

May 21, 2025

ITEM 218-2001-R0525

Request Authorization to Confer the title of University President and Professor Emerita upon Dr. Waded Cruzado; Montana State University

THAT

Upon the occasion of the retirement of Dr. Waded Cruzado from the presidency of Montana State University, the Board of Regents wishes to express its appreciation for her service to Montana State University, the Montana University System, and the people of the State of Montana.

EXPLANATION

President Cruzado has served as MSU's president since 2010 and has led transformative growth at the institution, which has set records in enrollment, retention, academic excellence, research and fundraising during her tenure.

President Cruzado is well known for bringing greater public understanding to the importance of the Morrill Act of 1862, which created the public, land-grant university system. She is passionate about the land-grant university's tripartite mission of education, research and outreach to communities, as well as the crucial role higher education plays in the development of individuals, the prosperity of the nation and the vitality of democracy.

President Cruzado has been deeply involved with APLU for many years, including chairing its Board of Directors in 2021. Since enrolling as a first-generation college student at the University of Puerto Rico at Mayaguez, she has spent her entire time as a student, faculty member, and administrator at APLU member institutions.

Under President Cruzado's leadership, MSU has achieved major growth milestones in a wide array of areas. Student full-time-equivalent enrollment has grown by 35%; the university's student retention rate set a record this past fall while MSU saw the highest ACT/SAT and GPA scores of any entering class. The university's four-year graduation rate has soared 61 percent during President Cruzado's tenure.

Enrollment of students from underrepresented groups has grown substantially during her decade and a half leading the institution, with nearly all groups setting institutional records for the most recent academic year. Since Cruzado became president in 2010, enrollment of Native American students has grown by 71%; Black students by 75%; Hispanic students by 232%; Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islanders by 99%, and veterans by 43%.

Research at MSU, another of the institution's pillars, has flourished since 2010. The university is designated a Carnegie R1, a very high research activity institution, and the university's annual research expenditures have grown more than 162% under President Cruzado.

The physical campus has expanded hugely under President Cruzado's leadership, with more than 25% of all square footage in the university's 132-year history being added through more than \$600 million in completed or under-construction projects — more than two dozen building projects, only two of which had taxpayer dollars involved.

Academic additions to the campus include Jake Jabs Hall; Norm Asbjornson Hall; five new buildings for the Mark and Robyn Jones College of Nursing; American Indian Hall, Gianforte Hall; a major renovation of the

historic Romney Hall; and legislative approval for a new home for Gallatin College MSU, the university's two-year programs.

Additionally, the university added more than \$115 million in student housing, including Yellowstone, Gallatin and Hyalite residence halls. Major renovations were completed in the Langford and Hapner residence halls, and MSU also renovated Miller Dining Commons and constructed Rendezvous Dining Pavilion.

In athletics and student life, the university added a new, student end zone to its stadium, added the Bobcat Athletic Complex, the Kennedy-Stark Indoor Athletic Center, a lighting and artificial turf upgrade to the Dobbie Lambert intramural fields. In 2024, MSU opened a \$72 million Student Wellness Center integrating medical, nutritional, mental health and physical recreation into one facility.

At the MSU Innovation Campus, the university welcomed the construction of its Applied Research Laboratory, a high-tech facility for classified research, and the openings of buildings for autonomous vehicle company Aurora and EngineWorks, a large-scale provider of office space.

Under President Cruzado, major constructions projects will also bring a new Montana Wool Lab, an on-campus hotel called The Vim, a substantial expansion to the home of Montana PBS, the transformation of Grant Street into a pedestrian mall, and a greatly improved University Facilities Yard to provide infrastructure services to the entire campus.

The majority of the university's physical growth was fueled by President Cruzado's skill as a fundraiser, raising more than \$880 million in private dollars that provided student scholarships, endowed chairs and funded construction of 13 major projects.

During her tenure, the university has been recognized by national organizations, including APLU, for excellence in community engagement, innovation and economic prosperity, and international education.

Prior to assuming the presidency of Montana State University, President Cruzado was executive vice president and provost at New Mexico State University and served as interim president of the university. She also previously served as dean of the College of Arts and Science at NMSU and dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at the University of Puerto Rico at Mayaguez, where she started her career.

President Cruzado has held a number of leadership roles in the higher education community in addition to her role as chair of the APLU Board of Directors, including: chair of the Campus Compact Board; chair of the TIAA Hispanic Advisory Board; a member of the American Council of Education Board of Directors; and as a member of the Board for International Food and Agricultural Development, a role appointed by the president of the United States.

President Cruzado has earned a wide variety of professional honors, including being recognized with the APLU Seaman Knapp Memorial Lectureship, the Council of Fellows Mentor Award by the American Council on Education, the Paul Harris Fellow Recognition, the Hero Award from the Montana Chapter of the National Alliance on Mental Illness, and the Michael P. Malone Educator of the Year award.

A Puerto Rico native, President Cruzado received her bachelor's degree in comparative literature from the University of Puerto Rico at Mayaguez, her master's degree in Spanish from the University of Texas at Arlington, and her Ph.D. in humanities also from the University of Texas at Arlington.

For these and her other numerous contributions to Montana State University, the Board of Regents of Higher Education is pleased to confer upon Dr. Waded Cruzado the rank of University President and Professor

Emerita of Montana State University and thanks her for her dedicated service to Montana State University, the Montana University System and the people of Montana and wishes her well for the future.

ATTACHMENTS

None