

May 21, 2025

**ITEM 218-2004-R0525**

**Request Authorization to Confer the Title of Professor Emeritus of Native American Studies upon Dr. Walter Fleming; Montana State University**

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**THAT**

Upon the occasion of the retirement of Professor Walter Fleming from Montana State University, the Board of Regents wishes to express its appreciation for his service to the University, the Montana University System, and the State of Montana.

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**EXPLANATION**

Dr. Walter C. Fleming is a Professor and Department Head of Native American Studies (NAS), an academic department within the College of Letters and Science.

Professor Fleming began his service for the Montana University System in 1977 when he served as an instructor and head of Indian Studies at Dawson Community College, Glendive. Dr. Fleming began teaching at Montana State University in 1979 and now is in his 46th year. He has served as the Department Head of NAS for nearly 25 years. He is the longest serving Native American Studies faculty member in the Montana University System (MUS). His term as department head is also the longest among NAS programs in the MUS. Professor Fleming was twice named Educator of the Year by the Montana Indian Education Association and is a recipient of the Governor's Humanities Award. He served two terms as a member of the Montana Committee for the Humanities. In his over 45 years of teaching, Professor Fleming has taught over 12,000 students at Montana State University. He has taught three generations of Native students in the same family on two occasions. He has taught the Introduction to Native American Studies course for decades to wide acclaim from students at MSU.

As Department Head, Dr. Fleming oversaw the academic programs as well as the American Indian and Alaska Native Student Support program that provides recruitment and retention efforts for the record 856 Native students (Fall 2024) enrolled at MSU and Gallatin College. Under his guidance, Native American Studies created two advisory groups: the Internal Advisory Committee and the external Cultural Oversight Board. The Internal Advisory Committee consists of Native faculty and staff across campus and the Cultural Oversight Board is made up of community members representing the 12 tribal Nations of Montana. Both committees provide direction to the Department toward expanding engagement with tribal communities.

As the Chair of the Design Committee, Dr. Fleming provided leadership toward the fundraising and construction of the \$20 M, 32,000 square foot American Indian Hall, the first LEED Platinum building in the state of Montana.

Professor Fleming just completed service as a member of a special commission constituted by St. Labre Missions (Ashland, Montana) to determine if there were any undocumented deaths and/or burials on the grounds of their three campuses (St. Labre Mission, St. Charles Mission School, and Pretty Eagle Catholic Academy). Using the historical record and LIDAR remote sensing technology, the Commission determined that no undocumented deaths or burials are known to exist.

For these and other contributions, the Board of Regents of Higher Education is pleased to confer upon Dr. Walter Fleming the rank of Professor Emeritus of Native American Studies at Montana State University and wishes him well for many years into the future.

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**ATTACHMENTS**

None