



MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY
NORTHERN

Northern Network News

The Official Newsletter of MSU-Northern - April 10, 2026

**LEARNING
BY DOING**

Building a
Wristwatch in
15 Weeks

MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY
NORTHERN

The video thumbnail shows two students in a workshop setting. One student is wearing a cap and glasses, and the other is wearing a blue t-shirt and a cap. They are both focused on their work, with one student using a tool on a small object. A large white play button icon is overlaid on the image. The background is a dark red color with white text. The MSU-Northern logo is in the bottom right corner.

[Watch the interview](#) with Aaron Riffin

Downing Visits Northern and Expresses Support for Higher Education in Montana



U.S. Representative Troy Downing visited MSU-Northern yesterday (April 9), to learn more about the campus's mission, programs, and unique role in serving students across the region. During his visit, Downing met with Chancellor Greg Kegel, Provost Jennifer Brown, and Vice Chancellor of Enrollment Management Lindsey Brandt-Bennett to discuss Northern's distinctness and its commitment to student success.

A key focus of the conversation was MSU-Northern's role as a primary access point for higher education and workforce training across northern Montana. Representative Downing expressed appreciation for the university's mission and noted his support in advocating for institutions like Northern at the federal level.

Northern Alum Named Montana's Rural Teacher of the Year



Monica Mattson, a graduate of MSU-Northern's teacher education program, has been named Montana's Rural Teacher of the Year. The honor, announced by Hill County Superintendent of Schools Vicki Proctor, recognizes Mattson's outstanding contributions to rural education over her 20-year career at Cottonwood School. She will also serve as the keynote speaker at the upcoming Montana Association of County Superintendents of Schools Conference in April.

A certified K–8 teacher and counselor, Mattson serves as lead teacher and curriculum director while managing two campuses. In addition to her leadership responsibilities, she plays a vital role in mentoring both new rural educators and current MSU-Northern education students. Her dedication to supporting fellow teachers reflects her commitment not only to her students, but to the future of rural education across Montana.

At Cottonwood’s one-room schoolhouse, Mattson creates a dynamic and inclusive learning environment where students of all ages are supported and challenged. Her classroom emphasizes academic achievement, character development, and a lifelong love of learning—hallmarks of strong rural education. The Montana Rural Teacher of the Year award recognizes excellence in teaching, leadership, and lasting impact, and Mattson exemplifies each of these qualities. A reception in her honor is planned for later this spring.

21st Annual Spring Fling Celebrates Northern Athletics in High-Energy Night of Giving



The 21st Annual Spring Fling delivered another unforgettable evening as MSU-Northern’s premier athletic fundraiser brought together more than 400 supporters in the Armory Gymnasium. With 54 tables filled and energy buzzing throughout the room, attendees enjoyed a lively night of dinner, camaraderie,

and competitive bidding—all in support of student-athlete scholarships through the Northern Lights Athletic Scholarship Foundation (NLASF). The event once again showcased the powerful community backing behind Northern athletics.

A highlight of the evening was the presentation of the 3rd annual Mike Tilleman “One Leg Up” Award, which honored Mitch and Renessa Galland for their outstanding support of MSU-Northern Athletics. Their dedication exemplified the spirit of generosity that fueled the night and helped drive continued success for Northern’s athletic programs. This year some of our athletic students helped at the event by working as “Thirst Responders,” ensuring no attendees were without a cold beverage during the night. As the evening concluded, excitement was already building for the next Spring Fling, scheduled for Friday, April 2, 2027.

Shining Light Athletes Honored at Spring Fling Celebration



One of the most inspiring moments of the 21st annual Spring Fling was the presentation of the Shining Light Awards to seven student athletes. It served as a powerful reminder of the talent, work ethic, and character that defines Northern athletics. These standout student-athletes exemplify excellence, leadership, and commitment within their respective sports. This year’s recipients included Braydon Cline (Football), Chance Three Irons (Rodeo), Orion Thivierge (Wrestling), Desiree Toombs (Cross Country), Taya Trottier (Women’s Basketball), Tracen Jilot (Men’s Basketball), and Macee Selman (Volleyball). Congratulations Shining Lights recipients! You make Northern proud.

Northern PAS Club Represents Montana at National Convention



MSU-Northern's Post-secondary Ag Students (PAS) Club traveled to Branson, Missouri, March 8–13 to compete at the national PAS convention, joining more than 550 students from 12 states as the only Montana chapter represented. Eight Northern students competed in a range of events, including agronomy, ag mechanics, precision agriculture, animal health, and public speaking, earning solid mid-level finishes across the board.

In addition to competition, students gained valuable industry exposure through agricultural tours. Highlights included visiting Johnny Morris' original Bass Pro Shops location and exploring innovative land and turf management practices at Big Cedar Lodge's golf courses. Another group toured the College of the Ozarks, learning about its unique work-for-tuition model that allows students to graduate debt-free.

The trip also provided opportunities for team bonding and exploration, as students experienced Branson's attractions and downtown entertainment, making it both an educational and memorable experience.

Sweetgrass Society Reaches 2026 Powwow Fundraising Goal

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 ARENA DIRECTOR Walter Runsabove SOUND Powwow Network Soundz	GOLDEN AGE All-Around ADULTS, TEENS, JUNIORS Traditional, Grass, Jingle, Fancy & Chicken TINY TOTS paid every session!

THANK YOU GOLD SPONSORS!

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ART BY BARRY BROWNLEE

The MSU-Northern Sweetgrass Society (SGS) has successfully reached its fundraising goal for this year’s powwow, thanks in part to a \$3,000 grant from the Montana Department of Commerce’s Economic Impact and Destination Event Grant Program, which will be used to promote and advertise the event. Organizers report that they have received enough financial support to fund the 2026 powwow, as well as hire renowned powwow drum and singing group Southern Cree to serve as Host Drum. The 49th annual SGS powwow is April 24-25 in Northern’s Armory Gymnasium. The powwow is free and open to everyone.

SGS expressed deep appreciation for the wide range of supporters who made the fundraising milestone possible. Early momentum came from a \$5,000 contribution from ASMSUN, followed by generous gifts from faculty and campus partners, including Dr. Carol Reifschneider, Dr. Margaret Campbell, Dr. Mark Sieffert, and the CASE Dean Fund led by Beth Durodoye and CASE faculty. Additional support from the Hill County Community Foundation and the Montana Community Foundation further strengthened the effort and demonstrated strong community investment in the event’s success.

Leaders of the Sweetgrass Society emphasized that the achievement reflects a collective commitment to celebrating and preserving culture while bringing visitors to campus and the region. They extended sincere thanks to all donors and partners whose contributions made the Powwow possible, noting that the outpouring of support highlights the importance of the event to both the university and the broader community.

Teacher Residency Grants Nears Completion



MSU–Northern’s Teacher Education Department is nearing the completion of a yearlong grant aimed at strengthening the university’s teacher residency program. The \$99,811 grant, awarded by the Montana Office of Public Instruction, supports statewide efforts to expand and encourage alternative pathways to teacher licensure. The interdisciplinary team leading this work includes faculty from Education and English, a Northern staff member, K–12 teachers, a school administrator, and Dean Beth Durodoye of the College of Arts, Sciences, and Education.

Under MSU–Northern’s teacher residency model, candidates spend a full academic year in a classroom, gaining significantly more hands-on experience before becoming teachers of record. Residents work alongside a master teacher, participate in statewide training on evidence-based practices, and receive both a monthly living stipend and a last dollar tuition waiver—substantially reducing the financial burden of their final year.

The residency benefits school districts as well. Districts gain extended opportunities to work with potential future hires, master teachers receive additional collaboration time and a stipend, and rural communities are better able to “grow their own” educators by supporting local residents who want to complete licensure without relocating.

Throughout the year, the grant team has met monthly to align MSU–Northern’s student teaching handbook with the state’s residency guidelines, develop inquiry-based modules that help residents tackle real classroom challenges, and prepare outreach efforts to promote the strengthened program to districts across Montana. The goal is clear: contribute meaningful solutions to the teacher shortage facing the state.

Students took Northern on a CrossCountry Road Trip



In response to our “Take Northern with You Challenge,” Max Morrey and Sterling Shelton bought one-way tickets to South Carolina—because nothing says “great plan” like flying across the country to resurrect a 2010 Honda Pilot that had been sitting for two years. This wasn’t just any vehicle; it was Max’s childhood chariot. After a little maintenance (and discovering it still ran like a Honda), they set out for Havre—but not without packing their MSU-Northern gear, determined to take Northern with them every mile of the journey.

From southern BBQ stops and family visits in South Carolina to roadside photos proudly sporting Northern apparel at every state sign, the trip quickly became a rolling showcase of Lights pride. They made memorable stops at Buc-ee’s, the Great Smoky Mountains, and eventually rolled into Chicago on St. Patrick’s Day, celebrating in full Northern fashion as the river turned green. Along the way, they kept the tradition alive—capturing photos in Northern gear at landmarks, cities, and anywhere worth remembering.

Fueled by road trip staples like Culver’s and White Castle, they continued west, visiting more family and crossing scenic states before making their way to Mount Rushmore—again representing Northern. Finally, after what they said felt like 47 years on the road, they arrived home, exhausted but accomplished. No fanfare, just two road-weary travelers collapsing into bed—having taken MSU-Northern with them across the country on an unforgettable adventure that was part road trip, part food tour, and all Northern pride.

Statewide Standouts Compete in Hi-Line Invitational

The 39th Annual Hi-Line Invitational Tournament (H.I.T.) was held March 26–28, bringing together some of Montana’s top high school basketball talent. All-star teams representing Class C, B, A, and AA competed in a showcase that featured standout players from schools across the state, highlighting the depth and skill of Montana prep athletics. The event once again drew strong participation and enthusiasm from student-athletes and fans alike.

Museum of the Rockies Honors Former Northern Paleontology Professor

The Museum of the Rockies is currently showcasing the lasting impact of former MSU-Northern paleontology professor Vickie Clouse, whose work continues to shape both science and student experiences. Known for taking learning beyond the classroom, Clouse immersed her students in hands-on fieldwork across Montana's Hi-Line, where they uncovered fossils and gained a deep understanding of Earth's ancient history. Her teaching emphasized patience, detail, and discovery—qualities reflected in her own remarkable contributions to paleontology, including the 1989 discovery of a subadult skeleton later identified as *Daspletosaurus horneri*.



Clouse also instilled in her students a strong sense of responsibility, teaching them that fossils found on public land belong to everyone and should be preserved for future study. Many of the specimens discovered through her work were transferred to Montana State University's repository and are now housed at the Museum of the Rockies, where they continue to inform research and inspire visitors. Though she passed in 2023, Clouse's legacy lives on through her students, her discoveries, and the enduring sense of wonder she brought to the study of the past.

[Read more...](#)

Be Part of the Voices of the Hi-Line

It's that time of year again. The English Department and the Montana Actors Theatre are partnering to sponsor our International Poetry Event on April 22nd at 7 pm in the MAT theatre.

They are seeking individuals to present in **any language other than modern English**. A poem, song, chant or any other small piece is encouraged, whether one that was published or a personal piece is up to you.

Please let Valerie Guyant (Valerie.guyant@msun.edu) know by April 15th if you are willing to present, in what language, the name of the piece you will be presenting, and send a copy of the poem if possible.



Campus + AI :

What You Need To Know...

By: Scott Guyant

Think Before You Type: AI and Privacy

Artificial intelligence tools have become remarkably easy to use. You open a browser, type a question, and get an answer in seconds. But that simplicity can obscure something of noting, and that is what happens to what you type, and who might have access to it afterwards.

Popular AI tools like ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini, and others will store your conversations, even if it is only temporarily. Depending on the platform and your account settings, those conversations may be retained for extended periods and, in some cases, used to help train future versions of the model. A 2025 analysis of major AI providers found that some companies, including Amazon, Meta, and OpenAI, retain certain user chat data indefinitely, and noted that chat histories can accumulate into a detailed picture of a person's thoughts, experiences, and personal disclosures over time (Duffourc et al., 2025). Many platforms now allow you to turn off conversation history or use an incognito-style session, but those settings aren't always easy to find, and they often aren't always the default setting.

This will matter more in some contexts than others. Casual questions about recipes or travel are low stakes. But consider a student who pastes a draft of a personal essay into an AI tool for feedback, or a faculty member who uploads unpublished research for help with editing. That content is now on a third-party server, subject to that company's data policies and these policies that can change often.

For those of us in higher education, this raises a specific concern: FERPA. The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act protects the privacy of student education records, and as generative AI tools become more widespread, the risk of improper disclosure of that protected data grows (University of Wisconsin–Madison Office of the Registrar, 2024). Faculty members must ensure that using these technologies complies with FERPA regulations, which means obtaining student consent before using identifiable records with AI tools and applying the principle of data minimization or using only what is truly necessary for the task (Northern Michigan University Center for Teaching and Learning, n.d.). Institutions are still trying to catch up and institute clear guidance on this, but the cautious approach is to treat AI tools as you would

any third-party, unvetted platform: don't share what you wouldn't want leaving your institution.

A real-world example that illustrates the stakes: in 2023, Samsung engineers inadvertently leaked sensitive company data which included proprietary source code and confidential meeting notes while using ChatGPT to assist with routine tasks (DeGeurin, 2023). The lesson isn't that AI tools are malicious but that the line between "just asking a question" and "sharing sensitive information" can blur very quickly. The Federal Trade Commission has made clear that AI companies are expected to uphold the privacy commitments they make to users and to handle data responsibly (Federal Trade Commission, 2024).

The good news is that being privacy-conscious with AI doesn't require avoiding it altogether. A few practical habits go a long way: avoid entering real names, student IDs, or identifying details when asking for help with sensitive topics; review the privacy settings on any AI tool you use regularly; and when in doubt, paraphrase or anonymize before you paste. Most of what you need AI to help with doesn't require the full original context anyway.

Privacy in the age of AI isn't just about fear it's also about awareness. The same instincts that make you a good student or educator can translate well here: know your sources, understand your tools, and think before you share.

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

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

First S.O.A.R. – April 10

The first S.O.A.R. (Student Outreach, Advising & Registration) event helps new and returning students get ready for the upcoming semester. Attendees can register for classes, meet with advisors, complete FAFSA, and take care of essentials like campus tours, student IDs, and accessibility services. It's a one-stop experience designed to set students up for success.

All N Day – April 14

All N Day is a campus-wide celebration where classes are canceled so students can relax and have fun together. The day features activities like a hot dog eating contest, carnival games, a car show, and the popular Capture the Beast scavenger hunt. It's a favorite Northern tradition that brings the entire campus community together.

Brown Bag Lecture Series – April 15

Teaching Practices & Pedagogies for All Learners: Findings from a Faculty Learning Community

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

Student-Athletes Year-End Banquet – April 16, 6:30

The Student-Athletes Year-End Banquet celebrates the dedication and accomplishments of MSU-Northern's student-athletes. The evening includes the presentation of "The Northies," fun and memorable awards recognizing standout moments and players. Seniors are also honored for their contributions and impact on Northern athletics.

MAT - Government Inspector – April 16-18, 23-25

MSU-Northern's MAT Theatre presents *The Government Inspector*, a fast-paced comedy centered on a mistaken identity that throws a corrupt town into chaos. As officials scramble to impress who they believe is a powerful inspector, the story delivers sharp humor and satire. This entertaining production highlights the talent and creativity of Northern's theatre program.

<https://mtactors.com/tickets/>

Scholarship Ceremony – April 17

Northern's annual Scholarship Ceremony recognizes student achievement and the generosity of donors, awarding 364 scholarships totaling more than \$360,000. The event also features the presentation of the 2026 Golden N Awards and Student Excellence Awards. It's a meaningful celebration of academic success and opportunity at MSU-Northern.

MSU-Northern Rodeo – April 17-18

The MSU-Northern Rodeo brings top collegiate competitors to campus as the Northern Lights Rodeo Team faces off against schools from Montana and Wyoming. Fans can enjoy exciting events showcasing skill, grit, and western tradition. It's a great opportunity to support Northern athletes in a uniquely regional sport.

Student Art Show – April 20

The Student Art Show showcases the creativity and talent of MSU-Northern students alongside works from local high school artists. The exhibit highlights a variety of mediums and styles, offering a glimpse into the region's emerging artistic voices. It's a great opportunity to support and celebrate the arts on campus.

Voices of the Hi-Line – April 22

Voices of the Hi-Line is an international poetry reading that celebrates language, culture, and creative expression. Featuring performances in over 20 languages, the event brings together students, faculty, and community members to share poetry, songs, and stories from around the world. It's a vibrant evening that highlights the diversity and beauty of global voices.

PAS the Plate – April 22

The PAS club will be hosting its "PAS the Plate" potluck style appreciation banquet on April 22nd at 6 pm in the SUB Ballroom. (Invites will be sent out soon, hopefully this week). PAS wants to give back to all the faculty, staff, alumni, and supporters. They had over \$10,000 in donations from various businesses, student senate(ASMSUN), and alumni to make this trip possible. RSVP to karyn.billmayer@msun.edu by April 17th.

Sweetgrass Society Powwow – April 24-25

Hosted by the Sweetgrass Society, the 49th annual Powwow is a powerful celebration of Indigenous culture and tradition at MSU-Northern. Held in the Armory Gymnasium, the event brings together dancers, drummers, and community members for a meaningful cultural experience. It's a longstanding campus tradition that honors heritage and fosters connection.

Founders Excellence Awards – May 1

The Founders Excellence Awards recognize individuals who have demonstrated outstanding professional achievement, loyalty, and service to MSU-Northern. This year's honorees include William "Bill" Lanier, Kyle Leeds, and Terry "T-Bone" Mohn (posthumously). The event celebrates their lasting impact and connection to the university.

Finals Week – May 4-8

Finals Week marks the conclusion of the academic semester, as students complete exams and final projects. It's a focused time of preparation and hard work across campus. The week represents the culmination of months of learning and achievement.

Nurses Pinning – May 8

The Nurses Pinning Ceremony is a special tradition honoring graduating nursing students as they transition into the profession. During the ceremony, students receive their nursing pins, symbolizing their dedication, compassion, and readiness to serve. It's a meaningful milestone for both graduates and their families.

Commencement – May 9

Commencement is a proud celebration of MSU-Northern graduates as they receive their degrees and begin the next chapter of their lives. This year's ceremony will feature commencement speaker Jeff Ament and recognize Golden Graduates, including Northern Chancellor Greg Kegel. It's a memorable event honoring achievement, perseverance, and future success.

CAMPUS SCHEDULE

Friday, April 10

- Northern Rodeo @ Montana State University
- Registration for Fall Semester 2026 - New Students
- Summer Outreach Advising & Registration (SOAR)
- MAT presents: The Government Inspector – Cowan Theatre - 7:30 PM

Saturday, April 11

- Northern Rodeo @ Montana State University
- MAT presents: The Government Inspector – Cowan Theatre - 7:30 PM

Sunday, April 12

- Northern Rodeo @ Montana State University

Tuesday, April 14

- All "N" Day (no classes, offices OPEN)

Wednesday, April 15

- Brown Bag Lecture: Teaching Practices & Pedagogies for All Learners - noon

Thursday, April 16

- Northern Outdoor Track @ Trudnokwski Open
- MAT presents: The Government Inspector – Cowan Theatre - 7:30 PM

Friday, April 17

- Northern Rodeo @ Bigger Better Barn

- MAT presents: The Government Inspector – Cowan Theatre - 7:30 PM

Saturday, April 18

- Northern Rodeo @ Bigger Better Barn
- MAT presents: The Government Inspector – Cowan Theatre - 7:30 PM

N TidBit

By: William Lanier

#456 Lifelong Friends

First, sorry about missing last week's TidBit!

One of the greatest things about college is meeting people who become lifelong friends. My experience at Northern proved that to me many times over. Coming to Northern was one of the best decisions I have ever made. Between graduating, working, and volunteering at Northern, I have had the pleasure of meeting many people and making new friends. A great way to meet other students is to get active on campus.

Here are three individuals (Shane Etwiler, Dean Barta, and Brett Carver) who were active in Student Government or Councils (basically committees) at Northern Montana College in the mid-1980's and are still friends to this day. Let's go back in time and check out some old NoMoCo's (school paper).



Michelle Nault
Brett Carver



Shane Etwiler



Dean Barta

Then, fast-forward 40 years, and these three amazing Northern Alumni are still friends. The picture below was taken in the summer of 2025.



Please keep in mind that every year at graduation, the Foundation sponsors the Golden Grads. These are Northern Alumni who graduated from Northern 50 years ago. Please come back and visit the campus, as a Golden Grad, or even better, come before then and visit.

Here is the Alumni link on the MSU-Northern Foundation webpage. Please check in often and let us know what you are up to and see what your fellow Alumni are up to.

[Alumni Connections - MSU-Northern Foundation](#)

Thank you, Brett, Shane, and Dean!

If you have an idea for the NNN TidBit, send me an e-mail at wjlanier1963@yahoo.com

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STAY CONNECTED



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