



The University of Montana Western Campus Report

DATE: July 2025

TO: Board of Regents

FROM: Michael Reid, Chancellor

RE: Campus Report for the July Board of Regents' Meeting

- **Montana Western Holds 128th Annual Commencement Ceremony**

The University of Montana Western celebrated its 128th Annual Commencement Ceremony on Saturday, May 10, 2025—marking the first time the event was held in Bulldog Stadium.

A total of 372 graduates were awarded more than 404 degrees by the end of the 2024–25 academic year. Of those graduates, 27 completed two or more degrees, and 64% earned honors by achieving a GPA of 3.33 or higher. Two hundred graduates chose to participate in this year's ceremony.

The beautiful morning featured a Blackfeet Honor Song, a Commencement address by alumnus Nathan J. Boll, and speeches from ASUMW President Alexis Loucks and MUS Student Regent Raina Mortenson.

- **UMW Provost Dr. Johnny MacLean Named Chancellor of Montana Tech**

Dr. Johnny MacLean, Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs at the University of Montana Western, has been named Chancellor of Montana

Technological University, beginning his new role this summer. During his time at UMW, Dr. MacLean led efforts to enhance academic programs, promote student-centered learning, and support faculty development.

UMW Chancellor Michael Reid praised Dr. MacLean's transformative leadership and dedication to the university community.

Dr. Brian Elliott, Professor of English and Chair of the Division of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences, will serve as Interim Provost. A national search for UMW's next Provost will begin immediately, with the goal of selecting a strong candidate by fall.

- **Dr. Katrina Kennett Named 2025 MUS Teaching Scholar**

Dr. Katrina Kennett, Associate Professor of Education at the University of Montana Western, has been named a 2025 Montana University System (MUS) Teaching Scholar. She is one of eight faculty members statewide selected for the honor, which recognizes outstanding contributions to teaching and learning.

The MUS Teaching Scholars program highlights faculty who lead innovation in teaching and supports them in guiding faculty learning communities on their campuses. This year's theme, "Teaching Practices & Pedagogies for All Learners," focuses on strategies that serve non-traditional, working, and underserved students.

Throughout the fall, each scholar will lead a faculty cohort to explore effective teaching practices, with insights shared across the MUS through the Seamless System Initiative. Faculty were chosen through a competitive, double-blind review process based on their dedication to student success and the potential impact of their teaching proposals.

- **Student Cady Brown Selected for Prestigious National Farm Bureau Internship**

University of Montana Western student Cady Brown has been selected for the American Farm Bureau Federation's Leadership, Education, and Engagement Internship in Washington, D.C., for summer 2025. A passionate advocate for agriculture, Cady is president of UMW's Young Farmers & Ranchers (YF&R) chapter, where she helps lead food drives, classroom outreach, and student engagement.

Cady's involvement in YF&R, supported by advisor Iola "Olie" Else and the Montana Farm Bureau, helped her prepare for this national opportunity. She hopes to bring back insights on leadership, recruitment, and national agricultural programs to benefit Montana Farm Bureau and UMW's YF&R chapter.

Her journey from local involvement to national leadership highlights the impact of student engagement and community support in shaping future agricultural leaders.

- **2025 Spring Semester Dean's List**

The University of Montana Western is proud to announce that 530 students have been named to the Dean's List for the 2025 spring semester. To earn this distinction, students must be enrolled full-time (a minimum of 12 semester credits) and achieve a grade point average of 3.33 or higher.

- **UMW Offers Summer Theatre Workshops and Film Acting Intensive**

The University of Montana Western's Fine Arts Department is offering two dynamic summer programs for performers of all ages and experience levels. From July 21–25, the Summer Theatre Workshops will provide age-specific training, with younger students exploring creative dramatics, older students focusing on acting fundamentals, and adults diving into advanced techniques like emotional preparation and physicality.

From August 1–8, the new Summer Film Acting Intensive will immerse participants in the Meisner Technique and the fundamentals of on-camera performance. Led by Scott Trost and Stephen Alan Seder, the intensive includes scene work, camera technique, and critical response sessions to help actors elevate their screen presence.

Both programs offer valuable opportunities for artistic growth in a supportive, hands-on environment.

- **UMW Graduate Accepted into PhD Program in Genetics at University of Iowa**

Nicholas “Cole” Johnston, a 2025 graduate of the University of Montana Western and Dillon native, has been accepted into the University of Iowa’s Interdisciplinary Graduate Program in Genetics. Initially a Montana Tech engineering student, Cole transferred to UMW to pursue biology, where the block schedule and hands-on learning sparked his passion for research.

At UMW, he studied head movement in spiny dogfish sharks with Dr. Bradley Wood and presented his findings at national conferences. His interest in genetics was sparked by a gene-cloning project in Dr. Mike Gilbert’s class. Cole now plans to focus on human genetics and its biomedical applications as he begins his PhD studies this fall.

- **UMW Alumna Rylee Dolven Shares Journey from Psychology to Law**

Rylee Dolven, a 2017 University of Montana Western graduate with a degree in psychology, recently returned to campus to share her post-graduation experience. After earning her law degree from the University of Idaho in 2021, she now works at a civil litigation firm in Boise. Previously, she clerked for Idaho’s first female federal district judge, gaining valuable experience in the legal field.

Rylee credited UMW’s block schedule and rigorous academics—especially mentorship from Dr. Heather Haas—for preparing her for law school. She encouraged students to challenge themselves, find mentors, and develop discipline early. Her story shows how humanities majors can thrive in law and how UMW’s structure can support ambitious career goals.

- **UMW Students Present at National Literary Conference**

On April 18, UMW English majors Selika McGlynn and Rebecca Shandy presented their original research at the Connections 2025: Landscapes conference hosted by UC Davis. Their papers, developed in LIT 228: Italian Late Middle Ages Literature, reflected on literary and psychological landscapes in works by Dante and Boccaccio. The course, co-taught by Dr. Eudaily and Dr. Blankenship, combined historical and literary perspectives through UMW’s experiential model.

Shandy, a junior, explored despair in Dante's *Inferno* and Boccaccio's *The Decameron*, while McGlynn, now pursuing a master's degree, analyzed Florence as a psychological setting. Both praised the dual-instructor approach and the opportunity to present alongside scholars nationwide. Their participation highlighted the value of undergraduate research and the strength of UMW's English program.

- **UMW Alumnus Brennan Juden Shares Career Advice with English Students**

University of Montana Western alumnus Brennan Juden ('13) recently returned to campus to speak with English majors about career opportunities. Now a Marketing Coordinator for Great Harvest franchisees, Brennan emphasized how strong communication and writing skills have helped shape his career. Originally a business major, he switched to English to focus on developing those abilities—skills he says are crucial in any field.

Brennan encouraged students to be open to diverse paths and to actively build a portfolio that showcases their talents. His experiences at UMW, including a campus radio role and completing an English internship, helped prepare him for unexpected opportunities, including marketing roles in the brewing industry. His key message: stay curious, flexible, and ready to learn.