

May 21, 2025

ITEM 218-1507-0525

Request for Authorization to Confer the Title of Emeritus on Les Cook; Montana Technological University

THAT

Upon the occasion of the retirement of Chancellor Les Cook of Montana Tech, the faculty wish to express its appreciation for his years of dedication and valued service by requesting the rank of Emeritus be conferred upon him by the Board of Regents of Higher Education.

EXPLANATION

Dr. Les Cook is a distinguished higher education leader with nearly four decades of experience in advancing academic excellence, institutional growth, and student success. He currently serves as the Chancellor and Chief Executive Officer of Montana Technological University, where he provides strategic leadership to faculty, staff, students, and alumni in fulfilling the institution's mission and vision. As Chancellor, Dr. Cook is responsible for ensuring fiscal stability, developing sustainable educational strategies, fostering meaningful partnerships, and serving as the university's primary spokesperson. He is also an active member of the Montana University System (MUS) and the NAIA Frontier Conference Council of Presidents.

Under Dr. Cook's leadership, Montana Tech has achieved significant milestones, including the introduction of a second Ph.D. program, the launch of new STEM-based degrees, and the approval of seven microcredentials in extractive technologies. Enrollment growth has been a cornerstone of his tenure, with applications doubling and the fall 2024 incoming class becoming the largest since 2008. Additionally, student success initiatives have flourished through the development of a robust academic advising model, the dedication of the Student Success/Living Learning Center, and increased retention rates at Highlands College.

Dr. Cook has also overseen transformative advancements in campus infrastructure, including a \$1 million dining hall renovation and record-breaking numbers of students living on campus. Oredigger Athletics has thrived under his guidance, celebrating 15 Frontier Conference championships and two George R. Bandy Memorial All Sports Awards, while adding men's and women's cross country and track and field programs.

Philanthropy has reached unprecedented levels during Dr. Cook's tenure, highlighted by transformative gifts such as \$7 million for the Sherry Lesar School of Nursing, \$2 million for the Endowed Distinguished Professorship in Metallurgical and Materials Engineering, and a historic \$31 million gift from Ryan and Lisa Lance, the largest in Montana Tech's history.

Before joining Montana Tech, Dr. Cook served as Vice President for Strategic University Partnerships at Michigan Technological University, where he led collaborative initiatives beyond the Houghton campus. His previous roles at Michigan Tech included Vice President for Student Affairs and Advancement, Vice Provost, and Dean of Students, overseeing diverse functional areas including Advancement, Alumni Relations, Athletics, Student Success, Enrollment Services, and Marketing & Communications.

Beyond campus leadership, Dr. Cook has actively contributed to national and regional organizations, including LeaderShape, NASPA: Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education, APLU, ACPA, and the National Orientation Directors Association. Cook currently serves as the Chair of the Council of Presidents for the NAIA Frontier Athletics Conference.

As Montana Tech approaches its 125th anniversary, Dr. Cook remains committed to building upon recent successes, including \$50 million in state investments for infrastructure improvements, ongoing growth in research, and a steadfast focus on academic excellence. His leadership continues to position Montana Tech as a national leader in STEM education, energy, and sustainability.

“Serving as the Chancellor of Montana Tech is and will remain the pinnacle of my career in higher education. I am humbled and truly grateful to those who have made Montana Tech the incredible institution it is today. Our faculty, staff, and students are the best there is, and it has been my pleasure, along with my wife, Stephanie, to have them as colleagues, friends, and family.” – Dr. Les Cook

ATTACHMENTS

None