Executive Summary: Report of the Enrollment Management Working Group (EMWG)
FINAL October 10, 2013

- The EMWG urges campus executive leadership to make the design and implementation of improved enrollment management activities its top priority.

- UM must examine and adopt a strategic approach to enrollment that offers friendly, structured communication and inspiration to incoming students at all stages of the recruitment process. Strategic approaches will differ among potential undergraduate, graduate, and Missoula College students. Recruitment methods will utilize various media, personal contacts, and evaluation systems, crafted to specific target populations based on identified best practices and available economic analytical tools. Notable new populations to encourage for attendance include international students, veterans, workers, and representatives of diverse cultural groups.

- UM's enrollment management must decentralize some aspects of recruitment responsibility to academic units through the allocation of resources to trained staff within each School or College so ongoing specialized relationships can be built with key actors in each unit's recruitment pipeline.

- The EMWG strongly recommends an immediate review of the design of the application web page that allows for easy access to majors; quick access to an inviting, easily completed application form to start the process; and a way to allow rapid acknowledgement and encouragement to those exploring our applications web page. We recommend a similar review of all application and recruiting communication materials.

- The purpose and function of Missoula College must be clearly defined to foster greater access to higher education and improve matriculation to the UM Mountain Campus.

- UM must seek a student composition over the next five years that offers a financially sustainable model and not depend on philanthropically derived incentives for attendance.

- Retention of students will continue to depend on fostering opportunities for students to build meaningful relationships with other students, faculty, and staff. Investments in interactive, small group experiences and professional advising must increase, and systems to relieve bottlenecks in course selection and enrollment must be implemented.

- Current research into student composition, family financial capacity, student academic achievement, and program enrollment must continue. Results of this research must lead to substantive, visible changes in UM's recruitment investments and academic program offerings.

I. Work Group Name: Strategic Enrollment Workgroup

II. Charge: The charge of this group is to take a five-year view of enrollment management at the University of Montana considering issues such as the size of our student population, its potential composition, and improved practices in recruitment and retention.

III. Target Completion Date: The EMWG is scheduled to submit its final report to the Provost in mid-October. The report should be considered a work in progress to be assisted by deliberations with other working groups to recognize relevant interactions between academic programs and recruitment/retention success.

IV. Introduction/Background/Climate

Current campus conditions in relation to enrollment management

At present several administrative offices in both Students Affairs and Academic Affairs are responsible for managing UM's total enrollment of new and continuing students. Some are primarily focused on new students (Admissions/Enrollment Services), some on continuing students, and many have some degree of enrollment responsibility for both types of students (Office for Student Success, Registrar, International Programs, FSSS, and the Graduate School). A comprehensive enrollment management plan that states our enrollment goals for all student types does not exist, nor has enrollment management been linked to other campus strategic objectives such as Education for the Global Century or the Dynamic Leaning environment.

What is significant about this work group and its purpose?

The University of Montana depends on strong and steady enrollment for its financial health. We do not have the luxury of large endowments to buffer fluctuations. The recommendations we propose here aim to embolden and empower our enrollment staff and the entire UM community to maintain and improve our enrollment trajectory. More specifically, the discoveries and recommendations produced by the EMWG are expected to be carried forward into the production of a comprehensive strategic enrollment plan.

Summarize the activities of the work group, what was assessed, and the overall results.

The EMWG recognized that enrollment issues vary considerably across the types of educational experiences sought by students and their families, and so formed three subcommittees to address the twin issues of enrollment and retention by student type: Mountain Campus undergraduate, graduate, and Missoula College. In addition to examining recruitment/retention by student type, the EMWG identified principles to consider in forecasting student composition in the future, examined the relative capacity of the university to respond to enrollment growth or decline, and developed a set of recommendations and opportunities for future study.

V. References/Methods

List the most prominent reference materials, research, or resources that you may have used.

We asked for and received the following:

From Admissions/Enrollment Services:

- ☐ Ruffalo CODY Recruiting Workplan – Overview
- ☐ Fall 12 & 13Communication Plan and Workflow
- ☐ Fall 14 Communication Plan and Workflow
- ☐ Executive Summary of Enrollment Services Recruitment Plan and Strategic Direction (2012-13).
- ☐ Results from the STAMATS Non-enrolled Student Survey
- ☐ "Bring Back Montana - An Integrated Admissions Strategy" June 13, 2013

From the Office of Planning, Budget and Analysis

- ☐ Affordability Indicators: Net Tuition & Fees, Net Price (MUS)
- ☐ Data Digest: enrollment/retention/graduation by student type
- ☐ Fall 14 & 15 Tuition schedule
- ☐ International Student Recruitment from AY08/09 to AY12/13

How did you reach your findings? Cite the use of surveys, interviews, workshops, or other instruments that the work group may have used.

The EMWG relied on

- ☐ evidence by work members (such as their application experience posing as a prospective student and accessing the Admissions web site);
- ☐ interviews with parents of applicants and enrolled students;
- ☐ a survey of the deans;
- ☐ a review of current recruitment strategies and communications plan ("Bring Back Montana");
- ☐ a review of recruitment communications currently in use;
- ☐ the reported numbers for overall enrollment and first-time, full-time freshman enrollment fro, 2002-2013.

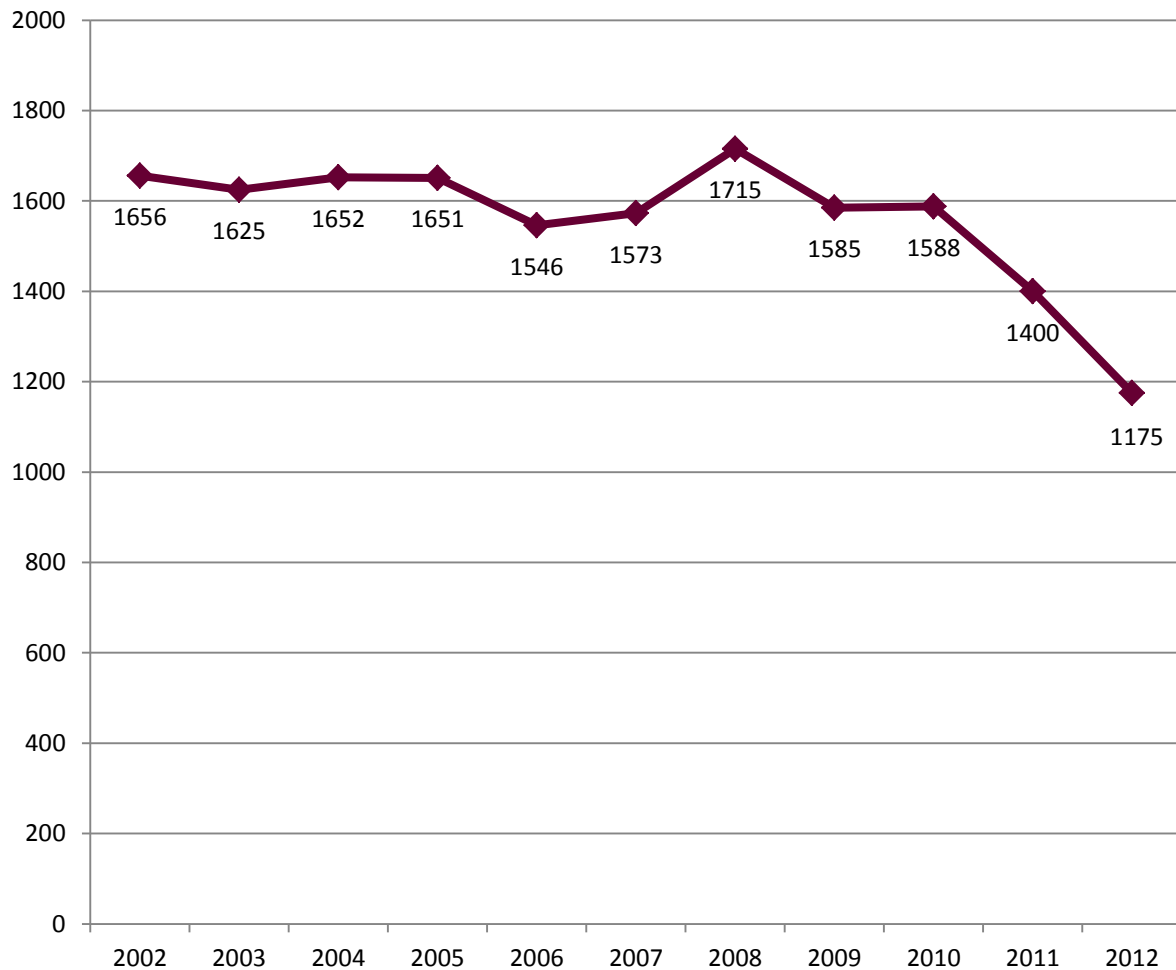**What were some of the limitations that you encountered?**

Primarily time and timing: The work that will be required to create a five-year enrollment plan goes far beyond the scope initially envisioned for the EMWG. There is a massive amount of data from a number of sources to analyze, and the data we were able to obtain came in toward the end of our deliberations. Nevertheless, we assert that much of the work in establishing the core principles that should guide our enrollment strategy have been identified.

From a timing standpoint, the University is currently under contract with Scannell & Kurz to provide us with two analyses: a financial aid sensitivity analysis (so that we maximize our enrollment with the current aid resources), and a retention practices audit. Those reports, which will include a set of recommendations that will address both areas of enrollment, will be delivered in November.
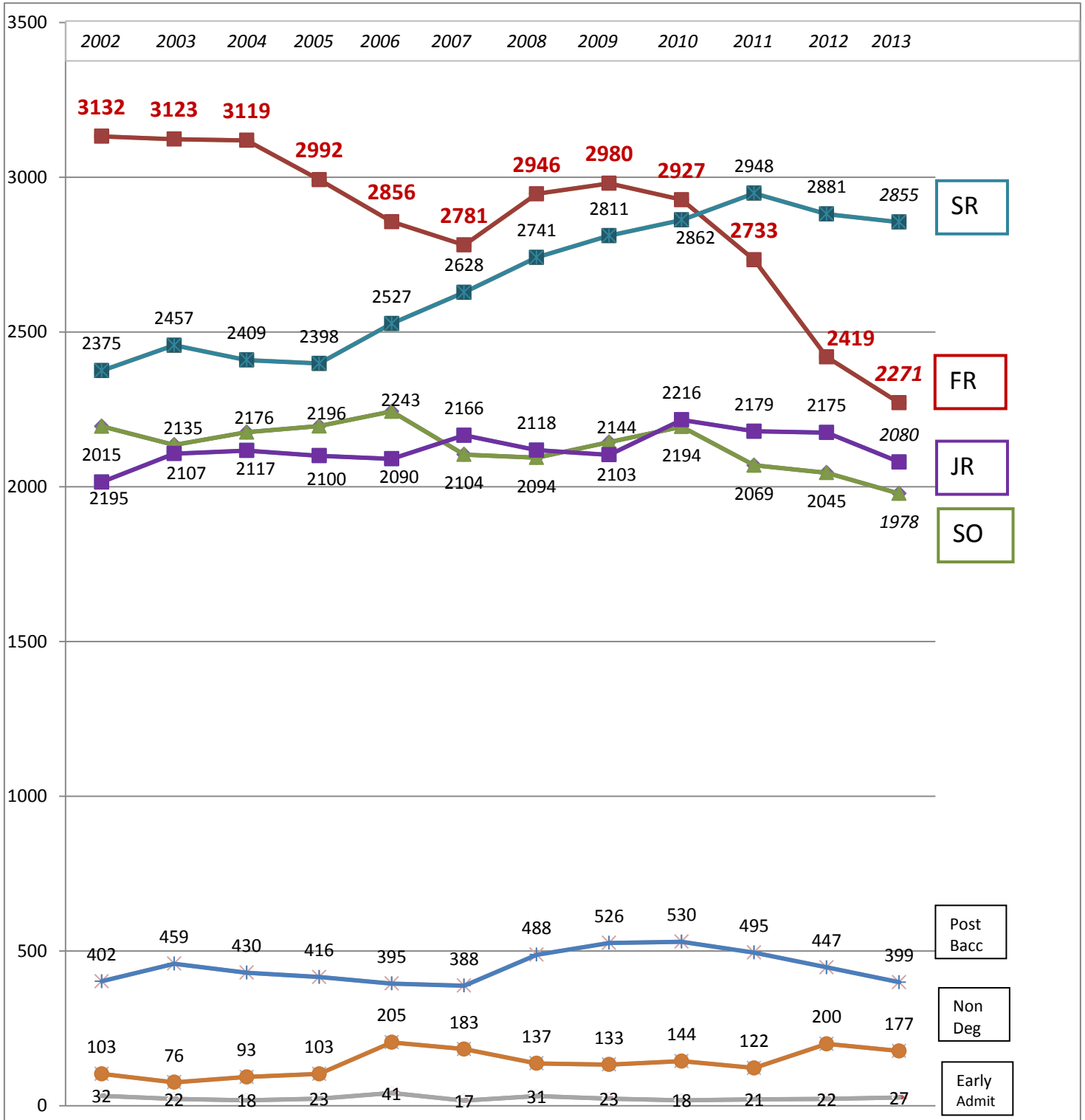
VI. Discoveries/Results and VII. Recommendations

Enrollment trends at UM for first time, full time freshmen have been declining for several years. This decline cannot likely be explained by any single event or cause, but it rests at the core of UM's enrollment problems. The following charts summarize UM's undergraduate enrollment trends over the past decade:

UM First Time Full Time Freshmen Enrollment (four year campus): 2002-2012

Undergraduate (four year campus) Enrollment: 2002-2013

	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
FR	3132	3123	3119	2992	2856	2781	2946	2980	2927	2733	2419	2271
SR	2375	2457	2409	2398	2527	2628	2741	2811	2862	2948	2881	2855
JR	2015	2135	2176	2196	2243	2166	2118	2144	2216	2179	2175	2080
SO	2195	2107	2117	2100	2090	2104	2094	2103	2194	2069	2045	1978
Post Bacc	402	459	430	416	395	388	488	526	530	495	447	399
Non Deg	103	76	93	103	205	183	137	133	144	122	200	177
Early Admit	32	22	18	23	41	17	31	23	18	21	22	27

Improvement of first-time, freshmen enrollment will be the most critical activity undertaken by UM in the following several years, and thus, the remainder of this report will focus on recommendations that might be considered to reverse the recent downward trend.

Recommendations - Undergraduate (4 years) Education

- **Adopt a strategic approach to enrollment management**

    The committee reviewed the 2012-13 Executive Summary of Enrollment Services Recruitment Plan and Strategic Direction provided by the UM Office of Admissions and Enrollment Services. It identified recruitment goals and strategic outreach and recruitment activities, including targets for college fairs, high school/community college visits, receptions, open houses, campus visits and communications. There were also brief sections on international recruitment, transfer recruitment, diversity recruitment, counselor recruitment, and social media/technology recruitment.

    Striking to the committee was a lack of attention to criteria or metrics to evaluate the success of recruitment efforts or notations of the alignment of priorities with best practices identified in the literature. It's evident that our Admissions and Enrollment Services staff work very hard and show extreme dedication, but it's difficult to surmise if their efforts are well placed. A more mature strategic approach would include evaluative measures and feedback loops to recognize the anticipated and realized returns on investments, such that modifications and mid-course corrections could be made. The EMWG urges a more thorough review of other strategic recruitment efforts by other universities and the methods utilized to measure effectiveness.

    The EMWG recommends that the campus' executive leadership team create a centralized admissions and retention authority to streamline and better coordinate the efforts of new student recruitment and retention. There needs to be a more cohesive and planned exchange of information at all stages, from prospective students to those on the brink of graduation.

- **Decentralize some aspects of the recruitment process and appropriately fund it at the college/school level**

    Academic department and College involvement in recruiting is limited and ad hoc at best. Much of this data regarding our students is available within our current recruitment office, from contractors such as Ruffalo-Cody, and from the Office of the Vice President of Administration and Finance. However, since the EMWG has not had time to receive or analyze this data, additional work in the fall will be necessary to recognize patterns, trends, and possible strategic interventions. However, one highly relevant structural issue regarding information on our current and potential students did emerge - the rather distant and indirect role played by academic units in fostering new student recruitment. Much relevant data on potential students - those expressing initial interest or those who have applied - is NOT delivered in a systematic manner to academic units. Moreover, there are not identified individuals

within units that are responsible for recruitment and retention services that highlight the specific, unique, and attractive features of each unit. The central recruitment office can hardly be expected to be cognizant of the fascinating features of every UM unit, so stories tailored to the focused interests of applicants are not delivered. The insistence of the EMWG on partial decentralization for enrollment success comes after considerable reflection and deliberation on other methods commonly used for recruitment. Simply increasing the size of the "funnel" to have more names poured into our outreach for more applicants does not seem to be the most effective strategy. Others have come to this same conclusion, as Hoover and Supiano (2013) describe in a recent article in the *Chronicle of Education*, "Although application totals are important, some enrollment leaders have come to describe them as fool's gold." What appears to be more important to enrollment management observers is customer service to those who show admissions interest.

As literature on best practices in recruitment identifies, customized, personalized communication with prospective students offers the highest potential for yielding enrolled students. The EMWG believes that this level of service can be provided most effectively at the unit level with responsibilities for recruitment and retention incorporated into a key staff member's position description and thus, available for annual evaluation. This would build on the strategy on increasing faculty involvement as expressed in the "Bring Back Montana" recruitment approach. Information and services provided by the unit level recruitment/ retention specialists would be coordinated through central UM Admissions personnel, but the details of the units programs, their innovations and compelling stories would emerge from their own enthusiasm and commitment to their academic areas. Clearly, recruitment and retention will become an increasingly larger component of every faculty member's service responsibility, but without adequate staff support, faculty are unlikely to be successful. Staff receiving this compensation for their position would work with existing Departmental Administrative Assistants to coordinate faculty travel with visits to high schools to engage students and their counselors in their particular discipline, demonstrating opportunities for interesting and exciting career paths through attendance in their programs. Contact information, materials to carry on visits, and follow up information and services would all be run through a unit-based, local service that would incentivize far more faculty participation in recruitment. Instead of only generic descriptions of UM offered courses, there would be real relationships nurtured that will be meaningful to prospective students.

These UM recruitment/retention specialists will also be the focal point for connecting recent alums and current students, vital ambassadors to attract new students, into the recruitment process. Since these specialists will emerge from each of the units, they will know those individuals who can highlight the student activities, research, and internships that will be attractive to new students. Specialists would be responsible for updating unit materials and web sites, circulating new imagery, and supporting the management of social media sites. Units are far more well-placed to identify and convey their "brand" characteristics (we are the best at field-based biology program) than a central admissions office that can't keep up with all the innovations of our diverse programs. Further, when students and parents make site visits, these specialists would be available to show the unit and engage people in hands-on activities that would stimulate positive impressions.

The realization of the decentralization model will require resources allocated to the units to pay those individuals, who will become increasingly professionalized, to offer key services while mobilizing faculty and students within their units to become recruitment catalysts. In the view of the EMWG the significance of successful recruitment and retention is so vital that we cannot afford to ignore this investment. Reallocation of resources might be considered as well. The majority of the over $1 million to be spent on the "Bring Back Montana" campaign was allocated to buying the names of potential new applicants and the delivery of passive mail messages. We feel a small portion of this amount, less than 20%, could be reinvested in personnel on campus whose return on investment would be far greater.

- **Revise the current application process for first time students**
  The application process for first time students is cumbersome with inconsistent response to inquiries from prospective students. From multiple sources and through the personal experience of committee members who tested the on-line application process to enter UM as a first-time student (Appendix 1). the portal currently available to apply to UM dissuades applicants in multiple ways. The requirement to "Create an Account" on one of the initial pages before proceeding is particularly off-putting. Navigation of the web pages takes far too many clicks to hold users; the constraint against saving submitted information could cause abandonment; "going back" routes users to the UM general webpage; and perhaps most importantly, no clear pathway exists to discover information on academic majors. Observations of other university application web pages revealed that other, more user-friendly, welcoming models can easily be developed. Follow-up to those who apply to UM also appears underdeveloped. Several parents and high school students interviewed by committee members indicated that they received no follow up contact from UM after initial inquiry. Others received no information from UM at all, although they commented that Montana State University had contacted them on several occasions. As of this writing (10-7-2013) it is not possible to apply to the Davidson Honors College online or by downloading a printable application; the online message reads "The Davidson Honors College Application is currently closed." Further, on the application itself, many majors are missing on the "majors of interest" drop-down list, and "areas of interest" tend to life-style and co-curricular activities instead of potential academic pursuits.

  On the other hand, those who experimented with the application process found the photographs to be of high quality. Observations of other university application web pages revealed that other, more user-friendly, welcoming models can easily be developed.

  The EMWG strongly recommends an immediate review of the design of the application web page that allows for easy access to majors; quick access to an inviting, easily completed application form to start the process; and a way to allow rapid acknowledgement and encouragement to those exploring our applications web page.

- **Know our students**
  The EMWG spent much of their time discussing the strategies needed to increase enrollment of first year students at UM. If there was a first principle to be derived from these discussions, it was to "know your current students." Knowledge about current students would help in targeting new students. Relevant questions are: Where do our students come from? What is their financial capacity? Why do they attend? Why are they able to succeed? and, If they don't succeed, what got in their way?

In addition to the four major recommendations listed above, other suggestions regarding enrollment management were identified by the EMWG:

- **Retention**
  It's clear that there are a number of steps we need to take to better retain students. With the implementation of the *Partnering for Student Success* retention plan, it is time for another round of review of the internal services we offer to students to keep them retained. The Scannell and Kurz assessment of UM's current retention efforts will provide additional recommendations for modifications of existing programs and adoption of new ones.

- **Recognize the importance that human engagement – with faculty, other students, and via other co-curricular activities - plays in student retention.** The retention of existing students presents unique challenges, especially when many UM students must be employed outside of class for economic reasons. Where capacity exists within Academic Affairs, offer more freshmen seminar courses, where small groups can work on a one-credit project, develop friendships and cohorts for mutual support. Similarly, where capacity exists within Student Affairs, offer structured opportunities for new students to work on a project for credit can provide both academic and social benefits.

- **Make the UM campus one that values internationalization.** Review the current recruiting and retention plans for international students, looking at return on investment (both current and future). Develop a system for analyzing the results of those efforts. International students will be an important part of future enrollment. Create opportunities in residence halls, the library, and in student clubs to incorporate international students into the fabric of UM.

- **Ensure that a more thorough analysis of scholarship investments is completed** such that scarce scholarship resources are devoted to those students who are on the cusp of enrolling instead of those who might enroll without the extra financial boost.

- **Provide more opportunities for the adult population in Montana to complete a two-year or a four-year degree.**

- **Identify which on-line or blended courses will have the most potential to attract students**, and offer incentives to faculty to offer these courses.

- **Use our current students more effectively in the recruiting efforts**. Encourage residence halls to have special programs where units can identify the notable and exciting elements of their curricula and see where current students might be able to communicate with their networks from their prior school.

- **Ensure that our campus and especially the residence halls have full wireless capabilities.** Student complaints about poor IT infrastructure can be distributed widely.

Findings – Missoula College:

- **Unlike most two year colleges, Missoula College faces constraints in providing both an A.A. degree and an A.S. degree**. They are the only two-year College in the state of Montana that does not offer an A.S. degree.

- **There is only one "2+2" curriculum (through the UM Department of Communication Studies)** for a Missoula College student to pass seamlessly through to a baccalaureate degree on the UM Mountain Campus. Without a clearer pathway for articulation to a baccalaureate program, students might not have sufficient incentives to enter or continue at Missoula College.

- **Some Missoula courses have a special "T" designation (for "trade course" or "technical" course). This designation, often not transparent to a student using UM's course registration software, can be a barrier to matriculation to baccalaureate status.**

Recommendations – Missoula College

- **Missoula College needs to continue forming 2+2 articulation agreements/partnerships with UM Missoula.** This would improve access to UM Missoula schools and majors and would encourage movement from Missoula College to UM Missoula and strengthen the feeder aspect of Missoula College to UM Missoula. It is also recommended that these 2+2 articulation agreements be reviewed and standardized to be a vehicle for articulation across the state.

- **Current and prospective Missoula College students need a better understanding of what credits will transfer to the Mountain Campus.** The EMWG recommends the re-evaluation of some "T" courses to remove the "T" designation and assist in credit movement to UM Missoula.

- **Promote the positive aspects of enrollment in Missoula College:** smaller course sizes in 100 or 200 level classes that offer a nurturing learning environment; the affordability of courses at Missoula College; and higher education access to a broad population of students who might not be ready for a four-year campus environment.

- **Make Missoula College a more adult student friendly campus** by offering , with expanded days and times for courses, day care options, etc.

Findings - Composition of the student population at UM

- **The number of Montana high school graduates has declined, and will not rebound for a decade.** There are evident data that suggest that the composition of the UM student population will change, such as the declining number of high school graduates in the state of Montana over the next decade. According to the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education's 2012 report "Knocking at the College Door":

  - *Montana's graduating classes have been in a slow decline since 1999-2000, having declined about 8% to about 10,500 graduates by 2008-09, the last reported year. Projections indicate that they will continue to decline and stay below 10,000 graduates through 2023-24. Despite some gains in the later years, graduates in Montana are not projected to return to the levels of the early 2000s during these projections.*

- **Forecasting the potential distribution of the UM population over the next five years raises a series of questions that are beyond the capabilities of the EMWG to address.** For example: Does UM wish to tradeoff higher education access for greater selectivity? And does the University envision itself primarily serving regional, national or international students in the future, alongside of our mission to serve Montana resident students (either to offset a decline in Montana high school graduates, or in order to bring in more tuition revenue)?

Recommendations: Composition of the student population at UM

To address the many uncertainties in future student population composition, the EMWG recommends a focus on principles to support future healthy enrollment at UM. Two principles appear most relevant:

- **Seek a diverse student population – in terms of student origin (state of Montana, non-resident, international), degrees sought (AA, AS, BA, BS, MS, PhD), traditional/non-traditional age groups; and cultural backgrounds.** An "ecological" approach to student enrollment over the long term – that is, an adaptive capacity to changing conditions, allowing for a degree of redundancy, and encouraging a wide distribution of characteristics – might be the best approach for long-term survival.

- **Seek a student composition that offers a financially sustainable model.** Encouraging student growth among populations that do not provide the revenue to address the costs of education cannot be sustained over time. Recruiting and selecting students from groups who possess sufficient financial wherewithal to pay fully for their education – either from private or public resources- must be a priority for the ongoing capability of UM to respond to the inevitable expansion of costs to offer a quality education for students at all levels.

Findings: Graduate Education

- **Resource availability for graduate students in the form of assistantships remains the primary currency for attracting a high-quality graduate student population.** Even partial scholarships are helpful. Without an adequate number of competitive assistantships, UM graduate programs cannot attract a high-quality graduate student population. This poses serious problems for the quality, vibrancy and relevancy of UM's graduate programs."

Recommendations: Graduate Education

Several recommendations emerged from the EMWG and its subcommittee on graduate recruitment.

- **Conduct an audit of graduate assistantships in the region and U.S. in order to determine the extent to which UM trails other peer institutions.** The EMNWG recommends that a committee explore the possibility of offering different "value" assistantships to graduate students in different disciplines on campus. The average amount of a Chemistry assistantship across the country is much higher than the average assistantship in the humanities or social sciences, which makes it that much harder for a department like Chemistry at UM to recruit high-quality graduate students. Currently assistantships are a flat amount across campus.

- **Increase support for faculty seeking grant funding.** External grant funding provides an indirect, but effective way to recruit and retain high-quality graduate students in many programs across campus."

- **The EMWG encourages a thorough market analysis of the successes and/or pitfalls of professional Masters programs.** These typically rely on the students, who are frequently mid-career professionals, to foot the bill for the cost of their education, as their incentive is to improve their professional capabilities and credentials. However, the EMWG was not certain which areas of specialization, what level of delivery (on-line vs. on-campus curricula) would be most suited to the strengths of UM.

Findings: Capacity for UM for increased student enrollment

- **Capacity to accommodate additional students varies by college/school and program**
  The EMWG finds that many academic programs at UM have residual capacity to accommodate additional student enrollment without needing to hire additional faculty or add infrastructure. However, there are several popular and heavily-enrolled academic programs that are already fully enrolled and do not have residual capacity. The annual UM report, **Academic Unit Data** (not a public document), provides analysis to indicate which UM academic programs are at or beyond national norms of capacity, using the NSICP Benchmarks (the University of Delaware National Study of Instructional Cost and Productivity) as a basis for analysis. In this annual report, certain UM programs are flagged as a "potential resource concern" if they exceed the NSCIP benchmark (for student credit hours per all faculty FTE) by more than 50%. According to the **Academic Unit Data** for 2012-13, there are two UM colleges and seven academic departments that present a "potential resource concern" on the basis of SCH per all faculty FTE. Although these results change every year and are not definitive, they do tend to indicate that several academic programs at UM have significant constraints upon their potential ability to accommodate additional students. Most clinical programs have given caps based on the needs of internal or external partners to offer adequate experiential learning.

- **Some units, particularly in the fine arts, sciences, and Missoula College, are faced with facilities bottlenecks.** Certain studios and laboratory facilities are already over capacity, and the admission of more students to their program could slow down progress toward graduation. Before UM can significantly increase enrollment in these programs, their facilities must be expanded or improved.

- **There is no incentive for departments to recruit more students for their major/program.** Without a proportionate increase in resources, more students simply means an increased workload for the same number of faculty. We hope that the Resource Allocation Workgroup will recommend a mechanism that rewards recruitment activity on the part of departments and faculty.

- **Classrooms space, the quality of which varies considerably across units, will be adequate in the near term to house more students on the Mountain Campus.** Innovative approaches to course offerings, such as block scheduling or evening courses, have not been seriously explored for their potential to expand access and flexibility. Opportunities for on-line or blended courses remain largely unexploited, providing much additional space for growth of course offerings. Again we expect that the Academic Programming and Revenue Enhancement Workgroups are exploring these options.

- **Available resources for basic instruction – for example in lower division writing courses – are inadequate for demand.**

<u>Recommendations: Capacity for UM for increased student enrollment</u>

- **Evaluate the constraints listed in the Findings above, and develop a plan for their remediation.** The EMWG recognizes that the overall capacity of the university is not under immediate pressure, although there are some programs currently not able to expand because of their own specific limitations.

- **Decide on the "right size" for UM, and incorporate that enrollment target into all long-range plans.** Perhaps a more important question to consider regarding capacity is the risk that growth could present to the atmosphere and collegiality that UM enjoys as a moderate-sized university. Does UM really wish to become a sprawling, less personal institution that characterizes some mega-universities like Arizona State or Michigan State? The EMWG believes that the human scale does matter to the quality of an educational experience, and UM should be careful in attempting to outgrow its charm.

VIII. Based off of these findings what recommendations would the work group forward to the Planning-Assessment Continuum and executive campus leadership?

Enrollment management at UM cannot be separated from other major considerations facing the university's future, such as standards for quality, program relevance to students and employers, the growth of for-profit educational institutions, and the tension between college affordability and cost escalation. However, it became clear to the EMWG that the administrative structure and approach for recruiting first time, full time freshmen students fall far short of a sustainable system. A comprehensive enrollment strategy needs to be developed immediately. Our on-line application system and communication with prospective students must be overhauled. The energy, knowledge, and good-will of faculty, staff, and students in our academic units must be mobilized through appropriate resource allocations to participate meaningfully in our recruitment and retention activities. These major changes cannot be postponed, as the diminishment of student numbers at UM undermines the financial capacity of the university to fulfill its mission. The EMWG urges campus executive leadership to make the design and implementation of improved enrollment management activities its top priority.

"STEALTH RESEARCH!" MY EXPERIENCE TO PARTIALLY APPLY TO MSU AND UM:
Application process and Request for information (UM vs. MSU)
During the week of August 12, I decided to test the application systems and request for more information from UM and MSU and compare the experience. Here's what happened.

UM
Applying to UM
I "fake" applied to UM using their links from the UM home page. I found it easy to get to the area to apply. First I had to create an account. It felt like a barrier to applying, but I did it. I went to a very sterile page with specific links to: Apply; Get more information; apply to DHC; Info on International Applications. The application process was fairly simply. I wish there had been some sort of welcome statement or appreciation statement at the beginning of the application process. Instead it had "Application-Processing Fee: $36, page 1 of 5" at the top.
I didn't complete the application, but gave them enough information to contact me (email/address and phone).
I received two replies from UM reminding me to complete my application.

Inquiring about more information from UM:
I completed the request for information with all of my contact information. It was easy and user friendly, although, I was required to complete a gender field of male or female. That should be optional at this point or there should be an "other" option.
I received two emails on August 21, offering me a link for additional information. I never did receive a brochure.

MSU:
Applying to MSU
I "fake" enrolled with MSU. I found the area to apply very easily. They had a nice radio button that made it very obvious where to click. When I clicked on apply, I went straight to a nicely laid out online application that had a note thanking me for applying at the top. They did not require me to create an account to do this. The user-friendliness of this application was much better than UM's
I didn't complete the application, but gave them enough information to contact me (email/address and phone).
I received a nice email with directions on how to complete my application on August 19th, and another reminder to complete my application on August 29.

Inquiring about more information from MSU
I completed the request for information with all of my contact information. It was easy and user friendly to complete the fields required. They did not ask for my gender.
I received a nice, glossy, brochure from MSU August 19.

MY THOUGHTS ABOUT THE EXPERIENCE OF APPLYING TO UM AND MSU

• It is scary applying to a university. MSU offered a more friendly presence. They even said "Welcome" to me on the first page of my application and I didn't have to create an account. On UM's first page of the application my welcome was a notice of what the application processing fee was going to be. We need to create a welcome page to new students applying.

• Having to create an account before completing the application is burdensome and very well might cause someone to not move forward with their application. I know we probably need that information. Maybe it should be in the next phase of the student's application process. We should make it really easy to get their commitment and contact info.

• I thought the brochure MSU sent was great. It showcased all of the colleges and areas of study, involvement opportunities, culture, costs, contact info and some great images. I was impressed (I'll bring it to our next meeting). It was a 40-page glossy brochure and I'm sure very expensive. I did not receive a brochure or any snail mail from UM. They did sent me two emails giving me links to more information. If I were 18 and looking at both schools, that brochure from MSU looks pretty good and it's probably in my room or on the kitchen table getting looked at by my mom and dad. Perhaps, like what happened to me, the email went to a different file than my inbox and the potential student would never see anything from UM. There are possible missed opportunities by not sending a hard brochure.

• I felt forced to fill out the fields stating if I was male of female to just get additional information about the UM campus. It was a mandatory field. We should make that optional and possibly consider putting in "no response".

• The user friendliness of the (RuffaloCody) database needs to be looked at. Automated processes within the (RuffaloCody) database need to be looked at. Maybe our IT people need to look how they could make the database work better.???

APPENDIX B: Faculty member's report on the Application Process for International Students

This May, I sat down with 5 Chinese students while I was in China to fill out the UM application form. It was a frustrating experience and one potential student quit in the middle of doing it. The difficulties were and still are:

1. One has to create an account. To all the 5 Chinese students I helped, they were at a loss to start with. They thought they had to be UM related in order to create an account. It was not a friendly experience.

2. The most frustrating section is "High School you attended." It only accepts U.S. high school names, not foreign ones. I spent 10 minutes on this column and had to fake the Hellgate High just to move on to the next section.

3. The space for address and phone numbers are U.S. bound as well. Chinese use long cell phone # which would not fit in the space, and so are the address limit.

4. Permanent can current address create confusion to international students living outside U.S.

5. The links to "majors" are not functional, which makes applicants believe certain majors are not offered by UM.

Upon my return to UM, I related above challenges I experienced to UM's Recruiting Office, Julie and Juana. I was told that students should read more carefully and changes are being made. When I asked how long would the new site take an American student to complete the application, Julie said, "30 minutes." I said it would take an international student at least twice the time, if not more. It took me 45 minutes.

APPENDIX C: EMWG member's comments on the "Bring Back Montana" Enrollment Strategy document

On the enrollment strategy plan that was sent out today, I have a few things about the "funnel". I don't see how increasing funding for prospective students will get more students here. I don't think buying more names is the answer, esp. if they never intend to come here. One thing that hasn't been focused on with this group is the quality of students, not quantity. It is great if we get big numbers of incoming students. If we are not retaining them (student fails out, leaves without explanation, etc.) until graduation, then we are never going to meet our enrollment issues. We need to focus on getting students here that are going to be successful. So buying more name is not going to help with the quality of students. Anyway I think there needs to be more focus on the 35,000 inquiries. These are the students that we need focus on with more direct contact such visits to high schools, college fairs, community events, etc. The academic department representatives could be working with this group with greater communication from and collaboration with Admissions. For example a prospective student could contact the recruiters asking about Wildlife Biology. The recruiter could then give the contact information of the wildlife biology representative and then give the student's contact information to the wildlife biology representative and they could email, phone, or send specific information to the student. By focusing on the inquiries will help inform students of what is expected of them and that UM is the best choice for getting a degree. They will also help us determine how we can make the student successful here.

Additional comments:

I want to share a couple of situations that shows the university is not doing all that needs to be done to get students to apply and eventually stay here.

Last week I saw several prospective students for Pre-Med. Two started asking me questions that should be answered by Admissions (application questions, population, safety, etc.). I felt comfortable answering them but it was deterring from the main point of the meeting, which was to talk about the Pre-Med program. I finally asked both of them if they had had a meeting with an Admissions Counselor who could focus only on those types of questions. Both said no. They said they just had a campus tour and the meeting with me. This seems to be a common occurrence. In my world, I would think a standard procedure with all prospective students would be campus tour, Admissions Counselor meeting, Financial Counselor (to get the idea of how to pay for college) meeting, meeting with the department, free lunch in the Food Zoo, and given a T-shirt or something so they remember UM. This is clearly not being done. This goes back to the point above about spending more with inquiries.

Another situation is we are not attracting children of Alumni who live out of state. I recently had an alum ask me if UM had a legacy program (giving in state tuition or other discount to children/grandchildren of Alum). This person wants their child to go UM because they know quality education they will get. However, It would be more cost effective for the child to attend the local university and live at home even with scholarships and financial aid.

The final situation is that we, due to board of regents policy, allow students to fully register for classes up to the 15th day of instruction. The only reason I can see for this is to boost enrollment numbers. These are the students will we not retain until graduation. This goes back to quality vs. quantity. I had a student in my office today with this situation. All I could do is inform the student that he was three weeks behind in class, it was his responsibility to make up all the work, and it was up to the instructor to let him in or not. I gave him a list of class to try with a stack of override forms. From my experience this student will fail his first semester and we will never see him again all to make some extra money for the time and boost current enrollment numbers.

Appendix D: 12 Year Enrollment History, UM vs. MSU

UM First Time Full Time Freshmen: 1656, 1625, 1652, 1651, 1546, 1573, 1715, 1585, 1588, 1400, 1175

MSU First Time Full Time Freshmen: 1927, 1988, 1982, 1977, 1928, 1839, 1792, 1778, 2088, 2119, 2165

Years: 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012