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To: Board of Regents

From: Johnny MacLean
Chancellor, Montana Technological University

RE: Campus Report for September 18, 2025, Board of Regents Meeting

Dr. Rick LaDouceur has been named one of five national recipients of the **2025 National TRIO Achiever Award**, a prestigious honor recognizing individuals who have overcome significant adversity to achieve excellence. Now serving as interim department head of mechanical engineering and a researcher in materials science, LaDouceur's journey was shaped by instability and scarcity in his early years. His path shifted when he joined the Upward Bound program at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, coordinated by his aunt. Over four summers in the program, he gained the skills and confidence that set the foundation for his success. Today, LaDouceur pays it forward by mentoring high school students in Upward Bound. He integrates them directly into his sponsored research projects—offering not just busywork, but meaningful opportunities to learn and contribute.

Environmental Engineering graduate students **Meggie Olson, Madison Skeel, Gavin Rahl, Halle Cogley, and Nick Thieme** captured first place at the **Air and Waste Management Association's Environmental Challenge International (ECi) Competition**. The competition tasked teams with developing an innovative solution to remove per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) from drinking water at scales appropriate for existing treatment facilities in North Carolina. PFAS, often referred to as "forever chemicals," pose significant health risks and are a growing concern worldwide. Guided by their faculty advisor and department head, **Dr. Kumar Ganesan**, the team's success reflects ongoing research at Montana Tech aimed at helping communities in Montana and beyond address PFAS contamination and improve water quality.

Montana Tech earned national recognition by being named to **Money Magazine's 2025** list of the **Best Colleges in America**. The annual ranking evaluates more than 700 four-year colleges based on factors including affordability, quality of education, graduation outcomes, and alumni success. The publication uses a unique star-rating system to assess overall value, with a strong emphasis on return on investment. Montana Tech was the only public university included on this year's list.

The **U.S. Department of Education** awarded Montana Tech a **federal TRIO Students Support Services (SSS)** grant of \$272,364 annually to improve college retention and graduation rates among low-income, first-generation students, and students with disabilities. **The five-year grant, totaling \$1.36 million**, will continue to serve 120 Montana Tech science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) students along with students in healthcare fields.

Dan Kelly, (B.S. Biological Sciences, 2023), a graduate student in Montana Tech's **M.S. in Ecological Restoration program**, earned **1st place in the Student Oral Presentation** competition at the **2025 American Society of Reclamation Sciences (ASRS) Annual Meeting**. Kelly's faculty advisor is **Dr. Robert Pal**, and his research is focused on restoring disturbed ecosystems.