January 28, 2008

Dr. Rolf Groseth  
Interim Chancellor  
Montana State University - Northern  
P.O. Box 7751  
Havre, MT 59501

Dear Chancellor Groseth:

On behalf of the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities, I am pleased to report that the accreditation of Montana State University - Northern has been reaffirmed on the basis of the Fall 2007 Comprehensive Evaluation Report. Congratulations on receiving this continued recognition.

The policy of the Commission is not to grant accreditation for a definite number of years. Instead, accreditation must be reaffirmed periodically. Each institution is required to conduct a self-study and be visited by a full evaluation committee at least once every ten years, and during the fifth year, the institution is to submit an interim report and be visited by one or more Commission representatives. In the case of Montana State University – Northern, the Commission requested that the institution prepare a focused interim report and host one or more Commission representatives in spring 2009 to address Recommendations 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 of the Fall 2007 Comprehensive Evaluation Report. In making these determinations, the Commission expanded the Recommendations to include:

Recommendation 6:

The Board of Commissioners urges the institution to address the issues of confidentiality and security regarding students’ records, and to ensure that student safety becomes and remains a high priority at the institution (Standard 3.B.4, 3.C.5).

A copy of the revised Recommendations is enclosed for your convenience.

In reaffirming accreditation the Commission determined that Recommendations 1, 4, 5 and 6 of the Fall 2007 Comprehensive Evaluation Report are areas where the institution substantially meets Commission criteria but where improvement is needed. The Commission further determined that Recommendations 2 and 3 of the Fall 2007 Comprehensive Evaluation Report do not meet Commission criteria for accreditation. According to U.S. Department of Education Regulation 34 CFR 602.20 and Commission Policy A-18, Commission Action Regarding Institutional Compliance Within Specified Period (enclosed), the Commission requires that Montana State University - Northern take appropriate action to ensure that Recommendations 2 and 3 are addressed and resolved within the prescribed two-year period.
Chancellor Rolf Groseth  
January 28, 2008  
Page Two

In the unlikely event the Commission should conclude that an institution is in danger of being unable to fulfill its mission and goals or to continue to meet the Eligibility Requirements, Standards or related Policies for accreditation, the Commission reserves the right to request that the institution receive an evaluation committee for a special review.

The Commission commends the faculty, staff and students for their loyalty, commitment and support of the mission of the University. Further, the Commission finds laudable the faculty and staff’s commitment to student success. Moreover, the Commission applauds the faculty for fostering industry partnerships and community alliances that provide exceptional learning opportunities for students, and the University for its cooperative education program which integrates theoretical knowledge with practical experience. Lastly, the Commission commends the University for its well maintained buildings and grounds and for its technology infrastructure and responsive IT staff.

Again, congratulations on receiving this recognition. Please feel free to contact me regarding your thoughts or suggestions for improving the comprehensive evaluation process and for any assistance we may provide the institution.

We will write in fall 2008 regarding the spring 2009 Focused Interim Report and visit.

Best wishes for a rewarding and peaceful new year.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Sandra E. Elman  
President

SEE: rb

Enclosures: Recommendations and Policy A-18

cc:  
Dr. Joe Callahan, Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs  
Dr. Alex Capdeville, Chancellor, Retired  
Dr. Geoffrey Gamble, President, Montana State University - Bozeman  
Ms. Lynn Hamilton, Chair, Montana Board of Regents
Comprehensive Evaluation Report  
Fall 2007  
Montana State University - Northern  

Recommendations

1. Significant declines in high school graduates in MSUN’s service area, along with increasing competition from other universities, has resulted in a serious drop in on-campus enrollment and major financial challenges. Therefore, the Committee recommends MSUN assess its mission and develop a comprehensive enrollment management plan (Standard 1.A.5; 1.B.4; 1.B.5; Eligibility Requirement 15).

2. The Committee recommends that MSUN continue the development of a campus-wide assessment plan. There is inconsistent development of objectives and missing linkages between measurable outcomes, assessment activities and program improvement. The Committee also recommends that the University publish student outcomes for each academic and co-curricular program (Policy 2.2, Standard 2.B, Standard 2.B.2, Eligibility Requirement 12).

3. The Committee recommends that the University acquire fire-proof filing cabinets to protect current and archived student admission, transcript, and financial aid records which are maintained in hard copy and/or paper form (Standard 3.C.5).

4. The Committee recommends that the University provide a systematic program of academic advising, publish an annual course schedule in a timely manner, and produce and annually update a multi-year course projection to help students make appropriate decisions concerning academic choices in course registration (Standard 2.E.4; Standard 3.D.10).

5. The Committee recommends that the University clearly articulate the transfer and acceptance of credit through articulation agreements, block transfer formats, and course-by-course analysis and computation in a consistent manner (Standards 2.C.4; Standard 3.C.4).

6. The Board of Commissioners urges the institution to address the issues of confidentiality and security regarding students’ records, and to ensure that student safety becomes and remains a high priority at the institution (Standard 3.B.4, 3.C.5).
Policy A-18 Commission Action Regarding Institutional Compliance Within Specified Period

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

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

Adopted 1997/Revised 2002