



Montana Campus Compact Strategic Plan 2023-25

Our Mission

The Montana Campus Compact (MTCC) advances the public purposes of colleges and universities by deepening their ability to improve community life and educate students for civic and social responsibility.

Our Vision

Higher education institutions and community partners will catalyze significant, positive impact through reciprocal campus-community partnerships, focused national service efforts, and statewide community building and professional development.

Our Values

The MTCC campus network and its network staff are values-driven people and share a set of core values based on the inherent dignity and value of all people. MTCC values: diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion; improving access to education and removing barriers for marginalized communities (i.e., BIPOC people, LGBTQ2S+ people, socioeconomically disadvantaged people); support for our democracy and civic life; higher education’s key role in fostering and supporting engaged citizens; and ethical community engagement as a critical part of the higher education experience.

Our Context

MTCC is a network led by college presidents with a thirty-year history of convening partners, supporting deep campus-community engagement utilizing community-based teaching and learning and national service. The landscape of our work is significantly changing with the national affiliate network ending in July 2024, higher housing and grocery costs impacting access to AmeriCorps service, and hunger, mental health, and other student needs proving persistent barriers to success. During the 2023-24 academic year Montana will launch a new version of its Compact. Our organization places a high value on listening to stakeholders and responding to the real needs and concerns of our network and the higher education community. This document provides a high-level overview of the three priority themes articulated by our stakeholders and is supported by a more detailed network office work plan containing specific goals, objectives, and measures.

Goals: 2023-2025

- 1. Support and expand campuses’ work to actively address their students' and community partners' most pressing needs.**

Significant challenges to students’ success in college include housing, hunger, and mental health, as well as barriers faced by people without family histories of postsecondary education, generational trauma and minoritized identities.

Strategies:



-MTCC will launch a new, evidence-based College Coaches program leveraging federal and local resources to add personnel to support targeted, high-needs programming statewide.

MTCC's antipoverty VISTA program will deploy its members to build and strengthen campus infrastructure supporting basic student needs, college success and environmental resilience.

-MTCC will produce and deploy new training and administrative practices to improve the service experiences of its service members.

-MTCC will convene a Community of Practice focused on-campus food pantries and student hunger, building community and resources for people supporting this work.

2. **Support and expand campuses' work to prioritize and recognize public service, community, and democratic engagement.**

Campuses that support and celebrate the civic achievements of student, faculty, and staff and that advance clear goals around student voting and democratic engagement build cultures that positively impacts students' civic habits throughout their lives.

Strategies:

-MTCC will convene its Advisory Committee monthly and host an in person retreat to build connections among Montana's diverse civic and community engagement practitioners.

-MTCC will support its campus network with awards, scholarships, and recognitions highlighting students' civic and community work.

-MTCC will offer professional development and networking opportunities to faculty members.

-MTCC will convene stakeholders and bring in thought leaders in democratic engagement to support campuses' democratic engagement.

3. **Amplify support for Montana's tribal nations and their ways of knowing and being.**

With seven tribal colleges (TCUs) and twelve tribal nations, Montana is uniquely positioned to learn and grow from its indigenous community's vast knowledge, experience and expertise.

Strategies:

-MTCC will highlight and share its TCU campuses' work to advance the public good and educate students for civic and social responsibility;

-MTCC will work to ensure equitable representation of tribal members among its staff, AmeriCorps members, and contractors;

-MTCC will build the cultural competency of its non-native staff, AmeriCorps members, and site supervisors.



Background and process notes: in early 2023, the MTCC network office staff conducted a set of focus group conversations with its CEO Council and Advisory Committee and administered a survey of key stakeholders. Dr. Karla Bird and Executive Board chair Haven Gourneau and vice chair McCall Flynn led the board conversation. Over 80 individuals participated, including members of the CEO Council, Advisory Committee, current AmeriCorps College Coaches, past Award Winners, MTCC Service Member Alumni, MTCC Staff, current AmeriCorps Site Supervisors, and current VISTAs. This document is based on the results of that work.

Note re. Mission: Our data gathering revealed a close-to-even split among respondents who felt the mission was still very relevant and those who believed its language should be updated at minimum. As part of MTCC's transition to a post-Campus Compact identity staff, Executive Board and Advisory Committee will revisit the mission statement.

Note re. Values: Because some survey respondents noted they were not sure of the organization's values, staff will make a practice of starting meetings and trainings by sharing those values and seeking opportunities to discuss them and their practical implications in greater depth, especially with AmeriCorps members. Additionally, some AmeriCorps members noted that the program's rules, particularly its prohibited activities, made MTCC's value of democratic engagement more challenging in practice. Therefore, staff will discuss the nuance and facts of AmeriCorps participation in greater detail, allowing time for greater dialogue.

Several themes emerged from this work. Many were of a typical strategic planning effort and considered needs and resources, while others were focused heavily on continuous improvement. Of particular note, those respondents from the AmeriCorps Member Alumni group made it clear that the context in which AmeriCorps and VISTA members currently are facing (high housing, food costs, and mental health in particular) as they commit to terms of service living at the poverty level places several significant barriers to their success. These AmeriCorps alumni charged the staff and organization to focus additional energy on member support, with a particular emphasis on increasing the support for those in direct service AmeriCorps roles.

Authorship: MTCC staff members Josh Vanek, Eli Bowe, Peter Buchanan, and Dannette Fadness wrote survey questions and built survey tools, and carried out focus group conversations. Robyn Michalec, 2022-23 VISTA leader, was instrumental in coding the responses and analyzing the data we received, helping MTCC think critically about its work and building our capacity to carry out our mission. We are indebted for the thoughtful, thorough job Robyn did.

Notes on implementation: Montana Campus Compact is a network of 18 campuses and people who support community and democratic engagement, student basic needs and racial and socioeconomic justice. This network is supported by a network office staff. Their primary role includes administering AmeriCorps programs and placing AmeriCorps and VISTA members with our campuses to support their student success, engagement, and basic needs work. In addition, the network office also seeks to support and remind institutions and personnel of their stated priorities and works to listen and provide resources. Because of the non-hierarchical nature of this network, much of the strategic plan will focus on actions the network office will take, and we will flag other items as priority areas for the Advisory Committee, CEO Council, or Executive Board.