

# MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY

BOZEMAN | BILLINGS | NORTHERN | GREAT FALLS COLLEGE

CAMPUS REPORT | Board of Regents Meeting | July 15-16, 2021



GREAT FALLS  
COLLEGE  
MONTANA STATE  
UNIVERSITY

MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY | GREAT FALLS COLLEGE

Great Falls College MSU celebrated its 2020 and 2021 graduates with an in-person ceremony on Saturday, May 8, at Montana ExpoPark in the fairgrounds. Among the graduates were 77 veterans, their spouses and dependents, nine dual-enrollment students, 54 who graduated with honors and 50 who graduated with high honors. In all, 314 certificates and degrees were awarded. The [commencement ceremony](#) was livestreamed for those who couldn't make it. The day began with an eagle feather ceremony for nine Native American graduates to receive a blessed eagle feather they could take across the stage with them during commencement.

Great Falls College was the virtual host of the May meeting of the Board of Regents, which gave the college the opportunity to give a [virtual tour](#) of campus that included a trip through the expanded dental facility. The facility will be finished on time and on budget. The only dental hygiene program in the state can graduate an additional seven students each year to fill a huge void in the job market. The facility came about thanks to bipartisan support of the 2019 Legislature.

Among the dental hygiene graduates of 2021 were three students, Tabitha Wolff of Wolf Point, Charlea DeRoche of Browning and Kyani St. Goddard of Arlee, who first went to Salish Kootenai College to become dental assistants before coming to Great Falls College. They shared their journeys in a [powerful video](#) telling about living off the reservation for the first time and being at first intimidated since they didn't culturally identify with a lot of their classmates. "Coming to college here was really scary for me because I was living off the reservation for the first time in my life," Wolff said. And St. Goddard added: "I want to share with the community, the youth, that it's not impossible. You can do it."

The Great Falls College renewable energy students and respiratory therapy students combined on an innovative project as the renewable energy students built an [electric bicycle](#) with a conversation kit, and the respiratory therapy students studied the effectiveness of the e-bike as they measured the vitals of the renewable energy students after three students did a lap around campus using full pedal power, full motorized power and mixture of the two called pedal assist. The renewable energy students are auctioning the bike off to benefit the program.

Great Falls College teamed up with the University of Montana to offer a pathway to a bachelor's degree in [social work](#) without students needing to uproot their lives and move to Missoula. Students will be able to get their associate's degree in two years from Great Falls College before continuing at the University of Montana where they will take blended and online classes for another two years to complete their bachelor of arts in social work. Katie Maphies, a hair stylist in Great Falls, said the program will be a godsend as she will be able to continue to work and support her family while getting the degree she has always dreamed of obtaining.

Leigh Ann Ruggiero, English department head at Great Falls College, won the prestigious Juniper Prize in Fiction for her debut novel, ["Unfollowers."](#) The novel will be published by the University of Massachusetts Press in spring 2022. "That first thought was, 'I've wanted this since I was 10,'" said Ruggiero, who started the novel more than 10 years ago. "It was that moment where you realize this is literally a dream come true."

Great Falls College recognized 182 students as members of the [dean's list](#) for the spring 2021 semester. The spring dean's list includes local students from all corners of Montana and several who were from out of state. Employees who won dean's awards included Steve Robinett, computer technology director, who was the faculty award winner; Wendy Truax, who was the adjunct instructor of the year; and Kathy Meier, the director of disability services and the Native American Enrichment Center, who was recognized for staff excellence.