

# MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY

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CAMPUS REPORT | Board of Regents Meeting | May 17-18, 2023



GREAT FALLS  
COLLEGE  
MONTANA STATE  
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Great Falls College saw its [enrollment increase](#) for the second straight semester this spring. Fall saw a slight increase, and spring was up nearly 10%. The college has 1,362 students this semester compared to 1,256 students a year ago, marking an increase of 70 full-time equivalent students to an overall total of 800 full-time equivalent students. “It is wonderful to see our focused efforts to recruit and retain students are showing up in our enrollments,” said Dr. Stephanie Erdmann, CEO/dean of Great Falls College. “At Great Falls College, we offer extraordinary education in health care, trades, business and computer technology. Graduates of our many occupational career programs see an excellent return on investment. And for those seeking a four-year degree, they can start here, live at home, save a little money getting general education credits and then transfer anywhere to complete a bachelor’s degree.”

The college received the great news that it has been authorized to offer early childhood education programs starting in the fall. Great Falls, like most places, is facing a critical shortage of workers in the industry. Gov. Greg Gianforte’s administration has made it a high priority to fill this workforce void, and the college is very pleased to offer needed credentials. Those already working at childcare facilities can earn raises and promotions as they work their way through stackable credentials, including a semester-long certificate of technical studies, a one-year certificate of applied science and a two-year associate of applied science in early childhood education. Graduates can transfer to the University of Montana Western’s online bachelor’s program.

Great Falls College brought in a record total of more than \$19,000 for its students studying in the STEM fields with its Night Out for Science fundraiser. It is the second straight record-setting event, with all proceeds going toward student scholarships. Attendees are treated to hands-on, informative demonstrations by our students and faculty showcasing the breadth of the college’s offerings. Faculty members Mike Walker and Cheryl Simpson entertained the audience with a debate on which movie got time travel the most right. Dr. Moses Leavens, an assistant professor at McLaughlin Research Institute, talked about his academic journey, including getting his associate’s degree at Great Falls College.

March is science month at Great Falls College, as the college also hosted the regional science and engineering fairs on campus during our spring break. It is so much fun to see the projects that the youth in our community cook up. The [elementary fair](#) is one day and then the [middle and high school fairs](#) are another.

Great Falls College’s Continuing Education and Training’s CDL program is continuing to flourish and meet a critical workforce void. The college was able to purchase its own semi-tractor for the program to augment the state-of-the-art simulator it purchased earlier in the year. Both came with the help of ARPA funds. The college previously was borrowing a tractor from K&K Trucking, one of the many industry partners helping with this innovative program that pairs drivers with industry. New classes run each month. Continuing Education and Training also [celebrated](#) a new crop of students earning their CNA and other healthcare credentials, including 15 from Great Falls High.

Leading up to graduation, Great Falls College spotlighted numerous students and their accomplishments, including dental hygiene student [Reilly English](#), pre-nursing student [Jaida Bynum](#) and industrial tech student [Sierra Thomas](#). Reilly worked his way through the University of Montana Western as a dental assistant, decided he loved the dental field and came to Great Falls College to become a hygienist. Jaida, from Browning, plans to get her associate degree in nursing and eventually wants to become a nurse practitioner. Sierra was told she would never go to college after taking a gap year – or five – and is now the second woman to graduate from the college’s industrial tech program.