September 13, 2015

Provost Martha Potvin, MSU

As noted in our meeting with Deputy Commissioner Cech and by the list of certificates and degrees that I gave you it is clear that the University of Montana (UM) has had a presence in the Hospitality space for a long time, some of our presence dating to the 1960’s when Arnold Bolle was Dean of the School of Forestry (now College of Forestry and Conservation). Beginning with programs in recreation and tourism, the establishment of the Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research in the late 1980s, the Food Service and Culinary programming of Missoula College (with capacity increasing about three-fold when the new Missoula College building is completed next year), establishment of the Entertainment Management program (events management), establishment of the Sustainable Business Management and Entrepreneurship and Small Business programs, and long-term foundational course work in Business Administration in management, marketing, and accounting we have continued to grow our programs and expertise. In addition, our award winning Dinning Services, a pioneer and leader in farm to college food programming, adds greatly to our expertise on campus and this fall our School of Business Administration is offering a Hospitality Management graduate seminar featuring prominent industry leaders from across the US.

For several years there has been discussion regarding more formal grouping of existing course work into a recognizable Hotel, Restaurant, and Tourism Management (or maybe just Tourism Management) program and after the Academic Portfolio Work Group delivered their report in 2013, where they recommended specific programming in Hospitality Management, the first step in this process was initiated with Missoula College developing a Hospitality Certificate program. A second step is underway as Missoula College will submit an AAS proposal in Hospitality Management to the campus governance process in October. Adding to this, the spring 2015 report of our Academic Alignment and Innovation Program (AAIP) affirmed Hospitality Management as a logical new program for UM. The AAIP task force viewed it as a low cost addition since the essential faculty and courses for such programming already exist at the University of Montana-Missoula.

The above paragraphs affirm that UM has had a long and growing presence in the Hospitality arena. However, we consider this a quite broad area and do see that there are roles for both of our campuses within it. In the interest of the State we believe that there is room for more than one program in this broad area if we clearly identify niches that take advantage of the strengths of our campuses and that recognize particular needs of the broad hospitality industry of Montana. That Montana State University (MSU) is proposing programming in agriculturally based hospitality and in sports and fitness programming is recognition that there are niches not adequately accommodated by the existing educational opportunities in Montana. In addition, in the area of food service and culinary, which has specific place-based components and current high demand, an argument can be made that there might be room for another program in the State, especially with both existing programs on the western side of our geographically large state.
With the above as preface, below we offer comment and suggestions for the MSU proposal. I was able to solicit comment from faculty members from the three colleges primarily involved in Hospitality Management on our campus—Missoula College, School of Business Administration, and College of Forestry and Conservation—and from the Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research and from Dining Services. I will begin with three quotes from three different faculty members and then offer some specific observations and suggestions.

“This draft looks very similar to the original draft Alison shared with Wayne Freimund, Bill Borrie, and myself (Keith Bosak) over a year ago. From the perspective of the Parks, Tourism, and Recreation Management Program, I still have serious concerns about there being significant overlap. We shared these concerns with Alison (Harmon) in that meeting yet the proposal was not modified. Our concerns are that we already offer curriculum in tourism and recreation administration and that we do not need a second tourism program in Montana. What we suggested to her was to focus on restaurant and lodge management (the indoor side of the industry) and we would focus on tourism and recreation (the outdoor side of the industry). This would avoid overlap and confusion.”

“Overall, I do see where there is overlap between the programs. But I also see a lot of ways these programs can complement versus compete with each other if there are some tweaks in the wording and titles of programs.”

“This is not really a degree in hospitality management in the conventional sense and appears to me as very misleading to potential students.”

- It is our observation that using the title of Hospitality portrays something quite different from what is proposed in the proposal. The four areas identified in the proposal are not necessarily hospitality, at least in the way the term is used and academic programs are constructed nationally. It is not clear from the four emphasis areas what the appropriate title might be and it is possible that there might be at least two programs if one separates out the “sports” part of the proposal as it does not seem to fit very closely with the other focus areas. Alternatively, you might title the program Leisure Enterprise Management and then you could keep the restaurant, lodging, and sports foci all together in one degree with appropriate options.
- It does not look as though UM Hospitality Certificate students or those who might come through our proposed AAS in Hospitality Management would find a 2+2 program possible with the MSU proposal since our programming follows a more conventional Hospitality Management curriculum.
- It appears that in the proposed curriculum there is a lack of culinary and restaurant management courses and this is of concern to our culinary and food service faculty members.
- MSU would need to develop many courses already offered within the State in areas such as Recreation and Tourism, Recreation Administration, Food Service and Restaurant Management, and Events Management. A question is, do we need all of these at more than one campus? We might, but it is a question for discussion.
- As stated in the proposal (section 2) there are four program areas (niches) identified: Restaurant Management: Farm to Table, Lodge Management and Rural Tourism, Value-Added
Food Enterprise, and Sports & Recreation Administration. For clarity of naming, and to reduce confusion among potential students, these might be retitled as Restaurant Management, Lodge Management, Value-Added Food Enterprise, and Sports and Activity Administration or Sports and Leisure Administration. Except for Restaurant Management which as noted previously does have some place-based appeal, worded in this way these are areas not emphasized at UM and for which we do not have aspirations for specific degrees.

- Section 4.C. seems misleading in that the names of the specific areas are reduced to names for which three of them overlap directly with UM programming: foodservice (overlap), lodging, rural tourism (overlap), and sports and recreation (overlap). It would be clearer if the words were the same as suggested for these areas under section 2.

- Section 4.E. could use considerable enhancement to accurately represent the breadth of programming within the State. For what is offered at UM, the first paragraph of this note could be used as a guide. In addition, the wording in this section says, “The intended niche of the Hospitality Management Degree program is restaurant and lodge management with an emphasis on farm to table and agritourism. The intended niche of the sports and recreation administration degree option is the management of gyms, recreation, and other health and fitness related facilities, and not necessarily on nature tourism, or outdoor adventure leadership.” These niche identifications might be moved to section 2 with slightly different wording to fit the section and then repeated in section 4.E as appropriate. That would make your intent very clear right up front in the proposal.

- We believe the last sentence of the final paragraph dealing with outdoor recreation and tourism should be deleted. Given that these areas already are well covered in the Montana University System (MUS) and that additional enrollment can be accommodated through existing programming, this would represent non-demand related and directly conflicting programming.

- In section 5.A. under Lodge Management and Rural Tourism the last sentence could be misleading. While it is true that graduates could be prepared for and chose to work in ecotourism and national parks we would be concerned about that being a goal of the program since ecotourism, and parks, tourism, and recreation are the focus of an existing MUS program.

These are our observations and suggestions. We are open to further dialogue on this topic as the hospitality area is large and there are multiple roles and opportunities within it.

Provost Perry Brown, UM