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CAMPUS REPORT | Board of Regents Meeting | May 18-19, 2022



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Great Falls College held its Night Out for Science fundraiser for the first time since 2019, raising at least \$15,000 in scholarships for students studying in science-based fields while giving the college the opportunity to show off its students, faculty and staff. The event also allowed the college to solidify its relationship with event sponsor and across-street neighbor McLaughlin Research Institute as Dr. Renee Reijo Pera, president of MRI, gave the keynote address. Another highlight was [Mike Walker](#), math department chair at Great Falls College, taking a twist on our theme of “Living It Up” and giving a vampire-themed talk that had the audience rolling while looking at predator-prey models. He titled it “(Un)Living It Up.”

The college recognized [Jensa Baumgartner](#) as the Newman Civic Fellow. Baumgartner started at Great Falls College in Connections 101, which assists students in becoming college or career ready. She is preparing to graduate from Great Falls College MSU in the summer after freeing herself from addiction and domestic violence. Baumgartner has been inducted into Phi Theta Kappa, the campus honor society.

The Diversity, Equity and Inclusion team brought in renowned speaker [Alonzo Kelly](#), who talked to various student, faculty and staff groups as well as the general public about crucial conversations. “Alonzo’s presentation was excellent,” said Dr. Stephanie Erdmann, CEO/dean of Great Falls College. “He has so much wisdom that he is able to share in such easy-to-understand language.”

Great Falls College celebrated the success of [Cody Tucker](#), who placed in the top 40 in the nation on the Classic Learning Test, an alternative to the SAT or ACT. Tucker was home-schooled and came to the college this past fall after taking a gap year. He started with Connections 101, where they built up his confidence and found the direction he was seeking as he realized he wants to become a Catholic priest. “Connections really helped with everything, settle what I wanted to do and helped me settle what my path was to get me there. It was wonderful,” he said of the program.

The Lifelong Learning team at Great Falls College celebrated its first year offering certified nursing assistant and other health care credentials with a [ceremony](#) in March. The program has a 100% completion rate with 94% passing their required exams for licensure on the first attempt. In one year, the program has helped 12 businesses with an outreach into five different communities by helping them fill positions for quality workers. Fifty-two individuals have gone through the course to help fill a huge workforce need.

Great Falls College English department chair [Leigh Ann Ruggiero](#)’s debut novel, *Unfollowers*, came out on March 25, and she held a book launch event at the college on April 1. Ruggiero won the Juniper Prize for Fiction for the novel, which contest judge Gabriel Bump described like this: “This beautiful novel sprawls across space and time, bounces between continents and decades. With a comforting hand, Ruggiero keeps us orientated and engaged. Energetic, stylistically brave, emotionally complex and gripping – *Unfollowers* is a singular achievement.”

Great Falls College welcomed many events to campus in early April for No More Violence Week, which started in 2015 when faculty member Dr. Cherie McKeever saw the trauma of domestic violence in her students when three of them lost children at the hands of abusers in a four-year period. It is now a community event. Great Falls College highlighted the week with a promotional [video of Sgt. Katie Cunningham](#) of the Great Falls Police Department who took in a foster child and adopted her after working as a special victims unit detective for many years.