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Montana Receives \$15 Million Grant to Improve Workforce Development in Healthcare Industry

HELENA – Today the US Department of Labor announced that Montana colleges have been awarded a \$15 million grant to expand opportunities for Montanans to gain skills and credentials for high-paying jobs in the healthcare industry across the state. Through the “Montana HealthCARE” (Creating Access to Rural Education) grant, which will be administered by Missoula College University of Montana, 15 Montana two-year, community colleges, and tribal colleges will partner with 39 healthcare providers—both public and private—to improve health care training opportunities in the state.

“A strong economy requires a talented and trained workforce, with the skills to fill the jobs that are most in demand, and this is especially true in Montana’s growing healthcare industry” Governor Steve Bullock said of the grant. “This grant will facilitate innovative private-public partnerships to ensure our two-year and community colleges, universities, and tribal colleges together with our State workforce systems are responsive to the needs of healthcare employers as well as job seekers looking for opportunities in their local communities. The grant will be a critical component of Pillar I of Main Street Montana (Train and Education Tomorrow’s Workforce Today).”

The grant has four primary objectives:

- Create statewide healthcare pathways to simplify the process for earning a career certificate or degree in the healthcare industry
- Systematically address Montana’s nursing shortages and provide accelerated pathways to completion of nursing programs
- Increase student success by providing services that better prepare adult students for success in the curriculum, accelerate credential completion, coach students in education pathway navigation, and provide access to distance education
- Engage the healthcare industry, education, workforce programs, and other stakeholders to improve workforce development strategies by improving on-the-job training and apprenticeship opportunities

Commissioner of Higher Education Clayton Christian said the grant will improve opportunities for students to pursue careers in health care and health-related fields. "Montana's public and tribal two-year colleges are working together to build new pathways, partnerships, and curriculum updates to serve our state's health care needs," Christian said. Almost half of the two-year degrees and certificates awarded in Montana last year were in nursing or allied-health related fields, he said.

Key population groups to be targeted by the Montana HealthCARE grant include long-term unemployed, veterans, and new ways to reach adult learners. The grant will also create healthcare Apprenticeship and Training programs for the first time in Montana and develop an integrated system for healthcare workforce planning.

Funds will also be distributed to local campuses as follows:

Bitterroot College UM	158,789.00
Blackfeet Community College	637,940.00
City College MSUB	637,940.00
Chief Dull Knife College	158,789.00
Flathead Valley Community College	638,940.00
Gallatin College MSU	158,789.00
Great Falls College MSU	637,940.00
Helena College UM	637,940.00
Miles Community College	637,940.00
Missoula College UM	7,934,206.00
MSU Northern	637,940.00
Highlands College MT Tech	637,940.00
UM Western	145,132.00
Salish Kootenai College	386,882.00
Stone Child College	158,789.00
US DOL Required Grant Evaluation	782,691.00
Total	14,988,587.00

Montana's population is aging and leaving the workforce resulting in new demands on Montana's healthcare industries. The industry is expected to add about 1,300 jobs each year until 2022. The grant is expected to result in the completion of nearly 2,500 new certificates and two-year degrees in allied health and nursing. The grant will create new opportunities for associate degree registered nurses to more easily bridge to four-year bachelor degrees in nursing. In addition, the grant will create a partnership with the Montana Department of Labor and Industry to create hybrid registered apprenticeship programs sponsored by local healthcare employers in Certified Nurse Assistant, Medical Coding and Insurance Billing, Health Information Technology, and Pharmacy Technology.

Montana HealthCARE has been awarded through Round 4 of the US DOL (Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training (TAACCCT) Grant Program. Last year, Montana received a \$25 million grant through Round 3 of this program to fund the Strengthening Workforce Alignment in Montana's Manufacturing and Energy Industries (SWAMMEI) consortium of 13 two-year and tribal colleges to improve workforce development through private-public partnerships in the growing advanced manufacturing and energy industries.

More information about the grant can be found at:

<http://governor.mt.gov/Portals/16/docs/2014PressReleases/HealthCareTAACCCTAbstract.pdf>

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