



**May 8, 2025**

Greetings, Montana Tech Family,

I hope this message finds you well and that your semester has been an incredible one. For many of us, this marks our final semester at Montana Tech. While the moment is undoubtedly bittersweet, it's also been extraordinary in countless ways.

Since my arrival at Tech, I've often shared that one of the most impactful decisions I made in my first year was purchasing a soft serve ice cream machine for the dining hall. While it may seem like a small gesture, it became a symbol of care and attention to student experience—so much so that I still hear about it every time the machine takes a break!

Another early and impactful decision was to add men's and women's cross country and track & field. At the time, it felt like a natural next step—but in hindsight, it has been truly transformational. Today, more than 80 student-athletes compete in these programs, bringing energy, commitment, and pride to our campus community. Their success speaks volumes: earlier this week, the women's team earned its fourth consecutive Frontier Conference championship in track & field, while the men's team has claimed two titles in just four years. The women have also captured a Frontier Conference championship in cross country since the program's inception.

These are just two examples of how small decisions can lead to big outcomes. I'm deeply honored to have served as your chancellor these past six years and to have collaborated with so many of you to create a stronger, more vibrant Montana Tech.

In this edition of the *Chancellor Check-In*, we not only celebrate all the good happening on campus—we also look to the future. Please join me in warmly welcoming **Dr. Johnny MacLean**, who will begin his tenure as Montana Tech's 13th chancellor on **June 1**.

Congratulations and best wishes,



Les P. Cook  
Chancellor



Montana Tech is delighted to announce the appointment of Dr. Johnny MacLean as our new chancellor pending formal approval by the Board of Regents at its May meeting. Dr. MacLean will begin his tenure in June, working closely with Chancellor Cook to ensure a smooth leadership transition and maintain momentum on key university initiatives.

Dr. MacLean is Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs at the University of Montana Western. Before joining UMW in 2022, Dr. MacLean served in the Office of the Provost at Southern Utah University (SUU) since 2016,

rising to the position of Associate Provost. Read the media release [here](#).



### IT'S TIME TO CELEBRATE!

Montana Tech will hold its 2025 commencement ceremonies on Saturday, May 10, 2025, in the HPER. Montana Tech will award approximately 374 degrees and certificates to 347 students.

The commencement addresses will be delivered by alumnus Ryan Lance, the chairman and chief executive officer of ConocoPhillips and the student speaker will be Cody Skibsted. [Read more](#)





## RYLEE MITCHELL TO RECEIVE FIRST B.S. IN CONSTRUCTION MANAGEMENT

Rylee Mitchell is a builder. As a student at Montana Tech, she's learned how to build multi-million-dollar construction projects, create a strong foundation for a prosperous professional career, and forge community relationships that increase representation for Native American students. Mitchell will cross the stage at commencement on May 10 at Montana Tech as the first graduate of the Construction

Management program.

Mitchell, a member of the Little Shell Tribe from Great Falls, says she was exposed to the construction industry from a young age. [Read more](#)



**Chancellor's Reception for Graduates:** Friday, May 9, 6:00 PM – 7:30 PM, SSC

**Line Rodeo:** Friday, May 9, 9:00 AM – 12:00 PM, Pole Yard, Highlands College

**Order of the Engineer Ceremony:** Friday, May 9, 5:00 PM, Library Auditorium

**Sherry Lesar School of Nursing Pinning Ceremony:** Saturday, May 10, 8:30 AM, Library Auditorium

**Morning Ceremony (10:00 AM):** Graduates from the Lance College of Mines and Engineering & Graduate School

**Afternoon Ceremony (1:00 PM):** Graduates from Highlands College & College of Letters, Sciences, & Professional Studies



Immediately following each ceremony, the graduate recession will conclude at the Student Success Center. We invite all families and guests to greet their graduates there for an informal reception. We encourage you to stop by and share in the joy of graduation day.



## OUTSTANDING STUDENT AWARDS ANNOUNCED

Montana Tech announced this week student honors for its graduating class of 2025. Valedictorian honors are awarded for academic excellence to attain the associate of applied science degree and the bachelor of science degree. The bachelor of science valedictorian award is given to the graduating senior at Montana Tech who has achieved the highest grade point average overall in his or her years of study at the university. The recipient must receive his or her first baccalaureate degree and

have earned all academic credits at Montana Tech. The 2025 valedictorians are: Emaleigh Cimorelli, Nursing; Ethan Heggem, Mechanical Engineering, Justin Morgan, Electrical Engineering, Dawson Roesti, Biological Sciences and Challis Westwater, Biological Sciences.

The associate of applied science valedictorian award is given to the graduate who has achieved the highest grade point average overall in his or her years of study toward a first associate of applied science degree. The recipient must have earned all academic credits at Highlands College. The 2025 associate of applied science valedictorians are Abbey Hanni, Radiologic Technology and Grace Horton, Radiologic Technology. [Read more](#)



## EARLY IMPACT ALUMNI AWARDEES

Montana Tech presented the 2025 Early Impact Alumni Awards to Brianne McClafferty and Dr. Nick Gow. The Early Impact Alumni Award is given to Montana Technological University graduates who have already made a lasting impact on their community, Montana Tech, and their profession. This award celebrates alumni who have made an early impact after

graduation and shown tremendous potential in their professional field. Awardees are great examples of how a world-class education from Montana Tech is limitless. [Read more](#)







## #1 FOR BEST ONLINE MASTER'S IN MONTANA

For the second year in a row, Montana Tech has been named [#1 on the list of Best Online Master's in Montana by Online Master's Colleges](#). Montana Tech is listed in the top spot, alongside Montana State University (#2), the University of Montana (#3), Montana State University-Billings (#4), and the University of Providence (#5). [Read more](#)



## WINNERS OF THE 14TH ANNUAL TECHXPO ANNOUNCED

Ninety student research and design projects, represented by 168 undergraduate and graduate students, filled the HPER in April for Techxpo, the annual campus-wide event showcasing the hard work, innovation, and excellence of students. Exhibits included projects in science, engineering, and mathematics. A panel of industry professionals judge the students' projects, and the top project in each category is awarded a cash prize. [Read more](#)



## STUDENTS PRESENT ON SILVER LAKE PIPELINE MICROHYDROPOWER PROJECT

Three students presented a project at Techxpo that explored the feasibility of generating energy from the Silver Lake



## STUDENTS PRESENT PLAN TO CONVERT DIESEL-POWERED VEHICLE TO ELECTRIC

At Techxpo, a team of students presented their design to convert a diesel-powered Mahindra Roxor to an electric power

Pipeline that delivers industrial water to various industries throughout Anaconda, Ramsey, and Butte. The team included Halle Cogley, Sara Nehring, and Emily Routen. [Read more](#)

system that can be utilized by the UMEC. The team included Dorian Obergfell, Collin Badger, Benjamin Rohrschieb, Zoe McGowan, Aaron Kelly, John Cashell, and Justin McKnight. [Read more](#)



### SENIOR RECEIVES MONTANA STUDENT VOLUNTEER AWARD

Montana Tech civil engineering senior Malachi Warneke is one of 15 students from around the state to receive the Montana Student Volunteer Award from the Governor's Office of Community Service and Montana Campus Network for Civic Engagement. Warneke, from Shepherd, Montana, volunteers with Chi Alpha, a campus ministry. [Read more](#)



### DYLAN BALDWIN NAMED STUDENT EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR

Dylan Baldwin was honored with the 2025 Student Employee of the Year award at the annual Student Awards Ceremony. Currently a technical support assistant at the IT Helpdesk, Dylan was selected based on the National Association of Colleges and Employers' competencies and personal characteristics, including critical thinking, problem-solving, intercultural fluency, collaboration and teamwork, professionalism, work ethic, and leadership and communication skills. [Read more](#)



## HIGHLANDS COLLEGE NAMED OPPORTUNITY COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY BY CARNEGIE CLASSIFICATIONS

Highlands College was named an *Opportunity College and University* by The American Council on Education (ACE) and the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching through updates to its Carnegie Classifications.

[Read more](#)



## LANCE COLLEGE OF MINES & ENGINEERING UPDATE



### FUTURE OF ENERGY DISCUSSION

ConocoPhillips CEO and Chairman Ryan Lance and Chairman of the Board of Freeport-McMoRan Richard C. Adkerson told students recently that world energy demand is projected to continue to see strong growth in the coming years and that graduates of Montana Tech are uniquely poised to help fill those needs.

The industry leaders sat down with Lance Energy Chair Robert Morris to discuss the future of the energy market. Morris noted that in the last 25 years world energy consumption in the world and the United States has grown 50%, and that energy consumption is expected to only increase as more and more of the world's six billion energy-poor residents gain access. [Read more](#)







### HEGDEM RECEIVES PRESTIGIOUS NSF GRADUATE RESEARCH FELLOWSHIP

Montana Tech mechanical engineering student Ethan Heggem has been awarded a prestigious research fellowship. Heggem, a senior from Butte, has been selected to receive the 2025 National Science Foundation (NSF) Graduate Research Fellowship. The five-year Fellowship provides three years of financial support, including an annual stipend of \$37,000. [Read more](#)



### ASCE CLUB TAKES HOME THIRD PLACE FROM SUSTAINABLE SOLUTIONS COMPETITION

The American Society of Civil Engineers Chapter (ASCE) brought home third place from the Pacific Northwest ASCE Student Symposium (ASCE PNW) held in April in Oregon. The ASCE Club competed in the sustainable solutions category. According to contest organizers, the ASCE Sustainable Solution Competition challenges students to develop a stronger understanding of sustainability and learn to incorporate sustainable solutions into everyday problems that engineers incur. [Read more](#)



### SAE BAJA CLUB HOSTS AUTO SHOW TO RAISE FUNDS AHEAD OF UPCOMING COMPETITION

Montana Tech's SAE Baja Club hosted an auto show on April 26 to raise funds for upcoming competition in Mechanicsville, Maryland and visibility for prospective club members. The SAE Baja Club builds an off-road vehicle from scratch every year. It is an endeavor that takes 500-600 hours to complete. The vehicle is then taken to competition where students put the vehicle through a number of challenges. This year's competition will be held on June 12-15. [Read more](#)





# COLLEGE OF LETTERS, SCIENCES & PROFESSIONAL STUDIES UPDATE



## STUDENTS COMPETE IN SAP COMPETITION IN SAP ERSIM NORTH AMERICA COMPETITION

Five Montana Tech students participated in the SAP ERPsim North America Competition on April 4, 2025. Team members—Dillon MacIlwraith, Cassie Cooper, Leah Hamilton, Brady Drummond, and Nicholas Pasquarello—competed against 23 other universities from across North America. The team prepared for the competition, with practice sessions and coursework. [Read more](#)



## NURSING STUDENTS LEAD SUCCESSFUL PEER MENTORING PROGRAM

Three dedicated nursing students presented their impactful research finding on their peer mentoring program in Arizona in March. Nacole Sestrich, Megan Savage, and Maggee Nielsen delivered a Rising Star of Research presentation at Sigma Theta Tau's Creating Healthy Work Environments 2025 conference. [Read more](#)



## Upcoming Events

### 5/09:

Line Rodeo (9:00 am-12:00 pm) | Order of the Engineer (5:00 pm, Auditorium)  
Chancellor's Reception for Graduates (6:00 pm-7:30 pm, SSC)

5/10: Nurse Pinning (8:30 am, Auditorium) | Commencement (10:00 am/1:00 pm, HPER)

**5/14:** Advancing Tech Forum (2:00 pm, Copper Lounge)

**5/15:** Les Cook Retirement Celebration (3:30 pm-6:00 pm, The Depot - 818 S. Arizona, RSVP [here](#))

**5/21-22:** Board of Regents (Great Falls)



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