Project: Romney Academic Renovation

Built in 1922, Romney Hall is underutilized and its core systems, safety systems, and access are no longer sufficient. The Romney Academic Renovation would create a new Veterans and Disabilities Services Center, new classrooms, new study rooms and new math, writing and general tutoring centers. This project is the number one priority of the entire university system as approved by the Montana Board of Regents.
Rationale

• **Record enrollment:** MSU has had record enrollment growth for seven consecutive years and currently serves 15,421 students—a nearly 27 percent increase since 2007. MSU is the largest, fastest growing university in the state.

• **Unusable space:** Romney’s prime location on campus makes its space a valuable commodity. However, several areas in the building are currently unusable, including a non-operational swimming pool (occupying a portion of three floors), locker rooms, bathrooms and various athletic spaces. Other spaces could be better utilized through a renovation.

• **Need for new Veterans Center:** Since 2009, MSU’s veteran enrollment has grown 78 percent to 579 students. This number could double in the next five years. MSU’s current Veterans Center is a 750-square-foot room in the basement of the Strand Union Building. The center is so heavily used by veterans that at peak times many are turned away because of crowding. A Romney renovation would include a new, significantly larger Veterans Center that would include quiet study areas, group meeting rooms, and rooms for one-on-one meetings with tutors, counselors and advisors.

• **Tutoring space to meet rising demand:** Tutoring plays a vital role in helping students stay in school and graduate. Just in the past two years, MSU’s overall tutoring utilization by students has grown 50 percent to 60,000 hours in the 2013-2014 academic year. Specifically in the last two years, math tutoring demand has grown 13 percent; writing tutoring demand has grown 40 percent; and general tutoring (in more than 150 courses) has grown by 182 percent. Future growth in tutoring will be limited due to a lack of space. A Romney renovation would include significant new space for all types of tutoring and make Romney an academic hub of the university.
• **Disability access needed:** MSU has 524 students who have registered with the Disability Services office, a 45 percent increase since 2009. Currently, there are only two small rooms on the ground floor of Romney that are accessible to students with disabilities. The building has no elevator nor accessible restrooms.

• **Safety and building code:** Romney has significant need for improvements to its fire and safety systems.
Benefits

- **Additional space:** The renovation will create a new Veterans Center, new classrooms, study rooms, math, writing and general tutoring centers and a new Disabilities Services Center.

- **Convenience and access:** Romney’s central location on campus would help make it easy for students to take advantage of the academic support services available to them.

- **Potential to reduce student debt:** MSU’s emphasis on math, writing and general tutoring is aimed to help students stay in school and graduate on time. Doing so can save individual students thousands to tens of thousands of dollars.

- **Potential to keep students in school and help them graduate on time:** Helping students stay in school and graduate on time through tutoring and other academic support services is a strategic priority of MSU. The Romney Academic Renovation would be focused on providing services to achieve those goals.

Investment

The Romney Academic Renovation would require $28 million to transform the building into a center for student-focused academic services and activities.