



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.

Advisory Council Meeting Minutes

Business and Accounting Advisory Council

Wednesday 5/7/2025 5:30 p.m.

Donaldson Campus Room 123

Introductions:

Helena College Attendees:

- Robyn Kiesling, Executive Director of General Education and Transfer
- Rachel Schanz, Accounting Instructor
- Shaun Scott, Business Adjunct Instructor
- Melissa Mousel – Program Manager of CTE

Helena Community Member Attendees:

- Sean McCurry, Rocky Mountain Credit Union
- Tom Burkart, Opportunity Bank
- Katherine Anderson, MBAC
- Andrew Page, Page Bookkeeping
- Andy Shirliff, Executive Director of the Montana Building Industry Association
- Jocelynn Norman, Wipfli
- Jayline Kenney, JCCS
- Jeff Plum, State of Montana

Program/Department Updates

- Hired two full time instructors, Rachel Schanz in Accounting and Anna Spoja in Business.
- Priorities for next year; building a strong community for students, networking/internship opportunities
- Our program focuses on transfer to a 4 year institution or the AAS for those who want to get out into the workforce sooner.

- Changes to business program curriculum
 - We are wanting to make sure that we are meeting the needs of the workforce and ensuring student success.
- Accounting curriculum is pretty set for the upcoming academic year.

Topics for Discussion

Employment

- Have your hiring requirements changed in the past year to meet any changes in your industry?
 - Our banking partners stated that they haven't seen changes.
 - Jeff Plum with the State of MT stated that some requirements have changed. Some departments are looking at getting beginning accountants to grow a career while employed.
 - Andrew Page stated that there is a lack of software knowledge. There is a need for deep rooted knowledge of software. This includes a need for knowledge of payroll software and the know how to set up the backend to link different platforms together.
- What soft skills are essential for students in the business and accounting fields?
 - how to dress for the part
 - how to write emails appropriately
 - customer service-interaction
 - communication skills

Technology

- Are there specific software platforms or tools our students should have experience with before entering employment?
 - Andy Shirtliff suggested online Quickbooks with the possibility to recertify students.
 - Shawn Scott suggested to spend more time in BMS, possibly move more into general information systems get concept then application.
 - It was suggested to have software class available for both the Accounting and Business degrees.

- Another suggestion was to use a variety of software in more than one course throughout a student's education. Also to give students the opportunity to connect online and desktop systems.
- How do you see the role of technology, such as AI and automation, impacting the future of accounting/business industry?
 - Helena College is discussing how to teach students to ethically use AI.
 - Helena College instructors are introducing AI. They are also insuring to point out the flaws in the current systems and how to make good prompts. Students need to have baseline knowledge to catch omissions, etc in Chat GPT.
 - Our partners state that the banking industry and the State of MT are being cautious to make sure that sensitive information isn't getting out into the world.

Advisory Council

- Would you consider partnering with Helena College students for an internship or work-study program, or know of who could/would. Could your organization host site visits or send guest speakers to provide industry perspectives?
 - JCCS wants internships-many interns turn into full time employees.
 - The consensus of the discussion was that internships need to be at least 135 hours to be meaningful
 - It was suggested to see if non-profits would be open to being internship partners with Helena College.