



MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY
NORTHERN

Northern Network News

The Official Newsletter of MSU-Northern - March 27, 2026

Alumni/Grad Student Spotlight: Star Thomas

*Alumni/
Grad Student
Spotlight*
**STAR
THOMAS**

"Finding Belonging - For Herself & Others"

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The image is a video player thumbnail. On the left, there is a dark red background with white text. The text reads "Alumni/ Grad Student Spotlight" in a cursive font, followed by "STAR THOMAS" in a bold, sans-serif font. Below this, the quote "Finding Belonging - For Herself & Others" is written in a smaller cursive font. At the bottom right of the thumbnail, the Montana State University Northern logo and name are displayed. On the right side of the thumbnail, there is a photograph of Star Thomas, a woman with long dark hair, smiling. A large white play button icon is overlaid on the photograph.

[Watch the interview](#) with Star Thomas.

Jeff Ament Named 2026 Commencement Speaker



MSU-Northern is pleased to announce that Jeff Ament will be this year's Commencement speaker. Jeff is a renowned musician, songwriter, and visual artist as well as the co-founder and bassist of the band Pearl Jam.

Jeff was born in Havre to George and Penny Ament and raised in Big Sandy, Montana. Jeff participated in basketball, football, and track at Big Sandy High School, where he graduated in 1981. During this same time, he also began playing bass guitar.

After graduation he attended the University of Montana until he moved to Seattle, Washington with his band Deranged Diction.

While in Seattle, Jeff became acquainted with many Seattle musicians. This led him to join the band Green River and then later establish the band Mother Love Bone, which signed to PolyGram a subsidiary of Mercury Records. The band split up after the untimely passing of his bandmate. Jeff was then invited to record with Temple of the Dog.

In 1990, Jeff co-founded Pearl Jam. The band signed to Epic Records in 1991 and then released the album Ten. This album helped break the band into the mainstream. It became one of the best-selling alternative albums of the 1990's.

It is hard, if not impossible, to list all of Jeff's career accomplishments. He has won Grammy's, released three solo albums, been inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, had an acting cameo, scored a television series, and founded an art production company, to name just a few.

Jeff also founded Montana Pool Service, a charitable foundation that has helped build skateparks in rural Montana and surrounding states including the local communities of Big Sandy, Chinook, Box Elder, Malta, Hays, and Havre.

Recently Jeff generously established the Dan Ulmen Memorial Scholarship, named for his close friend and former classmate, which will support students from Big Sandy High School and North Star High School who choose to attend

MSU-Northern. We are grateful for Jeff's generosity to support our students while keeping alive Dan's unwavering support for his community and Northern.

Jeff's inspiring journey from a small town in Montana to the pinnacle of the music industry makes him an ideal choice to impart wisdom and encouragement to the graduating class of 2026.

ASMSUN Hosts Lively and Well-Attended Casino Night



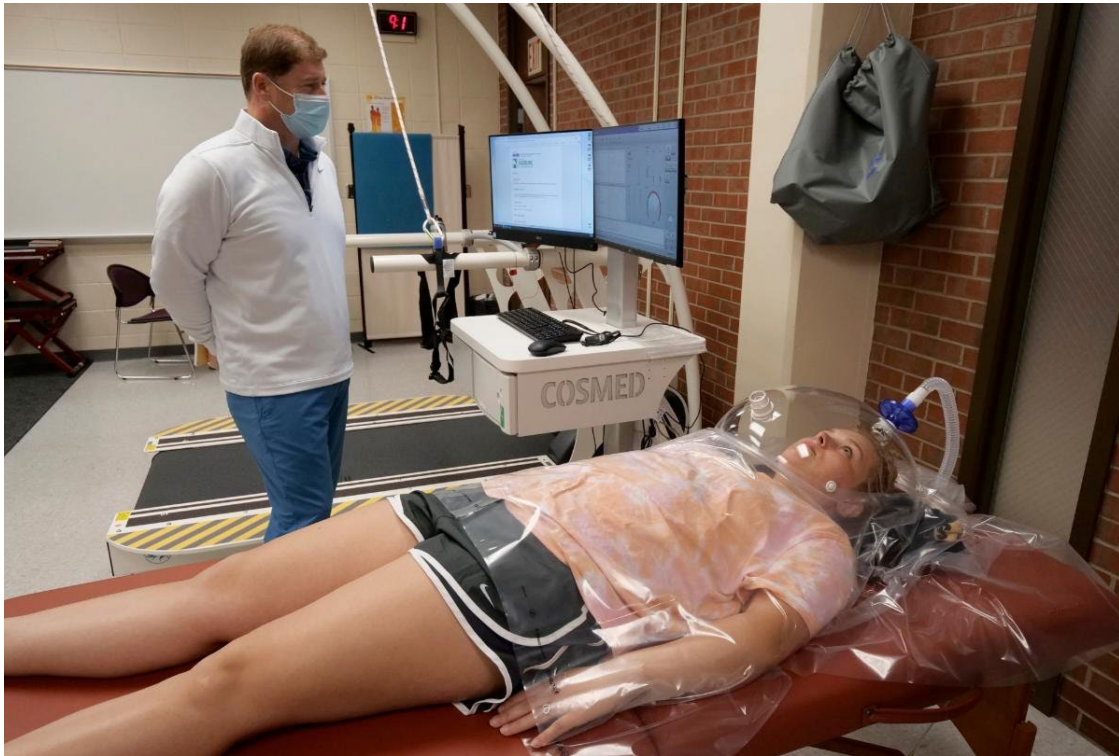
MSU-Northern's ASMSUN hosted a fun-filled and well-attended Annual Casino Night on March 25, bringing students together for an evening of games, prizes, and themed entertainment.

This year's Speakeasy/Great Gatsby theme set the tone for the night, with many attendees dressing up and fully embracing the vintage style. Creative costumes added to the excitement, with prizes awarded to some of the evening's standout looks.

Students enjoyed a variety of casino-style games throughout the night, creating an energetic and social atmosphere that lasted until the gaming floor closed at 9:30 p.m.

ASMSUN extended its appreciation to the many volunteers who helped make the event a success. From game dealers and mocktail bartenders to cashiers and faculty and staff hosts, the collaborative effort ensured a smooth and engaging experience for everyone involved.

MSU-Northern Study Seeks Women for Metabolic Health Research



Adult women in the Havre community are invited to participate in a Montana State University–Northern research project focused on resting metabolism and overall wellness. Led by Integrated Health Sciences professor **Chad Spangler**, the study uses indirect calorimetry, a noninvasive test that measures oxygen use and carbon dioxide output to determine how much energy the body uses at rest and whether it primarily burns fat, carbohydrates, or protein.

The spring pilot phase aims to test 30–50 women, with plans to expand the project this summer if student research funding is secured. Researchers will analyze the data to evaluate variability in metabolic rates and explore potential demographic and lifestyle factors that may explain variability in resting metabolism.

Participation is voluntary, confidential, and requires no blood draws. In addition to providing participants with insight into metabolic health, the project offers students valuable hands-on research experience.

[Read more about Northern's metabolic research...](#)

Winter Wellness Workshop Series Concludes with Mindful Journaling Event



MSU-Northern wrapped up its Winter Wellness Workshop Series on March 26 with a fun and practical mindful journaling session held in the Vande Bogart Library Makerspace.

Students gathered for a relaxed, hands-on experience where they used the handmade books created earlier in the series to explore journaling and mindful doodling. The session provided a creative, low-pressure environment focused on reflection and stress relief, giving participants simple tools they can continue using in their daily lives.

The workshop was designed to be beginner-friendly and welcoming to all, with no expectations on how participants chose to express themselves. With all materials provided, attendees were able to jump right in, making it an engaging and accessible way to unwind this semester.

Show Us Where Northern Went During Spring Break



Staff members Jim and Belinda Potter took MSU-Northern with them on their trip to Battambang, Cambodia to visit their son, Andrew, and his family. Andrew is a former MSUN student body president.

If you took a selfie wearing your Northern gear during your Spring Break then email your photo to potterj@msun.edu, along with a short description of where you went and what you did, and we will feature it in the *Northern Network News*!

Northern Student Earns Top Statewide Scholarship

MSU-Northern celebrated student success as junior Reese Whitehead was awarded the top \$5,000 scholarship from the Montana Grain Growers Association.

The association distributed \$26,000 in scholarships to students across Montana, with Whitehead receiving the highest award. A junior in the Agricultural Operations Technology program, she balanced her studies while working full-time at the Northern Agricultural Research Center.



The scholarship, designated for agriculture majors, will support her educational expenses and highlights both her hard work and the strength of Northern's agricultural programs. Congratulations Reese, you make Northern proud!

MSU-Northern Expands Traffic Ed Courses to Miles City



Registration is now open for MSU-Northern's Summer 2026 Traffic Education courses, including a special offering of TED 462/562 Methods of Behind-the-Wheel Instruction in Miles City at Miles Community College.

MSU-Northern remains the only institution in Montana offering a Traffic Education minor/endorsement, preparing students to become qualified driving instructors. The program blends online coursework with hands-on training in traffic safety, motor vehicle laws, and driving instruction.

New students must first apply for admission before registering. Residence halls will be available in Miles City for those attending in person.

Students can begin teaching traffic education after completing the initial 8 credits, with the full endorsement requiring 20 credits.

Visit the MSU-Northern [Traffic Education website](#) for details and be sure to register soon to secure your spot.



Campus + AI :

What You Need To Know...

By: Scott Guyant

Garbage In, Bias Out: The Hidden Flaw in AI

We tend to think of our computers as objective. They crunch numbers, follow logic, and don't have opinions — or so the thinking goes. But artificial intelligence has changed that. It is built by humans, trained on human-generated data, and shaped by human decisions. That means AI carries something very human into everything it does: **bias**.

Understanding AI bias isn't just a tech issue. It's a critical thinking issue and that makes it an everybody issue.

Where Does Bias Come From?

AI systems learn by analyzing massive amounts of data. If that data reflects historical inequalities, gaps, or skewed perspectives, the AI learns those patterns too — and then repeats them at scale.

Consider these few examples. Facial recognition software has been shown to be less accurate when identifying darker skin tones, especially those of women MIT News (Buolamwini & Gebru, 2018). In a study, software identified the sex of light-skinned men with over 99% accuracy, while error rates for darker-skinned women reached as high as 33% MIT Media Lab (Buolamwini & Gebru, 2018). Also in hiring, Amazon developed a recruitment AI that was unintentionally trained to favor male candidates, penalizing résumés containing the word "women's" or the names of certain all-women's colleges MIT Technology Review (Hao, 2018). These aren't just glitches. They're a system working exactly as designed/programed, on biased inputs.

Bias can also enter through the people who build and fine-tune AI. Decisions about what data to include, what to filter out, and how to define "correct" outputs all reflect the values and blind spots of the development team. As the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) (2018) notes, these tools are not eliminating human bias — they are merely reflecting it through software.

What Does This Mean for You?

When you use an AI tool to help research a topic, draft an essay, or summarize an article, the output isn't neutral. It reflects the data it was trained on which may overrepresent certain viewpoints, cultures, languages, or time periods, while underrepresenting others.

For students, this matters when you're using AI to explore a topic. An AI that has seen far more Western, English-language sources than others will subtly frame issues through that lens not even knowing that it is doing so.

For faculty, this matters when evaluating AI-assisted student work or using AI tools for research support. Outputs that sound authoritative and well-organized can still carry embedded assumptions that are worth questioning.

How to Spot It

A few simple habits can help. First, ask yourself whose perspective is centered in the AI's response and whose is missing. **Tip here:** you can ask AI to answer what bias it may have and it should give you an idea of areas where it may be lacking. Second, test the same question with different subjects and see if the tone or depth of the answer shifts. Third, treat AI output the way you'd treat any single source: useful, but incomplete, and in need of verification.

Your role is to find, evaluate, and think critically about information. AI doesn't change that mission it makes it more urgent.

The tool is just a tool it isn't neutral. So use your judgment and see what might be missing.

Full references and further reading for this column are available at:

<https://libguides.msun.edu/c.php?g=1502960>

As always please reach out to me with questions, comments, or topics you would like me to address next.

Scott Guyant

Research Librarian

Assisted by Claude Sonnet 4.6 extended model

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Registration Begins – Today, March 27

University Day - Friday, April 03

No classes, offices OPEN

No NNN Next Week - University Day - April 3

Positions Available on Campus

Administrative Associate III position

The Office of the Dean of the College of Arts, Sciences, and Education seeks applications for a part-time, permanent Administrative Associate III position. This classified-hourly position is a part-time equivalent to 20 hours per week and benefits eligible. For more information about this position or to apply, the internal posting may be accessed directly with this link, <https://jobs.msun.edu/postings/2649>.

Custodian II position

The Student Life division seeks applications for a full-time, permanent Custodian II in Auxiliary Custodial Services. This benefitted position is classified-hourly working 40 hours per week. Access the internal job posting using the following link, <https://jobs.msun.edu/postings/2650>.

Northern Network News Disclosure:

The NNN is produced with the assistance of ChatGPT

UPCOMING EVENTS

Brown Bag Lecture Series

Wednesday, April 15, 2026, 12 pm-1 pm in ATC Hensler Auditorium - Presented by Dr. Kasthuri Udayakumar

Mark Your Calendar: 49th Annual Powwow at MSU-Northern



The poster for the 49th Annual Sweetgrass Society Powwow features a central illustration of a Native American woman in profile, wearing a traditional beaded necklace, with a wolf's head integrated into her hair. The background is filled with various colorful flowers and leaves. Text on the poster includes the event title, dates, location, and a list of sponsors.

49th ANNUAL Sweetgrass Society POWWOW

APRIL 24-25, 2026
MSU-Northern Armory Gym
Havre, Montana

GRAND ENTRY
Friday 7:00 pm
Saturday 1:00 pm / 7:00 pm

FREE ADMISSION!
EVERYONE WELCOME!

HEAD STAFF	DANCE CATEGORIES
MASTER OF CEREMONIES Kasey Nicholson	GOLDEN AGE All-Around
ARENA DIRECTOR Walter Runsabove	ADULTS, TEENS, JUNIORS Traditional, Grass, Jingle, Fancy & Chicken
SOUND Powwow Network Soundz	TINY TOTS paid every session!

THANK YOU GOLD SPONSORS!

SPONSORS: DUCHSCHER KAPPERUD PRODUCE, ASMSLEY, MSU-NORTHERN, Independence BANK, AMERICAN PRAIRIE, TRIANGLE FOODSERVICE, WESTERN NATIVE VOICE, TC Energy, ENELL, HOLA RIVER INSURANCE, FIRST NATIONS DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE, LIONS CLUB.

ART BY BARRY BROWNLEE

The Sweetgrass Society will host its 49th Annual Powwow on April 24–25 in the Armory Gymnasium at MSU-Northern. Organized by the university’s Native American student club, the powwow brings together students, faculty, staff, and community members to celebrate Indigenous culture and traditions.

The event is supported through community sponsorships and donations, with additional support this year from CASE Dean Dr. Beth Durodoye, who has offered to match faculty and staff contributions up to \$500—doubling the impact of every dollar given.

Faculty and staff who wish to contribute can drop off cash or checks (payable to the MSUN Foundation with “Sweetgrass Society” in the memo) at Jennifer Anderson’s office in Cowan Hall 313.

Make plans now to attend this meaningful campus tradition and show your support for MSU-Northern students by marking your calendar for April 24–25.

Spring Fling – April 3

First S.O.A.R. – April 10

Scholarship Ceremony – April 17

Powwow – April 24-25

Founders Excellence Awards – May

Finals Week – May 4-8

Commencement – May 9

CAMPUS SCHEDULE

Friday, March 27

- Registration for Fall Semester 2026 - Graduate & Post-Baccalaureate
- Registration for Summer 2026 Begins

Monday, March 30

- Registration for Fall Semester 2026 – Seniors

Wednesday, April 1

- Registration for Fall Semester 2026 - Juniors
- Spring Deferred Payment Schedule: 75% Due

Friday, April 03

- Northern Outdoor Track @ Fighting Saints Open
 - University Day (no classes, offices OPEN)
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STAY CONNECTED



MSU-Northern | 300 13th Street West | Havre, MT 59501 US