

September 18, 2025

ITEM 220-2001-R0925**Request for authorization to confer the title of Professor Emerita of Weed Physiology upon Dr. Tracy Sterling; Montana State University**

THAT

Upon the occasion of the retirement of Dr. Tracy Sterling from the College of Agriculture at Montana State University, the Board of Regents wishes to express its appreciation for her service to the University, the Montana University System, and the people of the State of Montana.

EXPLANATION

Dr. Tracy Sterling earned her B.S. in Agronomy and Horticulture from the University of Minnesota (1983), her M.S. in Horticulture from Michigan State University (1985), and her Ph.D. in Agronomy/Botany from the University of Wisconsin (1988). From 1989–2009, she served as a faculty member at New Mexico State University, where she advanced from Assistant to Full Professor and directed the NSF-ADVANCE program to recruit and retain women in STEM.

Joining MSU in 2009 as Department Head of Land Resources and Environmental Sciences (LRES), Dr. Sterling guided the department through remarkable growth—expanding enrollment from 95 undergraduates and 52 graduate students to 300 undergraduates and 180 graduate students. She served as Interim Director of the Center for Invasive Species Management (2013–2015), Chair of the MSU President’s Commission on the Status of University Women (2015–2017), and Director of the Professional M.S. in LRES (2022–present). She was honored in 2018 as one of MSU’s 125 Extraordinary/Ordinary Women.

A distinguished scholar in weed physiology, Dr. Sterling’s research has advanced understanding of herbicide action, stress physiology, and invasive species management. She has published 50 peer-reviewed journal articles, four book chapters, and produced award-winning educational resources. Her leadership on Montana and regional weed initiatives—particularly outreach on noxious weed ecology and management—has significantly influenced state and regional practices. She has secured numerous competitive grants from agencies such as NSF, USDA, EPA, and NRCS, totaling millions in funding.

Dr. Sterling is also an exceptional educator and mentor, having taught four MSU courses (three while serving as Department Head), advised more than 16 graduate students, eight postdoctoral associates, and over 100 online M.S. students. She has served on more than 200 graduate committees, contributing broadly to MSU’s graduate education mission.

Her service record is exemplary, spanning departmental, college, university, state, and national levels. She has chaired major committees, served on high-profile search committees, and represented MSU in collaborations that strengthen its land-grant mission. Her recognitions—including the Western Society of Weed Science Fellow Award, the MSU Women’s Faculty Caucus Distinguished Mentoring Award, and national honors for distance education—reflect her broad impact.

For these and other contributions, the Board of Regents of Higher Education is pleased to confer upon Dr. Tracy Sterling the rank of Professor Emerita of Weed Physiology at Montana State University and wishes her well for many years into the future.

ATTACHMENTS

None