

Notification of Montana University System Complaint Process

In October 2010, the United States Department of Education released new regulations known as the “Program Integrity” rules, which are intended to address concerns relating to the integrity of academic programs offered by postsecondary educational institutions and authorized under Title IV of the Higher Education Act (HEA), as amended. As part of those new rules, each state must have in place a process for receiving, reviewing, and responding to complaints concerning post-secondary educational institutions delivering educational services in that state, and each institution must inform students how to initiate complaints in the state where the student receives instruction. This notification provides information on the complaint process available to students of the Montana University System and to students receiving instruction in the State of Montana.

Pursuant to Mont. Code Ann. § 20-25-201 and Title 20, Chapter 15 Mont. Code Ann., the designated units of the Montana University System and the duly organized community college districts in the State of Montana are legally authorized to provide postsecondary education in the State of Montana. Together, these fourteen entities form the group of public postsecondary educational institutions in the State of Montana, all of which are under the authority and control of the Board of Regents of the Montana University System. Those institutions are as follows:

- Montana State University – Bozeman
- Montana State University – Billings
- City College at Montana State University Billings
- Montana State University – Northern
- Great Falls College Montana State University
- The University of Montana – Missoula
- Missoula College University of Montana
- Helena College University of Montana
- Montana Tech of the University of Montana
- Highlands College of Montana Tech
- The University of Montana Western
- Dawson Community College
- Flathead Valley Community College
- Miles Community College

These institutions are accredited by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities, 8060 165th Avenue NE, Suite 100, Redmond, Washington 98052, (425) 558-4224, <http://www.nwccu.org/index.htm>.

Evidence of each institution’s accreditation can be found at:

<http://www.nwccu.org/Directory%20of%20Inst/Directory%20of%20Institutions.htm>.

HOW TO FILE A COMPLAINT:

Students and prospective students of the Montana University System are encouraged to initially address complaints through the applicable institution’s complaint or review procedures. For distance education students and for on-campus students, you may contact Elizabeth Stearns-Sims at 406.447.6903 or e.stearnsims@umhelena.edu if you wish to file a complaint.

Complaints that remain unresolved after engaging in the above-referenced process may be further pursued in the following manners:

- An individual adversely affected by the final decision of a university president may appeal the decision to the Commissioner of Higher Education and the Board of Regents pursuant to Board of Regents' Policy 203.5.2. <http://www.mus.edu/borpol/bor200/203-5-2.pdf>.
- Complaints concerning broad institutional academic practices, such as those that raise issues regarding an institution's ability to meet accreditation standards, may be filed with the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities. <http://www.nwccu.org/Complaints/ComplaintProcess.htm>
- Complaints concerning consumer protection violations may be directed to the Montana Department of Justice Office of Consumer Protection. <http://www.doj.mt.gov/consumer/>
- Individuals enrolled in an online or distance course with the Montana University System and residing outside of the State of Montana can seek to utilize the complaint processes in their state of residence. A list of information regarding the complaint processes of other states can be found here: <http://www.mus.edu/OnlineStudents-StateContactInfo.asp>