



MONTANA UNIVERSITY SYSTEM
OFFICE OF COMMISSIONER OF HIGHER EDUCATION

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September 4, 2026

The Honorable Linda McMahon
Secretary of Education
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue SW
Washington, DC 20202

Dear Secretary McMahon:

Thank you for your recent Call to Action inviting the nation's colleges and universities to reaffirm, publicly, their commitments to the students and communities they serve. The Montana University System welcomes the conversation. Many of the principles you have asked institutions to address are ones our campuses have long held and worked to strengthen on behalf of the people of Montana.

I write to share the enclosed statement, which the Montana University System is also publishing to our website as our response. It speaks to each of the seven areas you identified — transparent, merit-based admissions; the affordability and value of a degree; free expression; academic freedom; academic rigor in a time of new technology; research integrity and security; and service to our state and nation — and it describes not only what we believe, but how those commitments are made real in Board of Regents policy and in the daily work of our campuses.

A few points of particular pride: the MUS is an open-access system, built so that every Montanan has a place to pursue further education; our Board of Regents has repeatedly held resident tuition flat, keeping a Montana degree among the most affordable in the country; and our campuses have made Montana a national model for conducting sensitive, defense-related research securely — safeguarding federally funded discoveries and emerging intellectual property from foreign adversaries while strengthening the nation and growing Montana business.

We share your interest in a higher education system that is transparent, accountable, and worthy of public confidence, and we would welcome the chance to continue the dialogue. We offer this statement as a candid account of who we are and of the trust Montanans have placed in us.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Clayton T. Christian".

Clayton T. Christian
Commissioner of Higher Education
Montana University System

Enclosed: MUS Call to Action Response