D.2

Consistent with its mission and in the context of and in comparison with regional and national peer institutions, the institution establishes and shares widely a set of indicators for student achievement including, but not limited to, persistence, completion, retention, and postgraduation success. Such indicators of student achievement should be disaggregated by race, ethnicity, age, gender, socioeconomic status, first generation college student, and any other institutionally meaningful categories that may help promote student achievement and close barriers to academic excellence and success (equity gaps).

Eligibility Requirements 6, 21, 22

Helena College engages in ongoing and systematic collection and reporting of student achievement data, including enrollment, retention, completion, and postgraduation success. The Director of Institutional Research is primarily responsible for this task, supported by the IDEA Committee and the Dean's Cabinet in determining the indicators and setting targets.

The following strategic goal targets and KPIs in the [2022-2027 Strategic Plan](#) are the colleges official indicators of student achievement:

- Strategic Goals:
 - Impact (IM)-2: Utilize academic pathways to increase enrollment, retention, and completion
 - Target 3: Average annual-full-time equivalent (AAFTE)
 - Target 4: Retention of all entering students
 - Target 5: Degrees and certificates awarded
- Key Performance Indicators
 - Effectiveness (EF)-1: Gateway math and writing course completion by full-time and part-time students
 - EF-2: Course success rates
 - EF-3: Credit accumulation
 - EF-4: Credential learning outcomes
 - EF-5: Institutional competencies
 - EF-6: Completion of non-credit credentials
 - IM-1: Dual enrollment and early college enrollment
 - IM-2: 150% graduation rate
 - IM-3: 150% transfer rate
 - IM-4: Transfer success rate
 - IM-5: Transfer GPA
 - IM-6: Professional license and certification pass rates
 - IM-7: Employment rates

Many of these indicators have been carried over from the core theme indicators utilized in the 2018-2022 strategic plan, as they provide valuable insight into every component of student success at Helena College (see [Standard 1.B.1](#), [1.B.2](#), and [1.B.3](#) for more information about the plan, and Appendix B for a table which cross-references indicators from the two plans). Enrollment is an important first step for many students who may not have originally seen

themselves as college students. Completion of gateway courses, overall pass rates, and credit accumulation are three indicators of future student success, including retention and graduation. Achievement of credential learning outcomes and institutional competencies assures that students are prepared for the next step in their paths, whether that be entry into a career or furthering their education. The college aims to support students to not just earn their degrees or certificates, but to do so as quickly as efficiently as possible – another reason to monitor credit accumulation, and the main reason for also monitoring 150% graduation rates. Timely transfer and success after transfer are also important, as the college wants to be sure that students intending to continue their education are prepared appropriately during their time at Helena College. Professional license/certification pass rates and employment rates demonstrate student readiness and ability to enter the workforce following graduation. Finally, completion of non-credit credentials allows the college to track student achievement in the programs offered by the CEC.

These indicators have also been selected for the ability to disaggregate the data in support of identifying and understanding equity gaps. Wherever possible, the metrics are typically disaggregated in the following ways:

- IPEDS race/ethnicity categories
- Age
- Gender
- Pell eligibility (as an indicator of socioeconomic status)
- First generation students (neither parent completed bachelor degree)
- Veterans (as indicated by utilization of veteran benefits)
- Disability (utilizing Accessibility Resources)
- Academic program
- Enrollment status (full-time vs. part-time)
- Participation in programs such as TRIO-SSS, Montana 10, or Second Chance Pell

It can be challenging to report on some of these student characteristics or populations, as there are only a small number of students in some categories (for example, of the almost 1,500 students enrolled in fall 2023, 15% did not provide a race/ethnicity, and only about 12% identify as a person of color), especially when more than one dimension of a student is analyzed together (such as disaggregating only the new first time students by program, veteran status, or disability). The college typically addresses this issue by reporting multiple groups together, reporting rounded percentages, incorporating multiple years of data, or ensuring disaggregated data is only utilized internally. Currently, the college is unable to disaggregate learning outcomes assessment data (including institutional competencies), as it is reported in aggregate for a given assessment in a section, rather than for individual students. Professional license/certification pass rates are provided by the exam agencies and cannot be disaggregated, either.

Availability of data for peer comparison also informed the selection of these indicators of student achievement. For comparisons to other two-year colleges in the state of Montana, Helena College relies on the [robust dashboards](#) maintained by the Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education (OCHE). A new set of regional and national peer institutions (eight of each) was established in AY 2022-23, to be used primarily with IPEDS

data. The process to identify these institutions is described in more detail in [Standard 1.B.2](#). The IDEA Committee plans to re-evaluate this list of peers after five years to ensure the institutions are still appropriate comparators.

Table 6 outlines which of the 16 indicators of student achievement can be disaggregated and which can be compared to peer institutions:

Table 6. Indicators of Student Achievement

SG/KPI	Number	Metric	Disaggregated Data Available (Equity SG 2)	Peer Comparisons Available
SG	IM-2.3	Average annual full-time equivalent (AAFTE)	Yes	State and IPEDS
SG	IM-2.4	Retention	Yes	State and IPEDS
SG	IM-2.5	Degrees and certificates awarded	Yes	State and IPEDS
KPI	EF-1	Gateway course completion (math and writing, full-time and part-time students)	Yes	Potential state comparison, pending new performance funding metric
KPI	EF-2	Course success rates	Yes	No
KPI	EF-3	Credit accumulation	Yes	State
KPI	EF-4	Credential learning outcomes	No	No
KPI	EF-5	Institutional competencies	No	No
KPI	IM-1	Dual enrollment and early college enrollment	Yes	State (dual enrollment), potentially IPEDS
KPI	IM-2	150% graduation rate	Yes	State and IPEDS
KPI	IM-3	150% transfer rate	Yes	IPEDS
KPI	IM-4	Transfer success rate	Potentially	No
KPI	IM-5	Transfer GPA	Potentially	No
KPI	IM-6	Professional license and certification pass rates	No	Comparisons to other schools administering exams
KPI	IM-7	Employment rates	Yes	State

Standard 1.D.3

The institution's disaggregated indicators of student achievement should be widely published and available on the institution's website. Such disaggregated indicators should be aligned with meaningful, institutionally identified indicators benchmarked against indicators for peer institutions at the regional and national levels and be used for continuous improvement to inform planning, decision making, and allocation of resources.

Eligibility Requirements 6, 21 22

Student achievement indicators are currently shared in mission fulfillment reports, which the IDEA Committee aims to produce annually. Mission fulfillment reports are primarily discussed in IDEA Committee and Dean's Cabinet meetings, though they are available to the wider campus and the public on the [Strategic Planning page](#) of the college's website (left menu). The college also maintains a web page titled [HC at a Glance](#) which lists basic information about its most recent fall enrollment, including average class size, student to faculty ratio, student demographics, and information about partner dual enrollment programs. Student outcomes are published along with other required disclosures on the [Consumer Information page](#) of the website.

The Director of Institutional Research & Effectiveness shares additional data about student achievement in a collection of Excel files, which can be accessed internally in two places: a shared network drive and a campus-wide group in Microsoft Teams, which makes it easier for employees to access the data when they are working off campus, as remote access to network files via VPN is limited for security purposes. These reports expand on the indicators of student achievement with additional, related metrics and disaggregated data where possible. The reports are updated annually as time allows or requests are made. The Director also makes an effort to summarize highlights and trends in the data for the Dean's Cabinet and the Dean's Campus Advisory Council, occasionally incorporating readily-available data about state or national trends (for an example, see the Fall 2023 Census Enrollment Summary, Appendix O). Survey results, such as those from the College Employee Satisfaction Survey (CESS), or the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE), are also shared internally, while executive summaries are posted on the [Institutional Surveys](#) page of the college website.

Currently, the only disaggregated indicators of student achievement used in benchmarking against peer institutions are those that appear by default in the IPEDS Data Feedback Report. The college does utilize the comparison groups available through institutional surveys, such as the CESS and CCSSE discussed above, to understand how the employee and student experiences at Helena College compare to similar institutions that also participate in the surveys. The IDEA Committee has plans for this year or the next to conduct an inventory of metrics where disaggregated data can be gathered at Helena College and seen for peer institutions at the state, national, and regional level

Plans are also in the works to create more transparency and communication around the data that is collected about student achievement. One of the priorities for the Director of Institutional Research & Effectiveness and IDEA Committee in the coming year is to begin transitioning regular data reporting at the college from Excel files to dashboards available on

the college website. The dashboards will use the student achievement indicators described in Standard 1.D.2 as a foundation, and will allow for data to be disaggregated according to a variety of student characteristics and populations. Care will need to be taken to ensure any small population sizes are considered to avoid compromising student privacy. The Director is also currently working to provide more regular updates of student achievement data to the rest of the campus, either in the weekly employee newsletter (Monday Morning Memo), college-wide open forums, or the State of the College presentations, held at the end of the fall and spring semesters (see also [Standard 1.B.3](#)).

Standard 1.D.4

The institution's processes and methodologies for collecting and analyzing indicators of student achievement are transparent and are used to inform and implement strategies and allocate resources to mitigate perceived gaps in achievement and equity.

Eligibility Requirements 6, 21

Collection and reporting of student achievement data at Helena College is widely understood to be the primary responsibility of the Director of Institutional Research and Effectiveness (IR & E). Ad hoc reporting is available to some departments that work closely with student data, such as Enrollment Services, and the Director of IR & E works closely with both the Registrar and the Systems Analyst in charge of running ad hoc reports to ensure data is reported as consistently as possible. The Director of IR & E also aligns data reporting with the processes utilized for the Montana University System student data warehouse. As discussed in [Standard 1.D.3](#), reports produced by the Director of IR & E are shared and discussed with the IDEA Committee, the Dean's Cabinet, and the Dean's Campus Advisory Council. They are then made available to all employees via institutional network drives and a Microsoft Team (see Appendix O for an example). Many of these reports contain a data dictionary to help users understand where and how the data was collected and handled to create each report. This is especially helpful when reporting and analyzing disaggregated data, as definitions of student characteristics may vary depending on the use.

Institutional reports contain disaggregated student achievement data where possible, or where it has been requested. Additional disaggregated data is also made available to departments upon request. Most analysis of disaggregated student achievement data is completed as the need arises, resulting in targeted decisions impacting the groups of students with the most need.

For example, college leadership recently utilized longitudinal data about students receiving disability services to restructure the office and improve support for these students (see Appendix P). Following the departure of a part-time Disability Resources Coordinator, responsibility for registering students with the office and developing accommodations was assigned to a faculty member who had been given a credit release to perform these duties. Trends in retention and completion for students receiving disability services had begun to drop, indicating the workload and services provided by the staff needed to be readjusted, both in incorporate targeted advising for these students, but also to adequate time for training and outreach.

The college has been the recipient of two TRIO-SSS grants, thanks in large part to careful analysis of achievement data for students belonging to the populations served by the programs. In addition to demonstrating need for the grant by showing the achievement gaps present for first generation students, students with disabilities, and low-income students at the college, the TRIO program has also successfully demonstrated their ability to remove barriers for these students and help them succeed at rates higher than the general college population.

The Perkins grant also requires thoughtful analysis of disaggregated student achievement data in all programs supported by the grant, which are all of the trades and technical programs offered by the college. The Director of Institutional Research & Effectiveness prepared a set of dashboards to support this task, presenting [enrollment](#), [retention](#), and [graduation](#) information by program, gender, race/ethnicity, disability services, and Pell recipients. The dashboards were instrumental in completing the Perkins V Comprehensive Local Needs Assessment and the college would like to build off of them to create official institutional dashboards.

It has become apparent in preparations for this report, that more systematic assessment of disaggregated data is necessary for Helena College to be more proactive in identifying equity gaps and strategies to eliminate barriers. The Dean's Cabinet is in the beginning stages of developing an intentional strategic planning timeline for the academic year and intends to integrate analysis and discussion of disaggregated student achievement data into these strategic discussions. Plans to incorporate student achievement data into resource allocation may also include disaggregated student data, if possible. As the college works to increase availability and transparency of data, it will be necessary to increase the data literacy of all employees and promote responsible data governance.

CONCLUSION

Helena College remains committed to its mission to support its diverse community by providing the paths and tools necessary to assist learners in achieving their educational and career goals. An important part of living that mission is assessing institutional efforts and focusing on continuous improvement. During the last seven-year evaluation cycle, the college has made great strides in its assessment practices through improvements in learning outcomes assessment, annual plan tracking of strategic plan priorities, and academic and non-academic program review processes.

As the college looks to the future, the following priorities have been identified:

1. Improve transparency in resource allocation, ensuring the process aligns with the college's strategic goals and is informed by data.
2. Implement a systematic long-range planning process that incorporates data and financial planning to better connect academic priorities with student support initiatives and strategies for identifying needed resources.
3. Improve the website content and navigation (although this did not feature prominently in the report, feedback was repeatedly given about the difficulty in finding information on the website)

The self-evaluation process provided a valuable opportunity to bring both campuses together to review the college's work and identify areas for improvement. To complete this self-study, the college held workshops throughout the spring 2023 semester in which faculty discussed each of the standards and identified:

- How individuals, their areas, and the institution meet each standard
- What is going well in support of the standard
- Challenge or opportunities for improvement
- Questions about the standard, the work, or the accreditation process

These workshops were repeated during the summer with all non-faculty employees. At the end of the second round of discussions, a comprehensive review was completed by the IDEA Committee and the Dean/CEO to identify themes, trends, or discrepancies between the two groups and score the college against the standard rubrics provided by the NWCCU. At the same time, the Dean's Cabinet reviewed each standard for improvement areas identified through this process to develop a priority list of projects. Throughout the fall 2023 semester, the Director of Institutional Research and Effectiveness provided summaries of all of this work in the [employee newsletter](#).

This process helped ensure that the perspectives of all employees are represented in the pages of this report and that questions or misconceptions were addressed. It has provided the opportunity to celebrate areas of strength at Helena College and to have thoughtful discussions about needed improvements.

Strengths and Opportunities

Standard 1B – Improving Institutional Effectiveness

Strengths: The assessment database, annual plans, program reviews, and work with advisory boards give a solid structure for assessing effectiveness and making informed decisions. Additionally, the faculty are active in both Common Course Numbering (CCN) and Faculty Learning Outcomes Committees (FLOC) with the Montana University System to promote consistency.

Opportunities: More information about how resources are allocated, and better explanation of the budgeting process were identified as opportunities for improvement. This was established as a strategic goal under the new strategic plan and will be a focus of the BMT for the upcoming year. While the college has implemented a very good system for connecting departmental goals to the strategic plan and measuring mission fulfillment, there is an opportunity to establish better long-range plans in support of strategic goals.

Standard 1C – Student Learning

Strengths: The curriculum is continuously reviewed for rigor and appropriate content through industry advisory boards and comparison within the Montana University System. Specific academic programs also monitor student performance on national exams as a benchmark of effectiveness. The assessment database provides a tool for instructors to reflect on student mastery of learning outcomes, plan course changes to improve results, and follow up on the impact of these changes.

Opportunities: The college website should be reorganized to make information easier to find. There is also a good opportunity to explore how results of academic assessments could be used to inform student support services.

Standard 1D - Student Achievement

Strengths: Information in the academic catalog is clear and regularly reviewed to ensure clarity for students and provide a consistent record of official academic policies and programs and student services information. There is growing interest college-wide in the use of disaggregated student achievement data to make decisions.

Opportunities: The College could learn more about student experience and perspective by increasing student participation in surveys. Website improvements could improve ease of access to information. More widely-available data and education about responsible use of the data will empower more faculty, staff, directors, and administrators to use disaggregated data to understand equity gaps and identify ways to eliminate barriers.

In consideration of the standards and eligibility requirements set forth by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities, Helena College is confident that it meets the criteria for re-accreditation. Policies, procedures, and processes have set the college up to provide high quality education and essential student support services to all of its students.

ADDENDA

Addendum (a)

Helena College did not receive any official findings from the [peer evaluation](#) of the [Year Six Policies, Regulations, and Financial Review](#), but two standards were called out for the Year Seven team to look into.

Standard 2.D.1

The peer evaluation of the college's Year Six report indicated that "policies/procedures for reviewing published materials (print or websites) that assures institutional integrity" were not included in the required evidence and that "The Year Seven team should review related policy/procedures on site and confirm institutional processes."

In addition to the information provided in the Year Six report regarding compliance with Standard 2.D.1, Helena College has further developed the process to ensure promotional materials and academic program information on the website is accurate.

A Marketing & Communications Request Form (linked from the [Employee portal](#) and shared in Appendix Q) allows students, faculty, and staff to make requests of the Director to include items in internal publications like the Monday Morning Memo, Student Newsletter, or to be added to the digital displays around campus. The form can also be used to request something public facing, such as a press release, media coverage request, or social media post. The department has also developed a standard form to gather information from the faculty about each of their programs. The Academic Program Information Submissions Form (Appendix R) is used to update information on the website and for use in other college marketing efforts. The Academic Administrative Coordinator is tasked with ensuring all programs complete the form annually.

Standard 2.G.6

In the peer evaluation report, it was also noted that the "Year Seven team should review advising process evaluation and evidence of appropriate changes as a result of analyzing survey data."

In addition to the information provided in Year Six report to document compliance with Standard 2.G.6, Helena College has added two important annual activities to further ensure academic advisors and faculty are in regular conversation about academic programs and have an opportunity to share concerns and provide updates. Each fall semester, all student service departments, including academic advising, hold open forums for the faculty to learn about their procedures and share feedback from students with the instructors. In the spring, the process is reversed with faculty holding sessions to provide updates and answer questions about their programs. These sessions have proven to be a very effective way to exchange important facts about each program that need to be clearly communicated to students during advising appointments and will be continued each year going forward.

To complement the annual information sessions, the advising team meets biweekly with the Director of Student Life and the Academic Coach to collaborate on student support measures and share timely feedback or concerns from students. This has proven especially valuable for addressing reports of concern about specific students who may need extra academic support or a referral to additional services. Faculty are also invited to these meetings as necessary to provide program updates.

The Executive Director of Enrollment Services has also set a goal for the current academic year to conduct a data-informed analysis of advising loads to better understand the effect they may have on student success. Data on advisor loads, student retention, and degree completion from the past three to five years will be collected and analyzed to see if there are trends associated with smaller or larger advising load. The data will be used to inform strategic planning for the organizational structure and staffing of advising services.

Addendum (b)

Helena College is authorized by the NWCCU to offer Distance Education. The requirements outlined below were addressed in detail in Standard 2.G.7 in the Year Six Policies, Regulations, and Financial Review (PRFR).

1. Policies or procedures for ensuring the student who registers in a Distance Education course or program is the same student who participates in the course and receives credit.

From the PRFR:

Once a student is admitted and their application is processed, they are assigned a student ID number. This number is sent in the student's acceptance letter, at which point they are instructed to use their student ID and birthdate to activate their NetID in our central authentication system (CAS). All online course content is provided in Moodle, the College's learning management system (LMS), access to which is protected by the CAS. Information Technology Services is planning to deploy multi-factor authentication in the future. This information is explained in the New Student Packets sent to all admitted students (Appendix L).

2. Policies and procedures that make it clear student privacy is protected.

See # 1 above.

3. Notifications to students at the time of registration of any additional charges associated with verification procedures.

From the PRFR:

When reporting to the National Student Clearinghouse, the College will occasionally receive a file of students whose SSN appears to be in use by another person in the Clearinghouse. The College contacts the student to request documentation for verification of identity, which is passed along to the Clearinghouse. Additionally, students who apply for financial aid will have their social security number (SSN) matched to their student record in Banner. The institution does not charge for any identify verification processes.

4. Academic policies and procedures for instructors to implement requirements for regular and substantive interactions in distance education courses or programs

From the PRFR:

Helena College strives to provide an enriching online instructional environment for students who choose to participate in distance education courses and programs. All instructors teaching a course with any online component ([Course Formats at Helena College](#)) are encouraged to follow the [Online Course Quality Design and Accessibility Standards Checklist](#) and pursue training in [Quality Matters](#), a national, research-based set of best practices for online education. The syllabus template (in the [Faculty Handbook](#)) provides a space for instructors to outline their classroom behavior/expectations and attendance and/or participation requirements (pp. 25-26).

There is also an optional section for instructors teaching courses with any online component, where they are encouraged to further outline expectations for student-faculty and student-student interactions within the course.

5. Additional information:

- a. The institution's Distance Education programs are consistent with the mission and educational objectives of the institutions (Standard 1.C.1)

Courses are offered in a variety of formats, from fully online and asynchronous instruction to completely in-person and synchronous modalities, as well as formats that incorporate hybrid delivery and flexible attendance options. Currently only the Accounting & Business program offers credentials that can be completed fully online, a transition that was made in AY 2018-19 to provide options for students that were unable to attend class during the work day. Students also have the option to complete an Associate of Arts and Associate of Science degrees online. All three of these credentials

- b. Institutions that offer courses or programs via multiple delivery modalities ensure learning outcomes and levels of student achievement are comparable across modalities (Standard 1.C.6)

Helena College course modalities have expanded from three very different options (face-to-face, hybrid, or online) to [seven different delivery methods](#), each with varying requirements for place (in person vs. remote attendance) and time (asynchronous or synchronous). Course formats were originally expanded in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, and student and faculty satisfaction with the flexibility afforded by the options led the college to continue offering them. Course formats have since been standardized across the Montana University System.

The college monitors pass rates, retention rates, etc. for students enrolled in online courses (Appendix S), though it has become necessary to determine a consistent method for categorizing the students, as looking at each modality individually can lead to very small group sizes. Much of the reporting has grouped all course formats that could be completed fully online into one category. Students in online courses do tend to have lower pass rates and retention rates, something the college would like to improve while still providing flexibility. As mentioned above, instructors are encouraged to participate in Quality Matters courses and many pursue professional development in the area of promoting engagement in online courses.

Cari Schwen, an accounting instructor, speaks to how she sets up her hyflex course (ACTG 102) to support students however they choose to participate:

We have a regular meeting time on Tuesdays from 5:30-7:00 pm. My students have the option to attend class in person, live stream via Teams, or watch a recording of class later. All materials that will be used in class are made available to online students prior to class via email, Moodle, or Teams. Both in person and live stream students are encouraged to

participate in class discussion. Live streams are recorded and uploaded to Teams at the conclusion of class. In class presentations are displayed on one of our SMART boards which I am able to screen share with streaming participants and at the end of class the notes can be exported as a pdf file and uploaded to Teams for online participants. This allows all participants to follow along with the recorded lecture. My weekly modules in Moodle have pre-recorded videos that have been uploaded to You Tube. I have developed a playlist for ACTG 102 of short 10-15 minute videos covering assorted homework problems. By recording short videos it allows students more flexibility in learning. There are also 8-10 discussion forums in Moodle that allow students the opportunity to discuss everything from accounting theory to ethics in accounting.

In spring 2023, General Education faculty requested a comprehensive report of course pass rates, disaggregated not only by modality, but also by a number of student characteristics and populations (see Appendix T for two views from the dashboard, access limited due to small n for some groups). They are hoping to see data for more semesters before making any conclusions, but their early observations confirm that pass rates are lower for courses with flexible attendance options. The faculty hope to identify strategies for improving student achievement in this area once they have more data to include in their analysis.

APPENDIX J:
INSTITUTIONAL REPORT CERTIFICATION FORM

Please use this certification form for all institutional reports (Self-Evaluation, Annual, Mid-Cycle, PRFR, Evaluation of Institutional Effectiveness, Candidacy, Ad-Hoc, or Special)



Institutional Report Certification Form

On behalf of the Institution, I certify that:

- There was broad participation/ review by the campus community in the preparation of this report.
- The Institution remains in compliance with NWCCU Eligibility Requirements.
- The Institution will continue to remain in compliance throughout the duration of the institution's cycle of accreditation.

I understand that information provided in this report may affect the continued Candidacy or Accreditation of my institution. I certify that the information and data provided in the report are true and correct to the best of my knowledge.

Helena College University of Montana

(Name of Institution)

Sandra J Bauman

(Name of Chief Executive Officer)

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sandra J Bauman".

(Signature of Chief Executive Officer)

02/14/2024

(Date)