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To: Board of Regents

From: Johnny MacLean
Chancellor, Montana Technological University

RE: Campus Report for September 24, 2026, Board of Regents Meeting

The **U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) Office of Critical Minerals and Energy Innovation (CMEI)** announced a **Notice of Intent** for **up to \$100 million** to expand America's critical minerals workforce through the **Providing Opportunities for Specialized Education in Critical Technologies (PROSPECT)** initiative. PROSPECT seeks to address critical workforce shortages across the minerals and materials supply chain by doubling the number of graduates in mining, materials, and supply chain technologies and supporting new curricula, modern teaching tools, scholarships, financial aid, and other enrollment incentives. DOE estimates the nation will need approximately 6,000 new mining engineers over the next decade, in addition to significant talent in materials science, processing, and recycling. Chancellor Johnny MacLean, Associate Professor Chris Roos, and students Jordan Niggemyer and Michael Shaw were invited guests at the State Department for the announcement.

The **Montana Bureau of Mines and Geology Anaconda Research Collection** was designated a **Geological Heritage Collection** by the **International Union of Geological Sciences (IUGS)**, making it one of only 11 collections worldwide recognized for exceptional international scientific, historic, and educational relevance. Selected samples will be featured in a special exhibit at the Montana Mineral Museum, September 18 through November 1.

Montana Tech named **Professor Chad Okrusch, Ph.D., the first Chief Artificial Intelligence Officer in the Montana University System**. Okrusch will lead the University's strategic integration of AI and help ensure students, faculty, and staff are prepared to use and shape emerging technologies responsibly. A tenured professor of philosophy and communication, Okrusch brings **30 years of experience at the intersection of technology and human systems** and holds both a B.S. and M.S. from Montana Tech and a doctorate from the University of Oregon.

The **Environmental Engineering** department welcomed 23 high school students from six states for its inaugural **Summer Environmental Engineering Camp (SEEC)**, a six-day, all-expense-paid residential program where students explored what environmental engineers do, why the field is a strong career choice, and what it is like to live and study on a college campus.

Highlands College launched three broadband-focused micro-credential programs in **heavy equipment operation, fiber splicing, and warehousing**. The short-term programs are designed to rapidly prepare workers for high-demand careers supporting infrastructure development and connectivity across Montana.

Montana Tech was named the **Best Value College in Montana** by data journalism outlet **Stacker**. The designation highlights Montana Tech's exceptional ability to combine academic excellence, affordability, and outstanding career outcomes for its students.