

MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY

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CAMPUS REPORT | Board of Regents Meeting | September 20-21, 2023



**GREAT FALLS
COLLEGE**
MONTANA STATE
UNIVERSITY

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Great Falls College partnered with the Montana Department of Labor and Industry, ADF, Allied Steel and Montana Vocational Rehab to launch the first 10-student cohort of an accelerated, 6-week structural welding course. The comprehensive program is designed to equip individuals with essential skills and qualifications to build careers in the critical welding industry. Students will engage in hands-on training, gaining practical experience and building a strong foundation in structural welding techniques. Upon completing the program, students will be eligible to test for welding qualifications. “We are so excited to take part in this innovative program that will connect prospective welders with employers while arming them with the necessary tools to launch a career,” said Dr. Stephanie Erdmann, CEO and dean of Great Falls College. “This rapid-training program is another great example of local industry and education working together for a win-win solution that benefits the entire community.” Both cohorts of the college’s credit program remain full for the 2023-24 school year.

Great Falls College received news that it received an additional \$150,000 for work with branding from the Lumina Foundation as part of its Million Dollar Community Challenge. The college will use the funds to continue improving the website making it more prospect-driven, improving interior and exterior signage, and funding a media campaign with influencers to bring home our name recognition. Lumina awarded us \$100,000 as a finalist in the competition.

The school year started with a bang with Otter Days, which included food trucks, cornhole, wellness walks and themed days. It concluded with Great Falls College night at the Great Falls Voyagers’ stadium, where the Great Falls College Community Choir sang the anthem, Dr. Stephanie Erdmann threw out the first pitch, and we gave out 500 River Otter shirts for the community. We also gave out 500 shirts at graduation and on campus as part of Otter Days as we built up enthusiasm for the upcoming school year.

The Weaver Library’s doors were closed for much of the summer – although its services and our library staff were still available to students – as it got a significant facelift. Banks of computers and books that were rarely checked out were moved out to make room for study nooks, comfortable seating and other amenities aimed to invite more students into the library as we look to build community and provide a space for students to congregate and collaborate.

The Great Falls College facilities team was busy this summer as the college implemented phase one of the facilities master plan by moving tutoring and accessibility services into the Weaver Library. The move concentrates more wraparound services in one space and builds on that community-building aspect from both Otter Days and the library facelift. In fact, several Otter Day events were held in the library to showcase the improvements to students and staff.

Industrial Technology graduate and soon-to-be welding student Dan Harvey, who races the stock car he maintains with the skills he developed at Great Falls College, showcased his car at River Otter Night at the Electric City Speedway and the city’s Fourth of July parade as we get our branding out into the community.

Mary Kay Bonilla, chief student affairs and human resources officer, retired after 17 years at the college. She recently led the college in completing a strategic enrollment management plan that identified four key priorities – dual enrollment students, students 25-34, former students who did not complete a degree, and Native Americans – as the college looks to reach 1,000 full-time equivalent students. The college had 800 full-time equivalent students at the census in spring.