



## **The University of Montana Western Campus Report**

**DATE:** May 2025

**TO:** Board of Regents

**FROM:** Michael Reid, Chancellor

**RE:** Campus Report for the May Board of Regents' Meeting

- **NASA Analyst and UMW Alumnus Nathan J. Boll Speaks at 2025 Commencement**

The University of Montana Western's 128th Annual Commencement Ceremony, held on May 10, 2025, featured keynote speaker Nathan J. Boll, a 2013 Montana Western graduate and NASA Space Policy Analyst. Boll works in NASA's Science Mission Directorate in Washington, D.C., specializing in intergovernmental affairs and serving as lead interagency agreement manager for the Joint Agency Satellite Division. He also acts as Executive Secretary for the NASA Advisory Council's Science Committee.

Boll holds degrees from Montana Western, the University of Michigan, and George Washington University. Chancellor Michael Reid welcomed Boll back to campus, highlighting his career as an example of where a Montana Western education can lead.

- **UMW Hosts 12th Annual Night of Stars and Education Hall of Fame Induction**

On April 26, 2025, the University of Montana Western's Education Department and Alumni Office, in partnership with Stockman Bank, hosted the 12th Annual Night of Stars and Education Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony.

The celebration honored four alumni—Eileen Lane Haugen, Jimi Lunak Champ, Ken Carver, and Sara Decker—for their dedication to education by inducting them into the Education Hall of Fame. Additionally, twelve current education students were recognized as Outstanding Teacher Candidates for their exemplary work: David House, John Mears, Shaun O'Brien, Caden Fields, Bryan Dellwo, Kamree Baumann, Stacy Bunko, Kyla Nelson, Megan McCauley, and Ryana Heavy Runner-Augure.

- **Bulldog Rodeo Finishes Second in Pair of MSU Rodeos**

The Montana Western rodeo team opened the spring season strong, earning second place in both the Montana State University Spring Rodeos. Sophomore Tavy Leno won the women's all-around title in the first rodeo after placing first in goat tying and sixth in breakaway roping. Laura Haight claimed the barrel racing title and women's all-around in the second rodeo—her second career title at the Brick Breeden Fieldhouse. In team roping, four Bulldog pairs placed in the top six of the second rodeo, with Konnor Ward and Carson Daniels taking first.

- **2025 Colt Sale Raises Over \$230,000 for Natural Horsemanship Program**

The University of Montana Western's ninth annual Colt Challenge and Sale held March 28–29 at the Montana Center for Horsemanship, raised \$231,500 in support of the UMW Natural Horsemanship Program. The event featured UMW students showcasing and auctioning horses they trained as part of the Colt Sale course. Proceeds will support scholarships, facility improvements, and other program needs.

The sale included the inaugural Alumni Horse Sale, with five alumni-trained horses auctioned. The Colt Challenge on March 28 highlighted students' training efforts, with Kat Hansen taking first place and receiving a \$2,500 scholarship. The live sale on March 29 brought in \$192,500, with RSR BROS BET, trained by Keelyn Hall, topping the auction at \$16,000.

- **UMW Transfers Ownership of Vigilante Field to Beaverhead County High School**

On March 7, 2025, the University of Montana Western officially transferred ownership of Vigilante Field to Beaverhead County High School, reinforcing a partnership that spans over 75 years. The Montana University System Board of Regents approved the transfer earlier in the academic year, following the completion of UMW's new Bulldog Stadium.

Chancellor Michael Reid emphasized the importance of the historic field to the community and praised the donors who helped make the transition possible. While Vigilante Field is now fully under BCHS ownership, UMW will continue to use the track for its Track and Field program.

The transfer ensures that the stadium—long a shared venue for both BCHS and UMW—remains central to Beaverhead County's school spirit and athletic tradition.

- **Raina Mortenson Appointed as MUS Student Regent**

UMW student Raina Mortenson has been appointed as the Student Regent for the Montana University System Board of Regents. As a voting member, she helps shape policies that affect colleges across the state. Encouraged by peers and a former student body president, she applied for the role and was selected by the governor after a competitive process.

Mortenson now attends board meetings, serves on committees, and advocates for student needs. She credits her leadership growth to Montana Western's supportive community and her time in student government, encouraging others to get involved and make a difference.

- **Renowned Glass Artist Katherine Gray Visits UMW**

UMW welcomed renowned glass artist Katherine Gray for a free public presentation on February 27 in Beier Auditorium. Gray, known for her innovative glass installations and role as resident evaluator on Netflix's *Blown Away*, spoke about her career, artistic process, and experience in the field.

A professor at California State University, San Bernardino, Gray has exhibited work internationally, with pieces in major glass museums across the U.S. Her installations explore themes of transparency, functionality, and the everyday role of glass. The event was hosted by the Montana Western Glass Department and was free and open to the public.

- **Emmett Jeschke Selected as George M. Dennison Civic Engagement Scholarship Recipient**

University of Montana Western student Emmett Jeschke was named a 2024–25 recipient of the George M. Dennison Civic Engagement Scholarship, awarded by the Montana Campus Network for Civic Engagement.

The scholarship honors students across Montana who demonstrate strong civic leadership and community involvement. Jeschke was recognized for his volunteer work with the campus food pantry and Red Cross blood drives, and he was recently selected as the MAS Student Lobbyist for the upcoming legislative session.

UMW celebrates Jeschke's dedication to service and advocacy, which reflects the legacy of civic engagement championed by President Dennison.

- **UMW Polynesian Club Hosts Community Luau Event**

The UMW Polynesian Club brought back the Bulldog Paniolo Luau on April 25, 2025, marking the first community luau at Montana Western since 2012. Held in Keltz Arena, the event featured traditional dances from Hawaii, Samoa, New Zealand, Tonga, and Tahiti.

A collaborative performance with the Dillon Shine Dance Studio included 33 local dancers, and the evening also featured a traditional dinner and handmade art for sale. The event raised funds to support the club's mission of sharing Polynesian culture. Alumni and the University of Montana Pacific Islander Club joined in the celebration.

- **Montana Western Hosts Annual Spring Career Fair**

The University of Montana Western hosted its annual Spring Career Fair on April 16, 2025, in the Keltz Arena. Organized by the UMW Career Services Office, the

event connected students with employers offering summer jobs, internships, and post-graduation opportunities. Students from all majors attended, and UMW welcomed back returning employers and appreciated their continued support in helping students explore career paths and build professional networks.

- **UMW and Dillon Community Celebrate Third Annual Japanese Festival**

The third annual Japanese Festival in Western Montana was held May 2–3, 2025, hosted by the University of Montana Western and the Dillon Public Library. The event featured traditional performances, hands-on cultural activities, and presentations across UMW, the library, and downtown businesses.

Highlights included taiko drum and koto harp performances, a tea ceremony, manga translation talk, and samurai armor demonstration. Visitors enjoyed interactive workshops, cultural tables, and exhibits exploring Japanese art, history, and daily life. Organized by Japan Outreach Initiative (JOI) Coordinator Nao Fukumoto, the festival welcomed guests from Seattle, Wyoming, and Japan.