



MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY BILLINGS

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Billings, MT 59101

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# *Faculty* EXCELLENCE

*Tuesday, February 20th, 2024*

*Recognizing excellence  
in teaching, research,  
and service to the  
campus and community*



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## PROGRAM

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### Welcome and Opening Remarks

Dr. Stefani Hicswa, Chancellor

### Ceremony

Dr. Sepehr Eskandari, Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs

### Presentation of Awards

Mr. David Russell, ASMSUB President, will present the ASMSUB Outstanding Faculty Awards

Dr. Tom Manthey, Director of the Montana Center for Inclusive Education and Interim Associate Dean, College of Education, will present two MCIE Awards for Support of Students with Disabilities

Dr. Rachael De La Cruz, Co-Director of the Women's and Gender Studies Center and Assistant Professor of History, College of Liberal Arts & Social Sciences, will present the Dr. Tasneem Khaleel Award for Mentoring Young Female Professionals

Dr. Paul Foster, Director of International Studies, will present the Promoting International Student Success Award

Dr. Kurt Toenjes, Dean, College of Health Professions and Science, will present an Outstanding Service Learning Award

Ms. Jodi Lightner, Chair and Professor of Art, College of Liberal Arts & Social Sciences, will present an Outstanding Service Learning Award

Dr. Susan Gilbertz, Interim Dean, College of Business, will present the Part-Time Faculty Award

Dr. Susan Gilbertz, Interim Dean, College of Business, will present the Excellence Award for Non-Tenured Faculty

Mr. Vern Gagnon, Interim Dean, City College, will present the City College Faculty Leadership Award

Dr. Melissa Boehm, Associate Professor of Communication, College of Liberal Arts & Social Sciences, will present the Early Achievement Research and Creative Accomplishments Award

Dr. Susan Gilbertz, Interim Dean, College of Business, will present a Faculty Excellence Award

Dr. Kurt Toenjes, Dean, College of Health Professions and Science, will present a Faculty Excellence Award

Dr. Emily Arendt, Chair and Associate Professor of History, College of Liberal Arts & Social Sciences, will present a Faculty Excellence Award

Dr. Kurt Toenjes, Dean, College of Health Professions and Science, will present a Winston & Helen Cox Fellowship Award

Ms. Tami Haaland, Dean, College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences, will present a Winston & Helen Cox Fellowship Award

Dr. Stefani Hicswa, Dr. Sepehr Eskandari, and Cox Family Members will present the Walter & Charlotte Pippenger Excellence in Innovation Award

Achieving Tenure, Emeriti, Years of Service, and Retirees

### Closing Remarks

Dr. Stefani Hicswa, Chancellor

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## YEARS OF SERVICE RECOGNITION

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### 5 YEARS

Dr. Lacy Bangert

*Assistant Professor, Health Care Services, CHPS*

Dr. Scott Jeppesen

*Associate Professor, Music, CLASS*

Curtis Leibrand

*Instructor, Nursing, Health and Public Safety, CC*

Dr. Aaron Mertes

*Assistant Professor, Rehabilitation and Human Services, CHPS*

Erica R. Shea

*Instructor, General Education, CC*

Christine Whitlatch

*Instructor, General Education, CC*

### 10 YEARS

Emily J. Arendt, Ph.D.

*Department Chair, Associate Professor, History, CLASS*

Allison Bailey

*Instructor, General Education, CC*

Dr. Melissa Boehm

*Associate Professor, Communication, CLASS*

Dr. Joseph D. Bryan

*Associate Professor, History, CLASS*

Dr. Scott Butterfield

*Associate Professor, Business Administration, COB*

Dr. Matt Queen

*Associate Professor, Biological and Physical Sciences, CHPS*

Timothy Stenson

*Instructor, Transportation and Welding - Metal Fabrication, CC*

### 15 YEARS

Dr. Ana Diaz

*Department Chair, Associate Professor, English, Philosophy & Modern Languages, CLASS*

### 20 YEARS

Stephen L. Eliason

*Professor, Social Sciences and Cultural Studies, CLASS*

Dr. Mark Jacobson

*Department Chair, Professor, Mathematics, CLASS*

Dr. Sarah N. Keller

*Professor, Communication, CLASS*

Dr. Steven A. Wiles

*Lecturer, Biological and Physical Sciences, CHPS*

### 25 YEARS

Dr. Tom Rust

*Professor, History, CLASS*

### ACHIEVING TENURE

Dr. Rebecca L. Muller, DNP, APRN, FNP-BC, CIC

*Assistant Professor, Health Care Services, CHPS*

Dr. Paul B. Nash

*Associate Professor, Biological and Physical Sciences, CHPS*

Dr. Joseph D. Bryan

*Associate Professor, History, CLASS*

Dr. Scott Jeppesen

*Associate Professor, Music, CLASS*

Keeara J. Rhoades

*Assistant Professor, Art, CLASS*

### IN MEMORIAM: THOSE WE LOST IN THE LAST YEAR

Boni Roberts

*Adjunct Instructor, Social Sciences and Cultural Studies, CLASS*

Greg Allard

*University Lecturer Emeritus, Educational Theory and Practice, COE*

### EMERITI

Dr. Keith Edgerton

*Professor Emeritus, History, CLASS*

Dr. Deborah Schaffer

*Professor Emerita, English, Philosophy & Modern Languages, CLASS*

Katherine S. Holt

*Adjunct Assistant Professor Emerita, Educational Theory and Practice, CLASS*

Dr. Rachel Schaffer

*Professor Emerita, English, Philosophy & Modern Languages, CLASS*

### RETIREES

Dr. Rhonda Dillman

*Assistant Professor, Biological and Physical Sciences, CHPS*

Dr. Rachel Schaffer

*Professor, English, Philosophy & Modern Languages, CLASS*

Dr. Deborah Schaffer

*Professor, English, Philosophy & Modern Languages, CLASS*

Dr. Keith Edgerton

*Professor Emeritus, History, CLASS*

Stuart Snyder, Ph.D.

*Professor, Biological and Physical Sciences, CHPS*

Dr. Tom Dell

*Professor, Rehabilitation and Human Services, CHPS*

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**WINSTON & HELEN COX  
FELLOWSHIP AWARD**

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## **Dr. Rachael De La Cruz**



*Assistant Professor,  
History, CLASS*

**D**r. Rachael De La Cruz is an assistant professor of modern Latin American History at Montana State University Billings. Her research and teaching interests include Central American history, Cold War Latin American history, migration history, and gender and sexuality studies. She is currently

writing a comparative and relational history of how and why Central American nation-states responded to the hundreds of thousands of refugees that fled the Salvadoran Civil War in the 1980s.

She earned her Ph.D. in history from the University of California Irvine in 2020. Prior to pursuing her doctorate, she worked and studied in her home state of Virginia, where she earned her M.A. in history from Old Dominion University and her B.A. in Latin American Studies from George Mason University. Dr. De La Cruz has personal and professional commitments to both campus diversity and immigration justice efforts.

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**ASMSUB OUTSTANDING FACULTY AWARDS**

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## **John Pannell**

Instructor  
Computer Systems Technology  
City College

## **Madison Collins, Ph.D.**

Assistant Professor  
Biological and Physical Sciences  
College of Health Professions and Science

## **Chad Jackson**

Lecturer  
Educational Theory and Practice  
College of Health Professions and Science

## **Jay Gentry**

Assistant Professor  
English, Philosophy & Modern Languages  
College of Liberal Arts & Social Sciences

## **Scott Gorman**

Lecturer  
Business Administration  
College of Business

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MCIE AWARD FOR SUPPORT OF  
STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

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## Erica R. Shea



*Instructor, General  
Education, CC*

**E**rica Shea, a dedicated general education and reading instructor at City College, continues to play a vital role in the institution's ability to meet student needs. She consistently exceeds expectations in supporting students academically at MSUB. In 2019, she transitioned to a full-time

reading instructor role under the Title 3 grant.

Since then, she has been a cornerstone of the Academic Support Center and the Office of International Studies, teaching college reading strategies to a diverse range of students across City College and the university campus. Erica is known for her commitment to student success and has recently been acknowledged for her exceptional dedication to teaching. She finds immense fulfillment in witnessing her students' learning breakthroughs and continually strives to create inclusive and supportive learning environments. Erica's compassionate approach extends to students with disabilities, where she not only provides necessary accommodations but actively seeks additional ways to support their learning journey.

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WINSTON & HELEN COX  
FELLOWSHIP AWARD

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## Jason Comer, Ph.D.



*Assistant Professor,  
Biological and Physical  
Sciences, CHPS*

**D**r. Comer serves as the MSUB botanist, curator of the MSUB herbarium, and greenhouse director. His research focuses on Montana plants, emphasizing local floristic inventories of public parks and genomics studies of plant communities and invasive species.

Committed to student involvement, he provides unique opportunities for their growth and success. Holding a B.S. in Biology from the College of the Ozarks, an M.S. in Plant Sciences from Missouri State University, and a Ph.D. in Plant Biology from the University of Georgia, Comer brings a wealth of academic expertise to his role. His passion for botanical research and dedication to student mentorship define his contributions to the MSUB community.

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## FACULTY EXCELLENCE AWARD

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### Dr. Joseph D. Bryan



*Associate Professor,  
History, CLASS*

**D**r. Bryan demonstrates excellence in teaching, scholarship, and service. Specializing in the history of the Atlantic World, the Enlightenment, and, more recently, punk rock, his versatile expertise engages students and invigorates the department.

Known for his innovative approach in courses, Dr. Bryan guides students in original research, fostering essential skills in research, writing, and critical thinking. Beyond the classroom, he prioritizes student well-being, offering support and mentorship. Dr. Bryan's service record spans departmental leadership roles, committee memberships, and contributions to university-wide initiatives. His commitment to mentorship extends to junior colleagues, reflecting his dedication to the academic community. Dr. Bryan has contributed significantly to historical scholarship, publishing in journals and presenting at conferences. His impact on students, colleagues, and the broader community makes him a deserving recipient of the Faculty Excellence Award, embodying the award's criteria in teaching, scholarship, and service.

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## MCIE AWARD FOR SUPPORT OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

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### Sam Russell



*Instructor, Transportation  
and Welding - Metal  
Fabrication, CC*

**S**am Russell loves to weld. Incorporating cold steel, a hot arc, and his talent to create the object that he sees in his mind, Sam loves to help his students understand this process — the metallurgy, the chemistry, the cutting, bending, forming, and fabricating of anything from mining equipment to an

intricate steel version of a Yellowjacket.

Sam is always willing to meet the needs of students. Sam and his classes made multiple modifications to the welding lab to accommodate students with disabilities and all students. This is an example of one of the many ways Sam makes welding a great learning experience for students with disabilities and all students.

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**DR. TASNEEM KHALEEL AWARD FOR MENTORING  
YOUNG PROFESSIONAL WOMEN**

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## Dr. Jen Lynn



*Professor, History, CLASS*

**D**r. Jennifer Lynn, a distinguished graduate from MSUB, earned her Ph.D. in Modern German History from UNC Chapel Hill. Joining MSUB in 2011, she is a tenured full professor, celebrated for her scholarship, service, and teaching.

Her book, *Contested Femininities: Representations of Modern Women in the German Illustrated Press, 1920 – 1960*, v

will be released on March 1 from Berghahn Books. Her current projects focus on activism to legalize abortion in Weimar Germany and the transnational work of Agnes Smedley. Dr. Lynn is co-director of the Women's and Gender Studies Center. Alongside her work with students, she serves as a mentor to new women faculty, guiding them through their early years at MSUB and is actively engaged in the women's faculty caucus. She also advocates for women through her work with PPMT and the YWCA.

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**FACULTY EXCELLENCE  
AWARD**

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## Madison Collins, Ph.D.



*Assistant Professor,  
Biological and Physical  
Sciences, CHPS*

**D**r. Madison Collins is an exemplary faculty member who excels in teaching, scholarship, and service. Dr. Collins is dedicated to advancing cutting-edge research on how MRSA causes infection. She is committed to student research and is dedicated to mentoring

five undergraduate researchers in her bacterial pathogenesis lab.

Dr. Collins has a distinguished record of scholarly achievements including securing multiple grants (i.e., MT INBRE, CARE, PTSE) to support her research. She has presented her work at the International Society for Leukocyte Biology conference while her students presented at the NIH IDeA Western Regional Conference in 2023. Beyond her research, she serves on several institutional committees and stays engaged in community-focused programs like the Science Expo, Science Bowl, and Atomic Circus.

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**FACULTY EXCELLENCE  
AWARD**

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## Jessie Perius, Ph.D.



*Assistant Professor,  
Business Administration,  
COB*

**D**r. Jessie Perius, an MSUB alum and faculty member, consistently demonstrates outstanding institutional dedication, community support, and impact in the areas of teaching and research. Her service efforts are unparalleled as she takes on many commitments including

mentoring faculty, serving on multiple committees, contributing to editorial and community boards, and promoting MSUB through student recruitment initiatives.

She works diligently to create an engaging classroom by using innovative teaching methods to incorporate international team-based projects partnering with institutions in Indonesia and Portugal, and she regularly invites business leaders working in the United States and abroad to speak in her classes. Dr. Perius' leadership and positivity inspire those around her, earning admiration from students and colleagues alike. Her dedication to excellence makes her a deserving candidate for the Faculty Excellence Award.

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**PROMOTING INTERNATIONAL  
STUDENT SUCCESS AWARD**

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## Rodrigo Cortopassi Goron Lobo



*Assistant Professor,  
Business Administration,  
COB*

**R**odrigo Cortopassi G Lobo has nearly 30 years of corporate and entrepreneurial experience, including senior positions at Accenture and Coastal Technologies, lately acquired by DuPont, and co-owner, partner, and executive director of Tecnodata Educacional, an independent educational publishing

company, and Tese Technology, a geo-technologies company, both based in Brazil. Rodrigo's experience was primarily as general manager, strategy, and marketing manager.

He has worked in more than 20 countries and has lived for six months or more in Brazil, the United States, England, Spain, and Argentina. Rodrigo is fluent in English, Spanish, and Portuguese. Rodrigo is currently full-time business faculty at Montana State University Billings, where he teaches Strategy and Entrepreneurship. His research stream is on innovation management, technology forecasting, and corporate strategy.

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OUTSTANDING SERVICE  
LEARNING AWARD

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## Ryan Butler



*Assistant Professor, Health  
and Human Performance,  
CHPS*

**S**ince joining Montana State University Billings in 2022, Ryan has infused his teaching with a commitment to service learning impacting both students and the community. Supporting the Outdoor Adventure Leadership program, he has instilled a culture of service and civic engagement,

enriching the educational journey for his students.

Under his guidance, OAL students actively contributed to community initiatives including Refresh the Rims, adaptive climbing training at Steep World, adaptive equipment work at Eagle Mount, and a Care & Repair Workshop at Base Camp. Ryan's deep understanding of the transformative potential of service learning is evident in the meaningful partnerships he has cultivated with local organizations, creating internship opportunities for OAL students. His dedication to service learning aligns with MSUB's values, making him a worthy recipient for the Outstanding Service Learning Award.

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EARLY ACHIEVEMENT RESEARCH AND CREATIVE  
ACCOMPLISHMENTS AWARD

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## Dr. Melinda Aley



*Assistant Professor,  
Communication, CLASS*

**M**elinda Aley, PhD, is an assistant professor for the Department of Communication at Montana State University Billings. Dr. Aley has been a prolific researcher and an innovative instructor since joining the Department of Communication in the Summer of 2021.

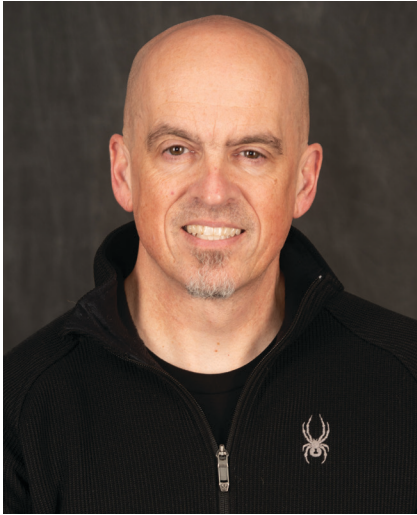
Her research impact is highlighted by 19 peer-reviewed journal articles and one book chapter since the start of her academic career. She teaches courses in organizational communication, covering topics from leadership communication to work-life balance. Her research focused on the socializing messages an individual receives throughout childhood and adolescence and how these messages impact identity development. Her current projects include examining the career decision-making process of first-generation college students, morality in children's media content, and parents' attitudes toward book banning.

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**CITY COLLEGE  
LEADERSHIP AWARD**

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## John Pannell



*Instructor, Computer Systems Technology, CC*

**J**ohn is a dedicated faculty member at City College and recognized for his outstanding contributions to teaching and professional development. In the dynamic landscape of higher education, John has emerged as a leader in addressing the impact of Artificial Intelligence.

Conducting three faculty development sessions on Artificial Intelligence, he shares valuable knowledge and advice, enabling faculty to enhance their courses and adapt to changes in teaching methodologies. Under John's leadership, his Computer Programming and Application Development program has been re-engineered and revitalized, fully adopting HyFlex modalities. His engagement with the Center for Teaching and Learning, the Academic Senate, and even Payday Friday all showcase his commitment to MSUB, continuous learning, and professional development. His multifaceted engagement exemplifies his role as both a dedicated faculty member and a proactive leader at City College.

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**OUTSTANDING SERVICE  
LEARNING AWARD**

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## Keeara Rhoades



*Assistant Professor, Art, CLASS*

**K**eeara Rhoades is recognized for her outstanding contribution to service learning at Montana State University Billings. Her collaboration with the School of Classical Ballet Company for the Alice in Wonderland ballet performance showcased her innovative approach to teaching. Rhoades and her New Media Art students

worked closely with the dance school, creating animated graphics that added a visually captivating dimension to the storybook ballet.

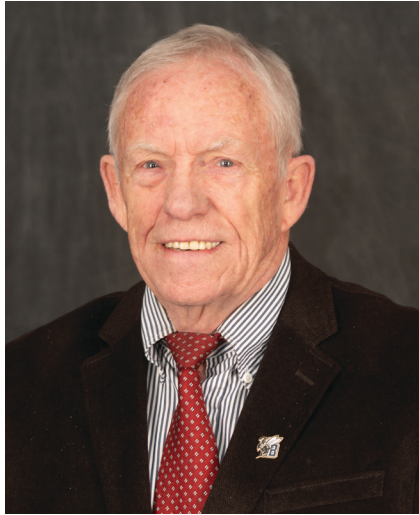
From depicting key events like Alice's fall down the hole, their work not only enhanced the performance but also demonstrated the immense talent within our student body. The project exemplifies service learning at its finest, providing authentic value to the community and highlighting the collaborative efforts of both students and faculty. Her dedication to a true partnership between the School of Classical Ballet and MSUB underscores the impact on the arts community.

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**PART-TIME  
FACULTY AWARD**

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## Gary Amundson



*Adjunct Instructor  
Emeritus, Business  
Administration, COB*

**G**ary Amundson, adjunct instructor emeritus of business administration at Montana State University Billings, retired in Summer 2016 after 17 years of full-time teaching. Having a distinguished career, he previously served as senior vice president for a major Montana-based firm,

holding director roles in industry trade associations.

Amundson has received numerous accolades, including the Excellence Award for Non-Tenured Faculty in 2007 and the ASMSUB Outstanding Faculty Award in 2016, 2012, and 2002. He was honored with the Montana State University Pure Gold Award in January 2016 and the Distinguished Service Award at the University of Arizona in December 2008 where he also received emeritus status in 2004. Recognized for his outstanding contributions, Amundson received the Faculty Excellence Award, Outstanding Teaching Award, and emeritus status at MSU Billings, as well as various awards during his tenure at the University of Arizona.

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**EXCELLENCE AWARD  
FOR NON-TENURED FACULTY**

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## Scott Gorman



*Lecturer, Business  
Administration, COB*

**S**cott Gorman, president of Ten40Tax, LLC, and a dedicated university lecturer at Montana State University Billings, seamlessly combines his California roots with a thriving career in Billings, Montana. As a dynamic figure, Gorman has led his firm to exponential growth, earning acclaim for client success and professional

excellence. His journey from North Hollywood to Montana shaped his passion for numbers and finance.

Beyond business success, Gorman is a committed educator, teaching accounting and forensics at MSU Billings with enthusiasm and real-world insights. Actively engaged in the Billings community, he contributes to the Chamber of Commerce and sponsors NextGen, fostering the development of future leaders. Gorman's life reflects the synergy of passion, dedication, and community involvement, making a positive impact in taxation, education, and the growth of Billings. His story is an inspiring testament to individual potential in both professional and community spheres.