



Greetings Montana Tech Family,

Earlier this week, we celebrated Veterans Day, recognizing those who have served our nation in the past, present and future. This service does not go unnoticed and we appreciate their courage, bravery and commitment to our country.

Making a difference in the lives of others has never been more essential than today. From life-changing experiences to thriving in any environment, Montana Tech provides an abundance of opportunities to do just this. In this edition of the *Chancellor Check-in*, you'll meet graduates who received the prestigious Marie Moebus scholarship, discover how Operation Next is preparing welders with job-ready, hands-on training for industry, and hear about our special visitors from the Young Southeast Asian Fellows Initiative. You'll also meet others who are embracing their passion and dreams right here at Montana Tech.

We celebrate and warmly welcome the new additions to our Montana Tech family, honor recent award winners, highlight Hockey's "Pink the Rink" fundraiser for breast cancer awareness, and cheer on our newest Frontier Conference Champions.

Every day is a great day to be an Oredigger, and this edition reflects that spirit in full.

Les P. Cook  
Chancellor





## PRE-PHARMACY FRESHMAN SAYS ARMY NATIONAL GUARD PROVIDES LIFE-CHANGING TRAINING

Emma Harper, a pre-pharmacy freshman at Montana Tech, works as a technician in the emergency room at Intermountain Health in Butte. While the ER can be a stressful place to work for some people, Harper says she rarely gets flustered because of the training provided to her by

the Army National Guard.

“Army mental stimulation is under duress,” Harper said. “You are super stressed out and you are thinking, ‘what is the next best thing I can do to make this situation better?’ In the ER, it is much more routine stuff.”

Harper graduated from Butte High in June 2023. She shipped out to Fort Sill in Oklahoma for Army Basic Combat Training, also known as boot camp, in July 2023. The 10-week program is the same training that all soldiers and guardsmen undergo. It’s a tough 10-week program that is meant to push new recruits to their limits while teaching them the customs and expectations of the U.S. Army. [Read more](#)



## BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES ALUMNUS UTILIZES NAVY'S HEALTH PROFESSIONS SPECIALTY PROGRAM ON PATH TO M.D.

Tanner Chase (Biological Sciences, '20), of Spokane, had never heard much about Montana Tech or Butte prior to being approached by a football recruiter.

“I went on my official visit and met the staff, players, and Dr. Stella Capoccia,” Chase said. “Dr. Capoccia told me all about the Biology program and the different paths I could take. All my questions were answered, and I was reassured that my education would set me up well to attend medical school. I instantly felt at home. I told myself I would think about it for a few days, but I was sold before returning to Spokane.”

Chase is in the clinical phase of medical school at the Pacific Northwest University of Health Sciences, and is utilizing the Navy's Health Professions Specialty Program (HPSP) program. [Read more](#)



## NEW STUDENTS FUEL ENROLLMENT GROWTH

The fall semester was one for the record books. The university experienced a remarkable surge in enrollment this fall semester. With 5% growth in overall headcount and a substantial 15% jump in new first-time students, Montana Tech is setting new records and solidifying its position as the state's only Special Focus institution.

Montana Tech's growth is a testament to the collective efforts of the entire Oredigger community, including faculty, staff, alumni, and friends. This includes welcoming 93 students from across Montana as the inaugural cohort of Lance Scholars. This was a driving force behind the university's growth and it demonstrates Montana Tech's commitment to attracting and nurturing the state's brightest minds. This success is further attributed to the support from the Lance family, whose contribution through the Lance Scholars Program will have a lasting impact on students and families across the state. [Read more](#)



## CHANCELLOR SEARCH UPDATE

The search for the next chancellor at Montana Tech is underway. On-campus interviews will occur the first week in December. More details will be shared as they become available.





## ALUMNI SHARE EXPERIENCES, ADVICE ABOUT ATTENDING COLLEGE AS A FIRST-GENERATION STUDENT

Three Montana Tech alumni who have gone on to become influential members of the Butte community spoke of the challenges and the triumphs of being a first-generation student in a panel discussion hosted by the Institute for Educational Opportunities on Thursday,

November 7.

The discussion was part of the First-Generation College Celebration, which takes place at universities and colleges across the U.S. Panel members were led in their discussion by first-generation alumnus Tom Reget, who serves multiple roles as TRIO digital content creator, SSS student advisor and Montana 10 advisor. Panel members included Melissa Swanson, a physical therapist at Intermountain Health; Leesla Jonart, risk management/contract administrator at Pioneer Technical; and Paul Babb, community relations manager at NorthWestern Energy. [Read more](#)



## RADER RECEIVES ART QUINN MEMORIAL AWARD

Theresa Rader received the Art Quinn Memorial Award at the ASPIRE Regional Conference held recently in Helena. The Art Quinn Memorial Award is the highest honor given through ASPIRE, Inc., an organization that serves more than 45,000 low-income and first-generation students in Colorado, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Wyoming and Utah. ASPIRE notes recipients of the award are "long-term ASPIRE members who have excelled in providing services

and support to ASPIRE and on behalf of TRIO programs and recipients at the institutional, state, regional, or national level. Art Quinn Memorial Award recipients are professionals who have shown a long-term dedication to assisting TRIO-eligible students in a manner that extends well beyond general expectations and project guidelines." [Read more](#)







## MONTANA TECH HOCKEY FIGHTS CANCER WITH "PINK THE RINK"

The Montana Tech Oredigger Hockey team held a "Pink the Rink" event recently to raise funds for the Intermountain Health Cancer Center. The team auctioned off 26 limited run "Hockey Fights Cancer" jerseys which raised

\$5,425, with an additional \$522 raised through in-game donations and 50/50 sales. The team will make the donation to the Cancer Center at a yet-to-be-determined time, likely in November.

Oredigger Hockey is proud to be a part of the Butte community and to give back. The team is planning a Teddy Bear Toss night on Sunday, December 8th when they battle the University of Montana Grizzlies in a matinee game, with donations going to Toys for Tots in time for Christmas. Additionally, the Orediggers are planning a Veterans Appreciation night on January 17th against the University of Utah, with proceeds going to help veterans in need here in Butte.



## HISTORY MADE! NO. 24 WOMEN'S CROSS COUNTRY WINS FIRST FRONTIER TITLE

The 24th-ranked women's cross country team placed four in the top five to claim the program's first-ever Frontier Conference championship. With the victory, the Orediggers earned the league's automatic berth into the NAIA National Championship.

Alyssa Plant led the charge for the Orediggers, covering the 6k course at Billings' Amend Park in 22:33.5 to win the individual title for Tech. Kamryn Comba (second), Alyssa Jany (fourth), and Emily See (fifth) also logged top-five finishes to seal the runaway win. Makenzie Sheils finished 14th to round out the scoring. [Read more](#)





## MEN'S CROSS COUNTRY PLACES THIRD AT FRONTIER CONFERENCE CHAMPIONSHIPS

Montana Tech's men's cross country team ran to a third-place finish Wednesday afternoon at the Frontier Conference championships.

The Oredigger men collected 92 points on the 8k course at Amend Park in

Billings. Ben Zerr highlighted the Diggers' performance, finishing fourth in 25:18.1. Derek Schultz (10th), Bryon Fanning (21st), Hayden Hollow (39th), and Konnor Gregerson (42nd) rounded out the scoring for Montana Tech. [Read more](#)



## FIRST-GENERATION BUSINESS JUNIOR FINDS HER PASSION

Butte native Tylar Clary says she always knew she wanted to go to college. "It was always my main goal," Clary said. "I was always going to college no matter what."

When she was younger, Clary thought she would go to Notre Dame, but as she grew older, she realized the benefits of staying closer to home, where she could continue to have quality time with younger sisters.



## FIRST-GENERATION MECHANICAL ENGINEERING STUDENT THRIVES

Steven Valencia-Sauno admits that when he was a high school senior in Libby, Montana, his vision for his future was a little murky. He knew engineering sounded like a good fit for his interests and strengths.

"I honestly had no idea where I was going to go after high school, but my friend Chase said 'I'm going to Montana Tech,' and I told him 'I'll look into that.'"

Valencia-Sauno applied to Montana Tech, signed up to be Chase's roommate, and

She applied to Montana Tech, and during her senior year of high school, she got a call that she had been selected to receive the Rolin Erickson Montana Resources Opportunity Scholarship. [Read more](#)

arrived on campus for the very first time for Orientation, without ever setting foot on campus beforehand. [Read more](#)



### FIRST-GENERATION STUDENT LEVERAGES SCHOLARSHIP TO BECOME A NURSE

Nacole Sestrich says she knew she would go to college.

“I always wanted to be a veterinarian, but as I got older, I realized that was too much schooling. I wanted to have somewhat of a life, and have a family.”



Sestrich decided nursing would be the right fit for her.

“Montana Tech has the #1 nursing program in the state, and I was able to stay at home,” the Butte native said.

A few weeks after high school graduation, Sestrich learned she had been selected for the Rolin Erickson Montana Resources Opportunity Scholarship at Montana Technological University. [Read more](#)



# HIGHLANDS COLLEGE UPDATE

## HIGHLANDS COLLEGE AUTOMOTIVE TECHNOLOGY PROGRAM PROVIDES STUDENTS WITH SKILLS TO LAUNCH NEW FUTURES

For two students at Highlands College, the automotive technology program is not only the gateway to a successful, in-demand career, it's a path that will allow them to build new futures.



For Cody West, enrolling at Highlands College was a huge commitment to a change in life trajectory. West, 32, is originally from Bozeman. As a young man, West's life was impacted by substance misuse. Eventually the problem escalated to the point that he ended up in jail. [Read more](#)



## OPERATION NEXT GIVES VETERANS/ENROLLED SERVICE MEMBERS CHANCE TO EARN WELDING/CNC CERTIFICATION FREE

Being apart is one of the hardest parts of having a fiancé in the Montana National Guard's 230<sup>th</sup> Engineer Support Company says Taylor Warner of Deer Lodge.

Warner is engaged to John Gamble, a guardsman who serves as a horizontal construction engineer. "It's hard as heck sometimes," Warner said. "It's really hard when there's no contact for a long chunk of time, but that makes it all the sweeter when you see each other again." [Read more](#)



## COLLEGE OF LETTERS, SCIENCES & PROFESSIONAL STUDIES UPDATE

*From College of Letters, Sciences & Professional Studies Dean Michele Hardy*





**MONTANA**  
TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY

*Present*

## **A SYMPOSIUM ON AI IN RESEARCH AND EDUCATION**

### **AI SYMPOSIUM HELD ON CAMPUS**

The College of Letters, Sciences, & Professional Studies recently hosted a Symposium on the Montana Tech campus focused on "*AI in Research and Education*." The event attracted nearly 100 in-person participants and 50 virtual attendees, with a diverse audience of faculty, staff, and students from across the Montana University System, as well as virtually from Alaska, Hawaii, Wyoming, Idaho, and Nevada. The overarching goal of the Symposium was to explore through discussion how the rapid emergence of AI is profoundly impacting both academic research and teaching practices. The Symposium opened with keynote speaker Lee Rainie, director of the Imagining the Digital

Future Center at Elon University. Mr. Rainie shared his insights from progressive research on the disruptive technologies that have changed how people interact over time, including internet/broadband, mobile connectivity, social media, and now AI. The keynote was followed by a panel discussion on ethics/bias/responsibility, and a second panel on academic writing. Additional speakers shared current research projects, including a second keynote talk by Giorgio Morales from Montana State University who is publishing seminal work in AI in precision agriculture. "It is critical that universities start talking about the role of AI in instruction, research, and institutional operations, with an eye toward adapting to cutting-edge technology that is informing a future that is already here. This Symposium gave faculty, staff, and students the opportunity to engage in these discussions and come away with actionable plans to implement AI into the structure of higher education," said Michele Hardy, dean of CLSPS. The event was funded by a NIH/NIGMS grant to the Montana INBRE Data Science Core.





### SHERRY LESAR SCHOOL OF NURSING JOINS ZETA UPSILON CHAPTER OF SIGMA THETA TAU

The Sherry Lesar School of Nursing at Montana Technological University is the newest member of the Zeta Upsilon at-Large Chapter of the Sigma Theta Tau International Honor Society of Nursing. It held an induction ceremony for all Montana Tech, Carroll College, and Montana State University students on Saturday, October 26, 2024 in the Library Auditorium.

The charter was amended to allow Montana Tech to join Carroll College and Montana State University in the Zeta Upsilon at-Large Chapter in June, marking the culmination of several years of hard work spearheaded by Assistant Professor Laurie Noel. [Read more](#)



### COLLABORATING TO EXPAND THE REACH OF AFTER-SCHOOL CODING PROGRAM

Associate Biological Sciences Professor Dr. Joel Graff teaches coursework at Montana Tech that is as far from computer science as one can get. As a biologist, his focus is on living systems, and his course load includes classes in virology, immunology, and biotechnology.

For a long time, Graff yearned to expand his knowledge by learning to code.

“I tried to learn coding a few times as an adult,” Graff said. “When my research lab was shutdown for the COVID moratorium, I finally had enough time to commit.” [Read more](#)





## NEW FLAG DISPLAY IN MONTANA TECH STUDENT UNION BUILDING RECOGNIZES EIGHT TRIBES OF MONTANA

A new flag display installed in the Student Union Building has increased visibility of the eight federally recognized tribes of Montana. The display was in place for Indigenous Peoples' Day and National Native American Heritage Month.

The display was made possible through the advocacy of the Montana Tech chapter of the American Indian Science and Engineering Society (AISES) and their partners Western Native Voice and Butte Native Wellness Center. [Read more](#)

## PARTICIPANTS FROM YOUNG SOUTHEAST ASIAN LEADERS INITIATIVE FELLOWS PROGRAM HOSTED ON CAMPUS

A Malaysian educator is taking knowledge about writing education, diversity and inclusivity efforts, and other teaching techniques back to her home country after spending a month at Montana Technological University. Nurul Aqilah Binti Azahari's time at the University was made possible through the U.S. Department of State's Young Southeast Asian Leaders Initiative Professional Fellows Program (YSEALI PFP) in partnership with the Maureen and Mike Mansfield Center at the University of Montana. [Read more](#)



*From Lance College of Mines & Engineering Interim Dean Jack Skinner*



### **PETROLEUM ENGINEERING STUDENTS ATTEND COOK-OFF**

A group of ten petroleum engineering students, along with Petroleum Engineering Department Head and Professor Todd Hoffman, traveled to Midland, Texas, to attend the Permian Basin BBQ Cook-off.

The students were hosted by Liberty Energy with additional support from ConocoPhillips and SM Energy. This unique event offered students a rare opportunity to engage with industry leaders in the Permian Basin, one of the most significant oil and gas regions in the U.S. Students participated in fireside chats with CEOs and top executives from service and operating companies, gaining valuable insights into the energy sector's current challenges, innovations, and future directions. The trip provided an immersive learning experience, connecting academia with real-world industry perspectives.



### **UPDATE FROM ENVIRONMENTAL ENGINEERING**

Environmental Engineering Department Head Kumar Ganesan presented a technical paper at the International Air and Waste Management Association's Annual Conference and Exhibition held in Calgary in June 2024. Five students from the department accompanied him to the conference.

Kumar Ganesan was an invited speaker at the International Congress on Advanced Sciences and Engineering 2024 (AMSE-24) in Croatia in July 2024. He presented his research related to mercury removal using gold nanoparticles.

Assistant Professor Robin Bullock received funding from Newmont for her research on Phyto mining.



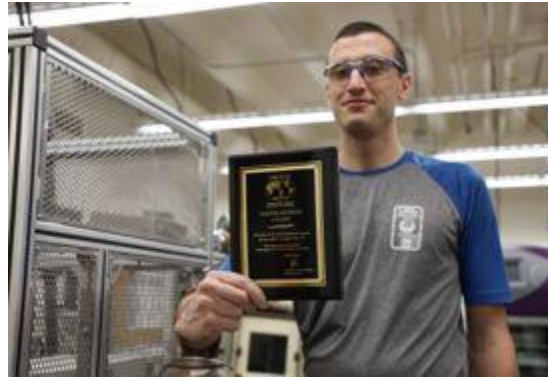




### MONTANA TECH STUDENTS PLANT DOZENS OF TREES

Montana Tech students recently planted 40 trees in the Energy, Environment, & Innovation Field Campus (EEIFC) following receipt of a grant from the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC). The DNRC grant provides forestry assistance to communities to expand tree and habitat density.

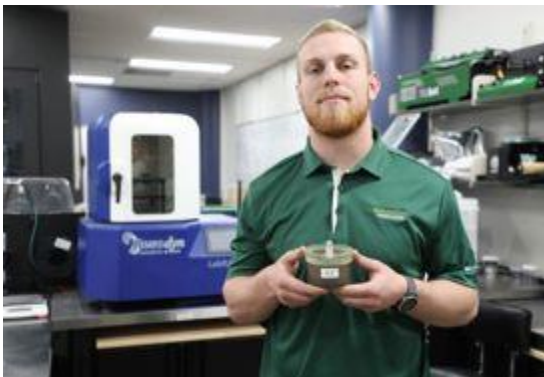
The EEIFC is comprised of 150 acres immediately west of campus, and includes the Underground Mine Education Center, a drone obstacle course and field test hub, impacted lands restoration plots and other experimental areas. [Read more](#)



### STUDENT EARNS ACCOLADE AT IMPC 2024

A Montana Tech doctoral student took home a top award at the International Mineral Processing Congress (IMPC 2024) held in Washington, D.C. recently. IMPC 2024 drew together approximately 800 of the world's leading experts in mineral processing including around 120 students from over 50 countries.

Mitchell Harvey, a Materials Science Ph.D. student, received the award for Best Technical Paper by an Author younger than 30 in the Innovation, Research, and Development category. [Read more](#)



### RESEARCHERS AND STUDENTS TRAVEL TO SANTIAGO, CHILE

## 5TH YEAR MASTER'S PROGRAMS OFFER STUDENTS CAREER ADVANCEMENT OPPORTUNITIES, WHILE SAVING TIME AND MONEY

Traditionally, a master's degree in engineering requires two additional years of study beyond a bachelor's program, but a student and alumna say the Lance College of Mines and Engineering's 5<sup>th</sup> year Master's Program at Montana Tech has allowed them to advance their careers and conduct ground-breaking research into topics that matter, while saving time and money.

Jeff Guthrie (B.S. Mechanical Engineering, 2024), from Spring Creek, Nevada, says he considered athletics and cost-savings when making a college choice for his undergraduate experience. [Read more](#)



## PFLUG EARNS PLACE IN HIGHLY COMPETITIVE PALACE ACQUIRE PROGRAM

Growing up, Sequoia Pflug remembers being fascinated by planes taking off from runways. "All my family is out of state so, I grew up associating flying with good things like going to see them," Pflug said.

## FOR INTERNATIONAL SUPPLY CHAIN WORKSHOP

Researchers and students from Montana Tech joined partners from Northwestern University, as well as other academic institutions, scholars, industry leaders and policy experts in exploring ways to bolster international supply chains of critical minerals in sustainable and socially-conscious ways at a workshop held in Santiago, Chile recently at Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile.

The workshop was the second in a series hosted by the National Science Foundation Global Center SuReMin: Sustainable, Resilient, Responsible Global Minerals Supply Chain. [Read more](#)



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

Montana Techy has been named [#1 on the list of Best Online Master's in Montana for 2024 by Online Master's Colleges](#) (OMC).

Montana Tech offers two fully online master's degree programs, a Master of Science in Industrial Hygiene and a Master of Project Engineering and Management.

The computer science and software engineering senior's interest in aviation grew deeper the older he got. Pflug owns a flight simulator and is working toward pursuing his personal pilot's license. His biggest aviation accomplishment has been landing a spot in the highly competitive PALACE Acquire (PAQ) program, an initiative of The Air Force Civilian Service. [Read more](#)

The recognition is a testament to Montana Technological University's unparalleled quality in education. As part of the rankings OMC evaluates various criteria, including graduation and retention rates, affordability, and program accreditation. [Read more](#)



## MEET THE MOEBUS SCHOLARS



### BYRD SAYS SCHOLARSHIP SET HIM UP FOR LIFE

Elijah Byrd (Mechanical Engineering, '24) graduated from Montana Tech in May 2024 and jumped into the workforce as an engineer in training with a bridge inspection company.

He says the Marie Moebus Presidential Scholarship, Montana Tech's most prestigious and competitive award, played a big part in his success. These scholarships combine a tuition waiver with



### RAPP LAUNCHES CAREER IN AERONAUTICS SECTOR

Butte native Katelyn Rapp (Mechanical Engineering, '24) moved to Palmdale, California this August, to begin her professional career as a systems engineer at Northrop Grumman in the aeronautics sector.

It's a new beginning that was facilitated in part thanks to the Marie Moebus Presidential Scholarships. The scholarships are Montana Tech's most prestigious and competitive awards. [Read more](#)

cash and are renewable for up to four years. [Read more](#)



## Upcoming Events

- 11/13:** Master Plan for Campus Facilities Presentation (5:30 pm, Copper Lounge)
- 11/14:** WBB vs Mayville State University (3:00 pm, HPER)
- 11/15:** Tech Day (9:00 am-2:30 pm) | Hockey v Providence (3:30 pm, Ice Rink) | MBB vs. Cal Maritime (7:00 pm, HPER)
- 11/15-16:** Frontier Volleyball Tourney (Havre)
- 11/16:** Football vs Carroll (1:00 pm) | MBB vs. Lewis-Clark State (7:00 pm, HPER)
- 11/21-22:** Board of Regents (Bozeman)
- 11/22:** Tech Day (9:00 am-2:30 pm) | XC at NAIA National Championships (Columbia, Mo.)
- 11/23:** WBB vs Northwest (6:00 pm, HPER) | First Tech Challenge Robotics Qualifier
- 11/29:** MBB vs. UMaine-Fort Kent (7:00 pm, HPER)
- 12/03:** Giving Tuesday
- 12/06:** Campus Winter Stroll | WBB vs Saint Mary's University (12:00 pm, HPER) | MBB vs. St. Mary's (5:30 pm, HPER)
- 12/07:** WBB vs. Jamestown (1:00 pm, HPER)
- 12/08:** Hockey Game - *Teddy Bear Toss* (1:00 pm, Ice Rink)
- 12/09:** Late Night Breakfast for Students (9:00 pm, Dining Hall)
- 12/13:** Line Rodeo | Order of the Engineering | Commencement Reception (6:00 pm-8:00 pm, SSC)
- 12/14:** Nurse Pinning (9:00 am, Auditorium) | Commencement (11:00 am, HPER)
- 12/17:** Holiday Brunch (9:00 am-11:00 am, Marcus Daly Dining Hall)
- 12/19:** Holiday Party (5:00 pm-8:00 pm, Chancellor's Residence)

**MONTANA**  
TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY



[Unsubscribe](#)

Montana Technological University Foundation  
1300 W Park St Butte, MT 59701