Standard 2:

Governance, Resources, and Capacity

The institution articulates its commitment to a structure of governance that is inclusive in its planning and decision-making. Through its planning, operational activities, and allocation of resources, the institution demonstrates a commitment to student learning and achievement in an environment respectful of meaningful discourse.

Criteria for Review (1)	Evidence (2)	Team Verification (3)
2.A1 The institution demonstrates an effective governance structure, with a board(s) or other governing body(ies) composed predominantly of members with no contractual, employment relationship, or personal financial interest with the institution. Such members shall also possess clearly defined authority, roles, and responsibilities. Institutions that are part of a complex system with multiple boards, a centralized board, or related entities shall have, with respect to such boards, written and clearly defined contractual authority, roles, and responsibilities for all entities. In addition, authority and responsibility between the system and the institution is clearly delineated in a written contract, described on its website and in its public documents, and provides the NWCCU accredited institution with sufficient autonomy to fulfill its mission.	☒Institutional governance policies and procedures ☒System governance policies and procedures ☒Multiple board governing policies and procedures ☐Board's calendar for reviewing institutional and board policies and procedures ☒Bylaws and Articles of Incorporation referencing governance structure	☒ Needs improvement

RATIONALE:

The Great Fall College - Montana State University (GFC-MSU) has relevant board policies related to academic programs and mission statement (Board policy 219). The Board of Regents website has other relevant system governance policies, specifically the by-laws and state government policies and procedures. However, the panel did not find a calendar for reviewing institutional and board policies and procedures. The panel also felt that a more through narrative on the governance structure would have helped to provide clarity on the relationship and dependence of Great Falls College and the MSU system.

Criteria for Review	Evidence	Team Verification
2.A2 The institution has an effective system of leadership, staffed by qualified administrators, with appropriate levels of authority, responsibility, and accountability who are charged with planning, organizing, and managing the institution and assessing its achievements and effectiveness.	☒Leadership organizational chart ☒Curriculum vitae of executive leadership	☒ Compliant

RATIONALE:

The institute has a governance structure in place. The main page of the institutional website has first order links to pages on leadership and governance, as well as for all policies and procedures. The information there is complete and understandable. Besides the executive leadership the College Planning, Budget and Analysis Committee and the Faculty and Staff Senates play a structured role in supporting the decision-making. the As of May 2021 the college is going through a leadership transition to a new Dean/CEO.

Criteria for Review	Evidence	Team Verification
2.A.3 The institution employs an appropriately qualified chief executive officer with full-time responsibility to the institution. The chief executive may serve as an *ex officio* member of the governing board(s) but may not serve as its chair.	☒Curriculum vitae of President/CEO	☒ Compliant

RATIONALE:

The Dean/CEO at the time of the review met qualifications with an up-to-date and complete CV and demonstrates qualification for the job. As of May 2021, the college is going through a leadership transition to a new Dean/CEO. The incoming Dean/CEO also has significant administrative experience in higher academia with interest in student success and building partnerships with industries and businesses.

2.A.4 The institution's decision-making structures and processes, which are documented and publicly available, must include provisions for the consideration of the views of faculty, staff, administrators, and students on matters in which each has a direct and reasonable interest.	☒Institutional governance policies & procedures (see 2.A.1)	☒ Compliant

RATIONALE:

The institutions' main decision-making body is the executive leadership team that works closely with the College Planning, Budget and Analysis Committee (CPBAC). College has both a staff and faculty senate as well as student government providing a robust system of shared governance. The institute executive leadership also has an advisory board. The structure and the processes, especially the budgeting, planning, and assessment process are well documented on the CPBAC website.

2.B.1 Within the context of its mission and values, the institution adheres to the principles of academic freedom and independence that protect its constituencies from inappropriate internal and external influences, pressures, and harassment.	☒Academic freedom policies and procedures	☒ Compliant

RATIONALE:

Academic Freedom statement is clearly articulated on page 4 of the Faculty Manual and in Montana Board of Regents Policy 302. This topic is also covered in a separate GFC-MSU Freedom of Expression Policy 111.1. The faculty manual and relevant policies are easily found on the website. A recent 11-page interim Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation Policy is also in effect.

2.B.2 Within the context of its mission and values, the institution defines and actively promotes an environment that supports independent thought in the pursuit and dissemination of knowledge. It affirms the freedom of faculty, staff, administrators, and students to share their scholarship and reasoned conclusions with others. While the institution and individuals within the institution may hold to a particular personal, social, or religious philosophy, its constituencies are intellectually free to test and examine all knowledge and theories, thought, reason, and perspectives of truth. Individuals within the institution allow others the freedom to do the same.		☒ Compliant

RATIONALE:

The Institution has a useful Faculty Handbook for Full-Time and Adjunct Instructors, that covers the "Principles of Good Teaching and Learning" well on pages 4 and 5. The Institute has a library to foster the broader educational ideals of life-long learning, information literacy, and intellectual freedom.

2.C.1 The institution's transfer-of-credit policy maintains the integrity of its programs and facilitates the efficient mobility of students desirous of the completion of their educational credits, credentials, or degrees in furtherance of their academic goals.	☒Transfer of credit policies procedures	☒Compliant

RATIONALE:

Transfer credit policy and procedures are done at a system level and are available on the Montana University System's admissions policy site. The relevant policies include, but are not limited to those for general education transfer, outdated coursework, minimum course grades, math & writing proficiency, etc. MUS relies on a single admission file for all campuses.

2.C.2 The institution's policies and procedures related to student rights and responsibilities should include, but not be limited to, provisions related to academic honesty, conduct, appeals, grievances, and accommodations for persons with disabilities.	☒Documentation of students' rights and responsibilities policies and procedures, which include: ☒Academic honesty ☒Appeals, grievances ☒Accommodations for persons with disabilities	☒ Compliant

RATIONALE:
Compliance in this area is documented on page 3 of the Student Conduct and Grievance Policy. Further information also available in the disabilities services document on GFC-MSU Disability and Accessibility website. This website also has a text-only version to increase accessibility. Appropriate policies and services exist in academic honesty, conduct, appeals, grievances, and accommodations for persons with disabilities.

2.C.3 The institution's academic and administrative policies and procedures should include admission and placement policies that guide the enrollment of students in courses and programs through an evaluation of prerequisite knowledge, skills, and abilities to ensure a reasonable probability of student success at a level commensurate with the institution's expectations. Such policies should also include a policy regarding continuation in and termination from its educational programs, including its appeal and re-admission policy.	☒Policies and procedures for recruiting, admitting, and placing students ☒Policies/procedures related to continuation and termination from educational programs including appeal process and readmission policies/procedures (If Catalog, please note specific pages.)	☒ Compliant

RATIONALE:
The admissions requirements are laid out in the Montana Board of Regents Policy and Procedures Manual under Policy 301.1. The admissions policies and procedures are clearly documented in GFC-MSUs' online catalog which also covers information on termination, re-admission, and appeals. There is a single admission policy in the Montana University System that adopts the 'Seamless One MSU' program for all 16 campuses.

2.C.4 The institution's policies and procedures regarding the secure retention of student records must include provisions related to confidentiality, release, and the reliable backup and retrievability of such records.	☒Policies/procedures regarding secure retention of student records, i.e., back-up, confidentiality, release, protection from cybersecurity issues or other emergencies	☒ Needs improvement

RATIONALE:
Cybersecurity is an area of growing concern in higher academia. While there was information on record retention and related topics, we saw no clear content regarding protection from cyber security threats. Montana State University provides technology and cybersecurity services to the institution.

2.D.1 The institution represents itself clearly, accurately, and consistently through its announcements, statements, and publications. It communicates its academic intentions, programs, and services to students and to the public and demonstrates that its academic programs can be completed in a timely fashion. It regularly reviews its publications to ensure accuracy and integrity in all representations about its mission, programs, and services.	☒Policies/procedures/ for reviewing published materials (print or websites) that assures institutional integrity	☒ Compliant

RATIONALE:
The catalog has details of all program offerings. The Institutes' website has a guiding page for incoming students to help them choose an academic pathway. They also maintain a separate page dedicated to all online programs. The communication and marketing site houses the annual report as well as logos, templates and branding guidelines. The institution has an executive level position in charge of communications and marketing who seems positioned to support 2.D.1.

2.D.2 The institution advocates, subscribes to, and exemplifies high ethical standards in its management and operations, including in its dealings with the public, NWCCU, and external organizations, including the fair and equitable treatment of students, faculty, administrators, staff, and other stakeholders and constituencies. The institution ensures that complaints and grievances are addressed in a fair, equitable, and timely manner.	☒Policies/procedures for reviewing internal and external complaints and grievances	☒ Compliant

RATIONALE:
Policies for this area are provided through Montana state law. It is a plus that they have a confidential reporting portal for concerns about violations.

2.D.3 The institution adheres to clearly defined policies that prohibit conflicts of interest on the part of members of the governing board(s), administration, faculty, and staff.	☒Policies/procedures prohibiting conflict of interests among employees and board members	☒ Compliant

RATIONALE:

Evidence of policies and procedures to prohibit conflict of interest can be found at least in three different places. The Montana Governments' legal site has the Montana Code Annotated 2019 on Standards of Conduct. GFC-MSU has a separate Policy 402.4, Board of Regents Policy 770 the area of conflict and compliance. The panel also noted the institute provides an annual conflict of interest report to the Board of Regents.

2.E.1 The institution utilizes relevant audit processes and regular reporting to demonstrate financial stability, including sufficient cash flow and reserves to achieve and fulfill its mission.	☒Policies/procedures that articulate the oversight and management of financial resources ☒Latest external financial audit including management letter ☒Cash flow balance sheets ☒Audited financial statements ☒Tuition and fees, educational, and auxiliary revenue for undergraduate and graduate enrollments ☐Significant contracts/grants ☐Endowment and giving reports ☒Investment revenue	☒ Compliant

RATIONALE:

The internal and external financial audits are managed by the Montana University System. This appears to be working for the institution, though that mechanism was less clear to the panel reviewers. Yearly and monthly budget reports are available on the CPBAC website. Historic budget trends are included in the budget reports, that also show the revenues broken down by funds that are unrestricted, restricted, designated, auxiliary, and plant. Institution has maintained a positive cash flow and a fund reserve balance that meets or exceeds their internal guidelines. The panel felt that the continued enrollment declines and increasing costs per students are areas of concern that should be closely monitored.

2.E.2 Financial planning includes meaningful opportunities for participation by stakeholders and ensures appropriate available funds, realistic development of financial resources, and comprehensive risk management to ensure short term financial health and long-term financial stability and sustainability.	☒Policies / procedures for planning and monitoring of operating and capital budgets, reserves, investments, fundraising, cash management, debt management, transfers and borrowing between funds	☒ Compliant

RATIONALE:

The College Planning, Budget and Analysis Committee provides an excellent opportunity for participation and has a diverse membership including faculty, staff, students, and representatives from the governance groups. The roles, responsibilities of CPBAC, the details on their website, their meeting frequency are evidence of their important role in financial planning, oversight, and supporting decision making. The fiscal planning includes a three-year budget plan. CPBAC also monitors financial activity and advises on course correction in investment or spending as needed.

2.E.3 Financial resources are managed transparently in accordance with policies approved by the institution's governing board(s), governance structure(s), and applicable state and federal laws.	☒Description of internal financial controls ☒Board approved financial policies, state financial policies, or system financial policies	☒ Compliant

RATIONALE:		
Controls come through Montana state law and Montana University System policies. These policies are posted online. The institute follows a uniform accounting system and has its own clear guidelines for purchasing. Up-to-date yearly and monthly budget reports are available on the CPBAC website. These provide easy access and financial transparency to a wide audience.		

2.F.1 Faculty, staff, and administrators are apprised of their conditions of employment, work assignments, rights and responsibilities, and criteria and procedures for evaluation, retention, promotion, and termination.	☒ Human resource policies / procedures ☒ Policies/procedures related to teaching, scholarship, service, and artistic creation ☒ Policies/procedures for apprising employees of working conditions, rights and responsibilities, evaluation, retention, promotion, and termination	☒ Compliant

RATIONALE:		
The GFC-MSU human resources website has relevant information on policies, compensation, training, opportunities, and performance management in one place. The institute has excellent orientation and onboarding checklists. Employees rely on their CBA and adjunct faculty handbooks for more specific information related to scholarly activities, and well as for evaluation, retention, promotion and termination. Institutional website includes form that all employees sign to acknowledge that they know where institute policies and procedures are available.		

2.F.2 The institution provides faculty, staff, and administrators with appropriate opportunities and support for professional growth and development.	☒Employee professional development policies/procedures	☒ Compliant

RATIONALE:		
Institutional support for professional development is shown through examples such as CEU funds being available for faculty and the ongoing operations of the Teaching and Learning Center for professional development of both faculty and staff.		

2.F.3 Consistent with its mission, programs, and services, the institution employs faculty, staff, and administrators sufficient in role, number, and qualifications to achieve its organizational responsibilities, educational objectives, establish and oversee academic policies, and ensure the integrity and continuity of its academic programs.	☒Documentation about engagement and responsibilities specified for faculty and staff, as appropriate ☒Personnel hiring policy/procedures ☒Academic organizational chart ☒Administrator/staff /faculty evaluation policies/procedures	☒ Compliant

RATIONALE:		
The institution seems to have managed to actively reduce employee counts in parallel with enrollment declines. The human resource website has materials that comply with the needs of standard 2.F.3. The organizational chart is available from the 'About' section of the main page of the institution. The panel appreciated the institutions desire to "prioritize positions and duties that continue to align with student needs and the college's mission."		

2.F.4 Faculty, staff, and administrators are evaluated regularly and systematically in alignment with institutional mission and goals, educational objectives, and policies and procedures. Evaluations are based on written criteria that are published, easily accessible, and clearly communicated. Evaluations are applied equitably, fairly, and consistently in relation to responsibilities and duties. Personnel are assessed for effectiveness and are provided feedback and encouragement for improvement.	☒Listing of programs and services supporting student learning needs	☒ Compliant

RATIONALE: The institution provides excellent related material on their human resources website. Staff and faculty (including adjunct faculty) are reviewed routinely. Guiding CBA and policies, evaluation forms, and other resources are available on the same websites. The panel noted that the institute follows a good practice of providing an opportunity for up to three evaluations in the first year of employment.		
2.G.1 Consistent with the nature of its educational programs and methods of delivery, and with a particular focus on equity and closure of equity gaps in achievement, the institution creates and maintains effective learning environments with appropriate programs and services to support student learning and success.	☒Listing of programs and services supporting student learning needs	☒ Compliant
RATIONALE: The institute provides a range of programs and services that support student learning and success. It has dedicated centers for college readiness, tutoring, academic success, testing, technology assistance, veteran success Native American enrichment, and child care. To support both employees and students 50% of the child care spots are reserved for students' children. Of particular interest is the eight-week advantage model that provides a focused immersive experience and has helped student with timely completion of pre-requisites and GER classes and has aided in student retention.		
2.G.2 The institution publishes in a catalog, or provides in a manner available to students and other stakeholders, current and accurate information that includes: institutional mission; admission requirements and procedures; grading policy; information on academic programs and courses, including degree and program completion requirements, expected learning outcomes, required course sequences, and projected timelines to completion based on normal student progress and the frequency of course offerings; names, titles, degrees held, and conferring institutions for administrators and full-time faculty; rules and regulations for conduct, rights, and responsibilities; tuition, fees, and other program costs; refund policies and procedures for students who withdraw from enrollment; opportunities and requirements for financial aid; and the academic calendar.	☒Catalog (and/or other publications) that provides information regarding: ☒Institutional mission ☒Admission requirements and procedures ☒Grading policy ☒Information on academic programs and courses, including degree and program completion requirements, expected learning outcomes, required course sequences, and projected timelines to completion ☒Names, titles, degrees held, and conferring institutions for administrators and full-time faculty ☒Rules and regulations for conduct, rights, and responsibilities ☒Tuition, fees, and other program costs ☒Refund policies and procedures for students who withdraw from enrollment ☒Opportunities and requirements for financial aid ☒The academic calendar	☒ Compliant
RATIONALE: The institution's catalog includes the mission, admissions requirement, grading policy, listing of academic programs, tuition fee information and all other relevant sections in compliance with standard 2.G.2. The catalog is electronic and does not include page numbers. The catalog is easy to access and navigate. Academic program page has all relevant information on one page.		
2.G.3 Publications and other written materials that describe educational programs include accurate information on national and/or state legal eligibility requirements for licensure or entry into an occupation or profession for which education and training are offered.	☒Samples of publications and other written materials that describe:	☒ Compliant

Descriptions of unique requirements for employment and advancement in the occupation or profession shall be included in such materials.	☒Accurate information on national and/or state legal eligibility requirements for licensure or entry into an occupation or profession for which education and training are offered. ☒Descriptions of unique requirements for employment and advancement in the occupation or profession shall be included in such materials.	

RATIONALE:

The institution's report contains excellent materials for both nursing and paramedic programs providing all required iand additional desired information. The information is helpful for a student to select and academic pathway and recognize the future prospects. The catalog also includes pages with all relevant information about an academic program in one place. GFC-MSU also maintains a separate career coach website.

2.G.4 The institution provides an effective and accountable program of financial aid consistent with its mission, student needs, and institutional resources. Information regarding the categories of financial assistance (such as scholarships, grants, and loans) is published and made available to prospective and enrolled students.	☒Published financial aid policies/procedures including information about categories of financial assistance ☒Information to students regarding repayment obligations ☒Policies / procedures for monitoring student loan programs	☒ Compliant

RATIONALE:

The institution provides a clear, navigable financial aid website. The website includes both video and text-based information with appropriate links to federal aid and state student aid information. The institute also provides scholarships established through philanthropy. Student loans are monitored and information is shared annually in internal reports and the standardized IPEDS system. The financial aid information is also subject to reviews and audits.

2.G.5 Students receiving financial assistance are informed of any repayment obligations. The institution regularly monitors its student loan programs and publicizes the institution's loan default rate on its website.		☒ Compliant

RATIONALE:

The institution's financial aid website provides clear information on repayment obligations. The information on the website also indicates that the financial aid advisors provide both entrance and exit counseling. Students review all details of their aid and repayment obligation at least annually.

2.G.6 The institution designs, maintains, and evaluates a systematic and effective program of academic advisement to support student development and success. Personnel responsible for advising students are knowledgeable of the curriculum, program and graduation requirements, and are adequately prepared to successfully fulfill their responsibilities. Advising requirements and responsibilities of advisors are defined, published, and made available to students.	☒Description of advising program, staffing, and advising publications ☒Systematic evaluation of advising ☒Professional development policies / procedures for advisors	☒ Compliant

RATIONALE:

Great Falls College is to be commended for the quality of their advising program. They have required advising prior to registration each semester. The approach is holistic, and advisors connect students to other student success resources noted in 2.G.1. as needed. The advising can

occur in person or online. Early student academic alert go through Maxient. The academic advising website has links to clear academic advising worksheets. Commitment to advising is also shown by one hour per week of professional development for advisors and the assignment of three FTE for advising.

2.G.7 The institution maintains an effective identity verification process for students enrolled in distance education courses and programs to establish that the student enrolled in such a course or program is the same person whose achievements are evaluated and credentialed. The institution ensures that the identity verification process for distance education students protects student privacy and that students are informed, in writing at the time of enrollment, of current and projected charges associated with the identity verification process.	☒Policies/procedures for ensuring identity verification for students enrolling in distance education courses	☒ Compliant

RATIONALE:

The institution uses standard policies and procedures for identification verification. These include the Banner student integration system and the Desire2Learn LMS. Testing center faculty have options to use the Respondus Monitor and require students to show a photo ID.

2.H.1 Consistent with its mission, the institution employs qualified personnel and provides access to library and information resources with a level of currency, depth, and breadth sufficient to support and sustain the institution's mission, programs, and services.	☒Procedures for assessing adequacy of library collections ☒Library planning committee and procedures for planning and collection development ☒Library instruction plan; policies/procedures related to the use of library and information resources ☒Library staffing information; policies/procedures that explains faculty/library partnership for assuring library and information resources are integrated into the learning process	☒ Compliant

 RATIONALE:

The Institution has both a physical Will Weaver Library on campus and it participates in other library consortia, the Montana Library2Go, and interlibrary loan programs. The volume of collections, especially the online holdings, are robust. The library personnel, resources and policies seem supportive of the mission.

2.I.1 Consistent with its mission, the institution creates and maintains physical facilities and technology infrastructure that are accessible, safe, secure, and sufficient in quantity and quality to ensure healthful learning and working environments that support and sustain the institution's mission, academic programs, and services.	Facilities master plan, including ☒Equipment replacement policies/procedures ☒Procedures for assessing sufficiency of physical facilities ☒Policies and procedures for ensuring accessible, safe, and secure facilities ☒Policies/procedures for the use, storage, and disposal of hazardous waste ☒Technology master plan and planning processes	☒ Compliant

RATIONALE:

Institute has sufficient infrastructure to meet student needs. Policies for hazardous material disposal exists. Technology policies point to the general MSU system technology policies and implementation is not clear.

Concluding Comments:

The Great Falls College Montana State University is effectively offering certificates and 2-year education to serve its constituents. The institute has a defined governance structure, qualified leadership, support for academic and student services, established policies, and is following sound financial practices even as enrollments have declined.

With the change in leadership, areas that Great Falls College MSU will need to continue working on are enrollment management with greater clarity on disaggregated student data, cybersecurity and technology policies, and a clarity on the connections with and the dependence on MSU system for operational functions.