To: Faculty Senate

From: Academic Program Working Group (APWG) Paul Gannon, Mary Ann Hansen, Scott Myers, Meta Newhouse, Jessi Smith, Abbie Richards (Chair)

Date: September 8, 2017

Re: Board of Regents proposal to establish a Dental Program in the State of Montana through the Regional Initiatives in Dental Education (RIDE) program with the University of Washington School of Dentistry

Overview: A Board of Regents Curriculum Proposal is made by the Montana Division of Health Sciences to establish a regional dental school in collaboration with the University of Washington School of Dentistry’s (UWSOD) Regional Initiatives in Dental Education (RIDE) program. This program would permit Montana residents to enroll at UWSOD and pay at the in-state tuition rate. Montana does not have a dental school; so, this would offer significant savings to students and provide increased opportunities for Montanans to pursue a dental degree through the UWSOD. The RIDE program is patterned after the existing Montana WWAMI Regional Medical Program. It would leverage existing WWAMI facilities at Bozeman Deaconess Hospital as well as share existing first-year WWAMI coursework. RIDE students would spend year 1 at the MSU WWAMI site taking coursework, followed by the second year at the Spokane-RIDE site for additional coursework. Year 3 would be completed at the UWSOD main campus and the final year would be spent completing clinical rotations at established dental clinics across Montana. An emphasis is placed on clinics that either predominantly serve minority populations or are in rural locations. Upon graduation, participants are expected to work in clinics that are in “underserved” areas as defined by the state legislature. The RIDE program would accommodate a class of 8 dental students per year and at its peak will involve 32 dental students. The first cohort of MT-RIDE students would be admitted for the 2020 academic year and would graduate in 2024 if approved by the MUS Board of Regents.

Proposal Strengths:
1. The proposal aligns with MSU’s strategic plan to provide both educational opportunities for Montana residents as well as serve the communities of Montana.

2. There is a clear and demonstrated need in Montana for dentists, particularly in rural and underserved areas. Data has shown that the number of dentists to the state population has decreased by nearly 17% over the past 5 years. There are currently 11 counties in Montana that lack a practicing dentist. Addressing this need is a specific mission of the RIDE program.

3. The program will leverage the use of existing resources on the 2nd floor of the Highland Park 5 building at Bozeman Deaconess and the WWAMI Montana Regional Medical Program, which will help reduce the startup costs of the RIDE program.
4. The RIDE program has already been piloted by the UWSOD to increase the number of dentists practicing in rural locations in the State of Washington, with a similar emphasis to the proposed MT-RIDE program placed on reaching Native American and rural populations.

5. Because the MT-RIDE students will be classified as NGD (non-degree seeking graduate students), the program will not negatively impact MSU’s goal of recruitment, retention, and completion of degree seeking students.

6. The Washington RIDE program has been through three successful accreditation cycles and recently received special commendation for innovation and quality. Replicating this program in Montana and the leadership that the UWSOD will take in the accreditation process suggest that the MT-RIDE program will share equal success.

7. Clinical rotations across Montana have been used by Spokane-RIDE for the past five years and will transition to the exclusive use of the MT-RIDE program, once established. These existing rotations have been sustained over the past five years and additional locations are being added.

8. The proposal has received approval from the Deans’ Council.

Proposal Concerns:
1. The APWG initially expressed concern over the ability to maintain a consistent pool of professional instructors in the program, given the time and effort that can be required. The proposers responded that local expertise would only form a portion of the teaching staff and that instructors from the UWSOD would also contribute to the instructional needs at the Bozeman location, either in residence for a semester or year or by delivering course content remotely. Any coursework that is not specifically hands on will be conducted virtually.

2. The APWG was concerned that coursework specific to the needs of rural communities or Native American populations was not listed in the appended materials. Discussions with Dr. Jutila from the Division of Health Sciences revealed that RIDE students would participate in a leadership course that would entail they create a community involvement project within the rural communities where they complete clinical rotations. The APWG is encouraged by this but would recommend that the proposers consider making the existence of such training more explicit in the BOR proposal.

3. A specific program outcome listed in the proposal is the ability to “serve patients with diverse needs.” With the emphasis placed on rural and underserved minority communities by the RIDE program, the APWG suggests that the proposers use established/validated metrics by which to assess the success of this important program outcome.

4. The resources needed to fund the MT-RIDE program will be in the form of additional dollars, not from the current MSU budget, which is a positive. The amount required to initiate the program, however, was a concern for the APWG in that it could be difficult to secure that amount from the MT State Legislature. Discussions with Dr. Jutila indicated that grant money could be used to supplement state dollars to establish the RIDE program. Dr. Jutila informed APWG that upon approval of the program by OCHE, grants (contingent on funding from the MT State Legislature) will be submitted to several foundations, such as the Kellogg Foundation or the Montana Healthcare Foundation, the latter of which has already provided seed money to establish the program. Dr. Jutila also indicated that several insurance providers may contribute to fixed capital costs (the dental lab).
The APWG encourages the proposer to continue to leverage existing WWAMI resources, and supplement these with grant money/support from healthcare industry partners to minimize the amount requested from the MT State Legislature to the greatest extent possible.

**Summary:** The APWG finds that this program provides educational opportunities to Montana residents while simultaneously addressing a critical need for greater access to dental care in rural Montana. We commend the Division of Health Sciences, particularly Dr. Jutila, for her leadership in bringing this program to Montana. The APWG unanimously endorses this proposal and encourages the support and endorsement of Faculty Senate.