Appendix D

Letter from NWCCU
February 5, 2015

NORTHWEST COMMISSION ON COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES
NWCCU

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February 5, 2015

Mr. Greg Kegel
Chancellor
Montana State University - Northern
P.O. Box 7751
Havre, MT 59501

Dear Chancellor Kegel:

On behalf of the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities, I write to report that at its January 7-8, 2015, meeting, the Commission did not accept Montana State University - Northern's Fall 2014 Ad Hoc Report which was to address Recommendations 1, 2, and 3 of the Fall 2013 Year Three Peer-Evaluation Report. The request for this report was the subject of Commission correspondence dated February 5, 2014.

In taking this action, the Commission also determined that the areas of concern included in Recommendations 1, 2, and 3 of the Fall 2013 Year Three Peer-Evaluation Report have yet to be adequately addressed. As such, the Commission issued a confidential sanction, namely a *Notice of Concern* with regard to Recommendations 1 and 2 (Standards 1.A.1, 1.B.2, and 2.C.10) of the Fall 2013 Year Three Peer-Evaluation Report. Insofar as these are areas in which the University does not meet the Commission's criteria for accreditation, the Commission requests that the University address Recommendations 1 and 2 in an Ad Hoc Report to be submitted by October 15, 2015. According to U.S. Department of Education Regulation 34 CFR 602.20 and Commission Policy, *Commission Action Regarding Institutional Compliance Within Specified Period* (copy enclosed), the Commission requires that Montana State University - Northern take appropriate action to ensure that Recommendations 1 and 2 of the Fall 2013 Year Three Peer-Evaluation Report are addressed and resolved within the prescribed two-year period.

The Commission determined that Recommendation 3 of the Fall 2013 Year Three Peer-Evaluation Report is an area where Montana State University - Northern is in substantial compliance with Commission criteria for accreditation, but in need of improvement. The Commission requests that the University address Recommendation 3 of the Fall 2013 Year Three Peer-Evaluation Report in its regularly scheduled Fall 2016 Year Seven *Mission Fulfillment and Sustainability* Report.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Best wishes for a peaceful and fulfilling New Year.

Sincerely,

Sandra E. Elman
President

SEE:rb

Enclosure: Commission Policy

cc: Dr. William Rugg, Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs
Dr. Waded Cruzado, President, Montana State University - Bozeman

Year Three *Resources and Capacity* Evaluation
Fall 2013
Montana State University – Northern
Recommendations

1. While the University has identified core themes, objectives, and indicators of achievement, the evaluation committee found that levels of mission fulfillment have not been defined in a manner that encompasses all of the core themes. In other instances, the threshold level of mission fulfillment does not appear to lead to meaningful improvement and be sustainable. The evaluation committee recommends that indicators of achievement need to be better aligned with clearly defined and meaningful levels of mission fulfillment (Standard 1.A.1, 1.B.2).

2. Efforts should be undertaken to ensure that the assessment of general education learning outcomes are standardized across multiple sections of the same course. Assessment efforts should place less reliance upon course-specific assessment and course grades, and a broader portfolio of assessment techniques should be developed and used (Standard 2.C.10).

3. The University should continue to carefully monitor its financial situation and exercise appropriate diligence with the goal of moving the institution out of a negative balance in its unrestricted net asset position on the institution's balance sheet as soon as possible (Standard 2.F.1).

Commission Action Regarding Institutional Compliance Within Specified Period Policy

If the Commission determines that an institution it accredits is not in compliance with a Commission standard for accreditation or an eligibility requirement, 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 or eligibility requirement, 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 or eligibility requirement 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 or eligibility requirement. The request is to 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.

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