

# Experience the Difference

## A Five-Year Strategic Plan (2014-19) for the University of Montana Western

### Preface

Experiential education is defined as learning by doing what the professionals do in a discipline, and it serves as the foundation for all of Montana Western's academic programs.

A shared commitment to that idea motivated the faculty, administration and staff to develop Experience One scheduling, where students take and faculty teach a single course at a time.

*Experience One engages students and faculty in actively exploring the knowledge, purposes and practices in every field of study.*

— UMW Faculty Senate, 2014

Experiential education dominates Montana Western's face-to-face and on-line distance learning programs. This educational approach drives the mission and strategic planning for this campus.

As a unit of the Montana University System (MUS), Montana Western's strategic plan relates to the MUS Strategic Plan 2013 ([mus.edu/data/StratPlan/StrategicPlan.asp](http://mus.edu/data/StratPlan/StrategicPlan.asp)).

Montana Western's priorities and goals work towards achieving the overall goals of the MUS. Campus functional areas will develop tactical actions plans for their respective areas that serve to assist Montana Western in achieving the goals and objectives of the MUS as well as those of Montana Western. This plan is to be viewed as a dynamic plan that responds to emerging opportunities and areas of concern.

### Mission Statement

The University of Montana Western differentiates itself and achieves academic excellence by sustaining a culture of concentrated experiential education.

### Vision Statement

The University of Montana Western transforms students and its greater community through experiential teaching and civic, environmental and multicultural engagement. Students learn by engaging in the authentic practices of a discipline under the expert guidance of faculty members. Student success is maximized by providing the means for each student to identify and achieve their educational goals.

### NWCCU Core Themes

The following Core Themes were developed to meet the requirements of the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities. Most of the goals and objectives found in this plan are closely related to these Core Themes.

1. Continuously improve undergraduate education and experiential learning.
2. Maximize campus-wide support for student success and completion.
3. Foster responsible campus efficiency and stewardship of resources.

## Guiding Principles

The following guiding principles are used to help shape the priorities and goals of this plan:

**LEARNING** – Montana Western maximizes extended opportunities for concentrated experiential learning.

**COMMUNITY** – Montana Western supports a constructive community by creating a climate that promotes diverse thought and supportive environments.

**SUCCESS** – Montana Western utilizes its resources to maximize student recruitment, retention, progression and timely completion.

**DIVERSITY** – Montana Western serves all people with its academic, service and lifelong learning programs.

**STEWARDSHIP** – Montana Western promotes and practices creative and efficient use of resources.

**DEVELOPMENT** – Montana Western is resourceful and creative in identifying existing and alternative resources to support university initiatives.

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## Priorities and Goals

This new five-year strategic plan reaffirms the mission, commitments and history of Montana Western. It consists of seven priorities. The university has also developed measurable objectives and baseline metrics, available in a separate document, which will allow the campus to assess how well it has achieved its priorities, core themes and mission.

**PRIORITY ONE:** Encourage academic excellence and innovation.

**GOAL 1A:** Develop a cohesive general education program that utilizes experiential education and achieves universally accepted student learning outcomes.

**GOAL 1B:** Enhance and promote experiential teaching and learning across the curriculum.

**GOAL 1C:** Improve academic programs through rigorous and ongoing assessment and review processes.

**GOAL 1D:** Promote and support academic innovation and an entrepreneurial spirit among students, faculty and staff.

**GOAL 1E:** Deliver high-quality, innovative experiential education to the new generation of digital learners by anticipating and delivering the technology needs of the future.

**GOAL 1F:** Engage students, faculty and staff in meaningful experiential learning, service, creative and scholarly activities.

**PRIORITY TWO:** Develop, strengthen and expand creative co-curricular programs and campus collaborations to promote student learning, development, retention and success.

**GOAL 2A:** Link student affairs and student academic support by adopting a developmental approach to co-curricular experiences and academic support.

**GOAL 2B:** Equip students with the knowledge and skills that inspire them to be civic-minded and enable them to lead.

**GOAL 2C:** Coordinate programming that explores issues of personal health and safety, decision-making, and social responsibility for students, faculty and staff through collaborations across the university community.

**GOAL 2D:** Build on the important opportunities for student development in leadership, teamwork and community consistently provided by the university's athletic and other non-curricular programs.

**GOAL 2E:** Demonstrate the power of experiential education by achieving greater student success than comparator institutions.

**PRIORITY THREE:** Develop enrollment management strategies that support the experiential mission and contribute to student success.

GOAL 3A: Manage class enrollments to achieve optimal efficiency.

GOAL 3B: Identify and recruit best-fit students.

GOAL 3C: Increase the diversity of the student body.

**PRIORITY FOUR:** Employ human resource strategies that support the experiential mission and attract and retain a highly qualified, diverse mix of faculty and staff.

GOAL 4A: Provide faculty and staff with the support and tools necessary to act on their commitments to excellence.

GOAL 4B: Ensure that Montana Western's working environment reflects and supports diversity.

GOAL 4C: Increase awareness of the strengths of the university community for prospective employees.

GOAL 4D: Develop staffing and salary plans to attract and retain faculty and staff.

**PRIORITY FIVE:** Maintain facilities and infrastructure commensurate to the mission and priorities of the university.

GOAL 5A: Maintain residential and co-curricular spaces that are safe, functional, environmentally responsible, and marketable.

GOAL 5B: Align campus facilities planning with the priorities outlined in the strategic plan.

GOAL 5C: Align information and technology services with the priorities outlined in the strategic plan.

**PRIORITY SIX:** Efficiently steward resources and operations to sustain the university for future generations.

GOAL 6A: Continually assess services, operations and energy consumption to achieve greater efficiency and creative use of resources.

GOAL 6B: Pursue state and federal funding opportunities that contribute to Montana Western's mission and core themes.

GOAL 6C: Engage alumni in the life of the university.

GOAL 6D: Work with the UMW Foundation to increase extramural funding and support of the university.

**PRIORITY SEVEN:** Increase Montana Western's local, regional and national profile.

GOAL 7A: Promote and enhance Montana Western's regional and national profile.

GOAL 7B: Continue implementing an integrated marketing and communications plan that reflects Montana Western's mission.