

# CHANCELLOR CHECK-IN

**MONTANA**  
TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY



*January 26, 2024*

[Athletics](#) | [Giving](#)

Greetings faculty, staff, and students,

Spring semester is fully underway, and I hope it is all you had expected and more.

Earlier this week, I participated in meetings at the National Academies of Science in Washington DC. The theme for the meeting was building workforce capacity for mineral resources. One of the sessions questioned how we build a roadmap to the future when most of us no longer use roadmaps. The speaker suggested that we consider the metaphor of planting trees with a sustainable root system.

Starting as the Montana State School of Mines, Montana Tech has provided the workforce with leaders, innovators and “determined doers” for 123 years. Our roots run deep in Butte, the state, nation, and far beyond.

I’m excited to share this edition of the Chancellor Check-in and some of those making this happen. Inside, you’ll meet Jordan Niggemyer, Montana Tech’s George M. Dennison Civic Engagement Scholarship recipient; learn about the microbiological makeup of mud pots at Yellowstone; hear about oil and gas outreach efforts for K-12 teachers; celebrate the rebirth of Oredigger Hockey; and so much more.

Thanks, and enjoy.

Les



## PROVOST SEARCH LAUNCHED

The search for our next Provost and Executive Vice Chancellor has begun. With the help of Myers McRae Executive Search and Consulting, we hope to have a strong pool of candidates for this important position. Thank you to Dan Trudnowski and Hilary Risser for co-chairing the search. Thank you to the search committee members, Layton Bahnmler, Leslie Dickerson, Colleen Fink, Linda Granger, Bryce Hill, Amy Kuenzi, Rick LaDouceur, Michael Masters, Ron Muffick, Scott Rosenthal, Sawyer Sibley, and Jenna Snow, for helping fill this important position. If you know of anyone who should consider this position, please encourage them to learn more on the search profile page, which can be found [here](#).



## SHERRY LESAR SCHOOL OF NURSING RANKED #1 IN MONTANA

Montana Tech is ranked #1 on RegisteredNursing.org's list of the "2024 Best RN Programs in Montana."

This is the second consecutive year that the Sherry Lesar School of Nursing tops the list. The rankings are determined by comparing the past five years of first-time

pass rates for the NCLEX-RN test, a national licensing exam for registered nurses. Pass rates from the most recent test year are given more weight, and scores from five years ago are given less weight. [Read more >>](#)



## **NIGGEMYER RECEIVES CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AWARD**

Montana Campus Compact, a network of higher education institutions committed to promoting civic and community engagement, is proud to announce the 2024 George M. Dennison Civic Engagement Scholarship recipients.

Montana Tech student Jordan Niggemyer is one of 10 students receiving the scholarship. Additional 2024 recipients

include: Bridgette Shields, Aaniiih Nakoda College; Geri Cutler, Carroll College; Mary Knight, Carroll College; Abigail Pilskalns, Flathead Valley Community College; Kiersten Clark, Flathead Valley Community College; Sophia Adams, Montana State University; Abe Malley, University of Montana; Ashley Wilson, University of Montana and Morgan Hoff, Salish Kootenai College. [Read more >>](#)



## **WELCOME JASON GRIMMIS**

Jason Grimmis has been hired as the new Director of Crisis and Emergency Management for the UM Affiliate campuses. He has over 25 years' experience with the Lewis & Clark County Sheriff's Office, and has most recently served as Director of Campus Security and Public Safety at Carroll College. He brings with him a wealth of knowledge, excellent experience, and strong connections within the Montana law enforcement and emergency response community.

The position will be shared between Montana Tech, University of Montana Western, and Helena College and will oversee the development and management of emergency response operations for the three affiliate campuses. This position is responsible for comprehensive crisis management and environmental health and safety risk management programs. Safety of our employees and students is always priority #1, and emergency response management is an area we have needed to bolster for a long time. Utilizing a shared position makes it manageable from a resource perspective. This is such a great example of the Better Together initiative of the UM affiliate campuses.

Jason starts on February 5. His primary office will be in Helena on the Helena College Donaldson campus, but he will be spending time on all three campuses.



## COLLEGE OF LETTERS, SCIENCES & PROFESSIONAL STUDIES UPDATE

Students at Montana Tech have a new early acceptance pathway to medical school through a recently signed agreement with the Rocky Vista University Montana College of Osteopathic Medicine (RVU-MCOM) in Billings.



“This is an exciting opportunity for Montana Tech students, and we are a part of a growing number of schools in the state that has worked out this agreement with RVU,” said Dr. Katie Hailer, Interim Dean of the College of Letters and Sciences. “The Biology and Chemistry departments at Montana Tech already do an excellent job preparing and helping our students gain admission to medical schools throughout the country. This new opportunity with RVU will streamline the application process and should enhance our ability to place even more students in to medical school while allowing them to remain in Montana for their education.” [Read more >>](#)



## LANCE COLLEGE OF MINES & ENGINEERING UPDATE

Students in the Associated General Contractors (AGC) club are preparing for three upcoming competitions at the National Associate School of Construction Conference in Sparks, Nevada. Our student teams will compete in the Heavy Civil, Commercial, and Project Management categories from February 7 through the 10th. The Montana Tech Heavy Civil team placed third last year in the Rocky Mountain Region competition, beating teams from Alaska, Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah, and Wyoming. Best of luck to our teams as they look to improve their standings this year.





## CONSTRUCTION MANAGEMENT SPRINT DEGREE OFFERED

Montana Tech is now accepting applicants for the University's construction management sprint degree, which will allow students to take an accelerated path to a bachelor's degree, with scholarship aid to assist with costs. The Lance College of Mines and Engineering received a \$162,000 grant from the Office of Commissioner of Higher Education (OCHE) to initiate sprint-degree pathways for the Bachelor of Science construction management program starting in the fall semester 2024. Incoming students with some AP, IB, CLEP or dual-enrollment college credits can finish the degree in as few as three academic years. All degree requirements must be met before the degree can be awarded. [Read more >>](#)



## PATHWAY TO AAS DEGREE IN AUTOMOTIVE TECHNOLOGY

Highlands College is now accepting applications for a new accelerated pathway to an A.A.S. degree in Automotive Technology. The program will allow current high school seniors to earn their degree with opportunities for scholarship aid to assist with cost and paid work-based learning.

"This program will provide potential students an opportunity to have an effective career in the automotive industry," Highlands College Dean Karen VanDaveer said. "This partnership will include Highlands College scholarships and industry job possibilities." Current Montana high school seniors will enroll in Spring 2024 courses. [Read more >>](#)



## **PETROLEUM RESOURCES WORKSHOP CONNECTS K-12TEACHERS WITH OIL AND GAS INDUSTRY**

Montana Technological University will hold a free workshop in the summer of 2024 for K-12 teachers to learn about the petroleum industry and its impact on their local community. Hess Corporation will sponsor the free Montana Petroleum Resources Workshop, which will include room and board for the week. Participating teachers receive 31 License Renewal Units or two graduate college credits from Montana State University-Billings. Montana Tech's Petroleum Engineering faculty will lead the workshop, which will be held June 10-14 in Billings. [Read more >>](#)



## **CFWEP UNVEILS STUNNING SIGNAL BOX ART**

The Clark Fork Watershed Education Program (CFWEP) is proud to announce the continuation of a vibrant public art project in Butte, Montana, featuring the transformation of four more signal boxes into canvases for local artists. This round of signal boxes wraps was sponsored by Water and Environmental Technologies (WET) and Butte-Silver Bow Public Works. This initiative enhances the city's



## **LEGEND DETAILS GEOCHEMICAL, BIOLOGICAL FINDINGS ABOUT YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK MUDPOTS IN NEW SCHOLARLY ARTICLE**

The geothermal features of Yellowstone National Park have awed visitors and scientists for generations. Scientists believe they have only begun to understand the biological and geochemical complexity of

streetscapes while promoting awareness about the importance of water resources in the Clark Fork Watershed.

The first signal box, proudly sponsored by Water and Environmental Technologies (WET), is located at the intersection of Harrison Avenue and Elizabeth Warren Ave. This eye-catching box features the artwork "Swim Shady" by local artist Breanna Hall and was voted as the people's choice on social media. The dynamic piece captures the spirit of aquatic ecosystems and serves as a visual reminder of the critical need to protect our water resources. [Read more >>](#)



## NURSING GRAD FOLLOWS IN MOM'S FOOTSTEPS

Dylan Skocilich's earliest memories of Montana Tech date back to when he was in preschool. His mom, Nora Schillo, PMHNP-BC, would bring him with her to the library at that time, as she worked her way through a nursing degree.

Skocilich watched his mom's career play a transformative role in his family's life. When he was younger, the family had few means, and lived in public housing. Over the years, his mother got her bachelor's degree in

hot springs, geysers, mudpots, and fumaroles.

A new academic paper exploring the geochemical and microbiological make up of mudpots, authored by Montana Tech researchers has been published by the American Chemical Society's *Earth and Space Chemistry* online on November 28<sup>th</sup>, 2023 and is the cover of the recent issue, December 21<sup>st</sup>, 2023. Authors include Gavin (Geogia R.) Dahlquist Selking (M.S. Geosciences: Geochemistry, '17), Paul Helfrich (M.S. Ecological Restoration, '21), Jacqueline Timmer (M.S. Geochemistry' 12), and Dr. Alysia Cox, Associate Professor of Environmental Chemistry. [Read more >>](#)



## WEBMASTER GRADUATES AFTER BALANCING JOB & CLASSES

Senior Eddie Pantoja is ready to walk across the graduation stage in just a few days, but doesn't have plans to leave campus anytime soon. Pantoja has worked as Montana Tech's full-time webmaster since summer 2022, and he says he hopes to continue in the position for a long time.

nursing, and master's degree to become a psychiatric mental health provider. His younger siblings grew up without experiencing what those earlier years were like. Yet Skocilich is grateful for that time, because it gave him an understanding of what it's like to be judged for not having as many resources as others do. [Read more >>](#)

"It comes naturally to me," Pantoja said of his webmaster tasks. "I love it."

Pantoja is originally from California. His family moved to Columbus, Montana more than a decade ago. His high school was small, and he wanted a similar experience in college. He started as a computer science major, but midway through the program, Pantoja changed his major to applied math with a computer science minor. [Read more >>](#)



## WOMEN'S BASKETBALL OPENS CONFERENCE WITH UPSET

Second-year Head Coach Jeff Graham led the Oredigger women's basketball team to a 9-4 record in non-conference action this fall. The momentum kept rolling into the season's first conference game, defeating No. 12 Rocky Mountain 51-50. Challis Westwater made the go-ahead free throw to win the game for the Orediggers. The conference season is always tough in the Frontier, with three teams ranked or receiving votes in the NAIA Coaches Top 25. The Orediggers fell to No. 5 Carroll College and No. 16 Providence. Tech fell just short in two



## MEN'S BASKETBALL OFF TO A GREAT START

The Oredigger men's basketball team is off to a great start as they defend their Frontier Conference title again this season. The Orediggers opened the conference schedule with a 5-1 record after going 10-3 in nonconference action. Tech is ranked No. 8 in the latest NAIA Coaches' Top 25 Poll with a 15-4 overall record. The first game on the conference slate against No. 15 Rocky Mountain was a thrilling 85-80 overtime victory on Kelvin Sampson Court. The men's basketball team won their next three games against MSU-Northern, Carroll College, and Montana Western. Last night, junior forward Michael Ure scored 35 points, making 8 of 9 from three-point range in an 89-54 victory over MSU Northern.

games, with MSU Northern losing in the final seconds after a last-second three pointer in overtime in Havre 52-51. The Skylights did it again in Butte, hitting free-throws in the final seconds. The women's basketball team is now 1-5 in league play and 10-9 overall. .



## TECH HOCKEY GEARING UP FOR HOME OPENER

The Montana Tech hockey team will begin their season this Saturday, January 27 with a 7:30 pm puck drop at the Butte Community Ice Rink. Admission to the game is \$5.

Read more about the Orediggers fight to bring hockey back. [Read more >>](#)



## OREDIGGER MEDIA CONTINUES LEGACY OF STORYTELLING

December marked the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of student media at Montana Tech. On December 14, 1923, nine students published the first edition of *The Acropolitan*, the University's monthly student newspaper. It is the oldest form of student media archived by the University's Digital Commons.



Over the years, the names and formats of student media have changed. The student radio station KMSM-FM ran for over 45 years - from 1972 until 2020. *The Amplifier*, *the Technocrat*, and *Magma* were all names of the student papers where students told their stories. Today, the students of Oredigger Media continue the tradition by sharing the student experience through digital platforms. [Read more >>](#)



## OUTDOOR LIFE KICKS OFF CLIMBING, SKIING ACTIVITIES

The Spring semester kicked off amidst a cold snap, with high temperatures dipping into the single digits, but Director of Outdoor Recreation Katie Bigbee is connecting students with opportunities to stay fit indoors, with outdoor activities planned as it warms up a bit.

“Our winters are long here in Montana, but our need for vitamin D and ability to stay mobile are still present throughout these



## SKI CLUB MAKING WINTER SPORTS MORE ACCESSIBLE

Butte, Montana receives an average of 62 inches of snow per year, and a group of Orediggers are revitalizing the Montana Tech Ski Club in hopes that students can enjoy all that the winter wonderland has to offer.

Quinn Cox is president of the Ski Club. He is a software engineering student from Soldotna, Alaska, who has been skiing

cold months,” Bigbee said. “One of the best ways to fight fatigue, seasonal blues and strive for great work-life balance is doing a fun and active outdoor sport such, snowshoeing, fat tire biking, sledding, Nordic and/or downhill skiing.” [Read more](#)  
[>>](#)

since first grade. “I like skiing because it is a great way to go outside in the winter and get some exercise,” Cox said. “It really calms me down after a long week of classes.”

Students have been working to revitalize the Ski Club since last winter. [Read more](#)  
[>>](#)



## FALL 2023 MNEWS

The fall 2023 edition of *MNews* has been released. In this edition, you will read about researchers tackling problems like the contamination of the Berkeley Pit and how they are reimagining solutions for the environment today and tomorrow. You'll learn about ground-breaking research in materials and meet former football lineman Clay Thomas, who's using his Environmental Engineering degree to address deforestation in Zbamia. We celebrate Professor John Ray's 48 years at Montana Tech and Coach Green, and you'll meet the farm boy from Big Sandy, who spent part of his summer interning in Cleveland with NASA. This edition is a great read, and we encourage you to look [here](#).



# Upcoming Events

**1/27:** Digger Hockey vs ISU (7:30 pm, Butte Community Ice Rink)  
**1/29:** Spring Career Fair  
**2/1:** WBB vs Carroll (5:00 pm, HPER) | MBB vs Carroll (7:00 pm, HPER)  
**2/8:** Advancing Tech Forum (3:00 pm, Copper Lounge)  
WBB vs Providence (5:00 pm, HPER) | MBB vs Providence (7:00 pm, HPER)  
**2/15:** WBB vs Rocky (5:00 pm, HPER) | MBB vs Rocky (7:00 pm, HPER)  
**2/17:** WBB vs Carroll (2:00 pm, HPER) | MBB vs Carroll (4:00 pm, HPER)  
**2/19:** President's Day holiday  
**2/29-3/2:** Foundation board meeting  
**3/8:** Spring Tech Day  
**3/14-15:** Board of Regents meetings (Dillon)  
**3/21-23:** 46th International Mining Competition



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