
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.

Fire and Emergency Services Advisory Board Meeting Minutes
April 8, 2025 1:00PM
Airport Campus-Room 205

Introductions

Helena College:

- Sandy Bauman-Dean/CEO
- Stephanie Hunthausen- Executive Director of CTE and Dual Enrollment
- Nolan Eggen- Fire Instructor
- Paige Ramirez –EMT Instructor
- Kathy Mortimore – Trades Advisor
- Melissa Mousel – Program Manager of CTE
- Danielle Senger – 2nd Year fire student
- James Raftery – 2nd Year fire student
- Gus Caudle – 1st Year Fire Student

Community Board Members:

- Mike Chambers – Assistant Fire Chief of the Helena Fire Department & HC adjunct
- John Culbertson – Director of the MSU Fire Services Training School
- Chris Mulberry – Unit Service Manager of St. Peter’s Hospital Ambulance

Program/Department Updates

- Update to personnel and current happenings
 - Chris Newman- Adjunct for Hazardous Materials Operations
 - Chris Mork- Adjunct for Wildland Firefighting
 - Mike Chambers- Adjunct for Fire Protection Systems and Fire Prevention
 - Paige Ramirez- Adjunct for EMT course
- Enrollment update
 - Fire classes, starting with FFI was full with 12, but lost one early last fall

- 8 in first year currently
- 2 in second year
- EMT class
 - Started with 17. This is a good mix of students, community and HS students. Current enrollment is at 13.
 - Student clinicals are being completed through St. Peters in Helena, A1 in Butte, Great Falls Fire and Great Falls Emergency Services.
- Equipment update
 - FSTS loaned us an engine to supplement our aging fire truck. This provides more learning opportunities for our students.
 - New battery powered extrication tools bought through the Perkins grant.
 - Recently ordered a fire dynamics training prop funded through Perkins as well.
 - Two more turnout coats/pants are on order as well.
- Student Success Stories
 - Chase Moore just got hired in Billings.
 - Chris Wegner was here for FFI hired by Helena Fire Department
 - Andrew Vanzant in Frenchtown hired by Helena Fire Department
 - Cole Bonzer is currently in Seattle going through the hiring process
- Current student reports
 - Gus is a first year student and is very happy with the training from Nolan and provided thoughts on character development. Nolan has also given him guidance on what hiring stations may be looking for in applicants. Cole Bonzer had recommended our program to Gus. He suggested that the program find a way to get the wildland training out on some land to enhance the class.
 - James is a 2nd year student who has benefited from the real-world experience of the staff, including the EMT and Fire adjuncts and the help with professional development and interview skills.
 - Dani is a 2nd year student who has recently applied for dispatcher.
- Discussion on when to have the EMT course
 - Nolan stated that his spring classes are not homework heavy, so that gives students more time to concentrate on the EMT coursework.
 - Paige and Stephanie both stated that trying to find instructors and assistant teachers in the Summer may be difficult.
 - Stephanie also mentioned that the EMT class seems to be a heavy lift for the first-year students.

Topics for Discussion

- Update on 2024 discussion
 - Driver operator class follow up: It was discovered that our students would be required to have their CDL to test drive fire truck on the road. This barrier means that the students must do the road testing on their own.

- Nolan then thought to add the road test to the Internship class-Fire 298. However some fire houses require workers to be 21 to drive apparatus. Nolan is keeping the class as is and students need to find somewhere to do the driver's test.
- Firefighter 1 Academy
 - This is in conjunction with HC community education. Has one spot open. The class will run May12-23. It will cover the hands-on portion of FF1. The self-study part will be on their own. We are giving them the books and other materials so that they can complete the course. FTS has been greatly helpful for implementing and advertising for this course.
 - This gives people a chance to look into the career pathway and Helena College will count the course as college credit if they decided to pursue the pathway.
- Site visits and discussion with Missoula Paramedic Program
 - Nolan, Stephanie, and Kathy visited. They were looking for ways/suggestions to give students a pathway to acquire a joint degree with Missoula paramedic that would include the FFI and FF2 certifications.
- Program review in 2025-2026
 - Next year Nolan will be writing a five-year program review. This is a great opportunity to look at the fire program holistically and to discuss curriculum changes.
 - John Culbertson stated that the NFP standards will be changing, but it shouldn't affect program delivery.
- What are you looking for in new hires? What qualities do new recruits lack?
 - Character and how to treat people
 - Keep questioning and be open to change
 - Giving people time to mature
 - Integration into the culture...get intimidated and then employee doesn't engage and is not comfortable in the environment.
- What would you like them to know on day one?
 - Manage time, get along with co-workers
 - Listen, but be prepared to ask appropriate questions
- Are any changes needed in our curriculum or program offerings? If so, what do you suggest?
 - Firefighter interview prep with industry professionals.

Wrap up and Summary of Takeaways

- Pathway Changes may be needed for the A.S. in Fire and Emergency Services.
 - Splitting up Writ 101 and COMX 115 to be taken in two separate semesters.
 - Recommend that students take ECP 130 (EMT course) in their second year.
 - Helena Fire is building a new training facility with a new smoke room, technical testing, and FF1 testing. This is about 2 years out. Helena College Fire Program has been invited to use the facility.

- There is a possibility that St. Peters may have an old ambulance to donate, giving our EMT students the opportunity to work in the tight quarters of an ambulance.