

First Monday



*From the desk of: Marilynn Miller, President and CEO
Monday, March 3, 2008, 8:00 a.m.*

First Monday is provided to friends of Montana State University Billings Foundation to advance the cause of philanthropy.

Tim Tirrell, the new Director of Online Learning Operations at MSU Billings, spent the last eight years working in higher education in Virginia. A specialist in the field of e-learning, Tirrell brings to MSU Billings an extensive academic background combined with a solid technological understanding.

Montana State University Billings has been the leader in the state for online learning since 1998, when it began with five online courses. Our program currently offers 300 courses in nearly 40 academic disciplines. Entire degree programs are now offered online. A growing number of MSU Billings students register for a combination of classes presented online and those presented in a classroom. Of the more than 4,700 credit hours being taken this spring by MSU Billings students, about 900 of them are online-only classes.

Tirrell plans to guide online education at MSU Billings from its current position of strength to even greater heights, incorporating the best practices of the past with future growth. He'll focus on student services and satisfaction, program development, and faculty advancement in the online arena.

Valentines from Donors. Below are some February gifts.

- **Karen Abrahamson** has designated MSU Billings Foundation as a beneficiary in her Will. Karen's bequest will benefit the Abrahamson Family Endowed Scholarship which was established in 2002 by Karen's mother, Erna Abrahamson, in memory of Erna's late husband John ('31). Between 2002 and her death in June 2007, Erna contributed \$35,000 to the scholarship fund. In December 2007, Karen donated \$10,000 to the fund, and recently notified us that a portion of her estate will benefit the Abrahamson Family Scholarship.
- **Beverly ('91) & Sig Ross** designated MSU Billings Foundation as a 50% beneficiary of a charitable remainder unitrust. The proceeds from the unitrust will benefit the MSU Billings Foundation Operating Endowment.
- **The Haynes Foundation** sent \$52,000 to fund spring semester Haynes Foundation Scholarship awards. These awards go to select Montana undergraduate students with financial need who maintain a 3.5 GPA.

- **Mike ('73) & Judi Hickey** pledged \$30,000 to benefit the College of Business Endowment and an unrestricted fund.
- An **anonymous** donor has established the Bart Bauer Endowed Scholarship for Men's Basketball with a \$10,000 gift. The scholarship will go to a player who has financial need.
- **Billings Gazette Communications** committed \$10,000 toward the new soccer complex.
- **Rocky Mountain Bank** added \$10,000 to the Rocky Mountain Bank Endowed Scholarship.

Is the federal government giving veterans their due? In a guest editorial in the *Baltimore Sun*, Finn Caspersen, CEO of a private management firm and chairman of Harvard Law School Dean's Advisory Board, expressed the following opinion.

...Today's combat veterans encounter a GI Bill whose stinginess would have been unimaginable to their grandparents. It is sad to chart how far it has fallen and how inadequate are its current benefits. Gone are the glory days of the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944 (the formal name of the GI Bill), which enabled millions of servicemen back from World War II to enter the hitherto largely inaccessible world of higher education. The GI Bill helped make the "Greatest Generation" great, paving the way for prosperity and the postwar boom years and permanently lowering the barriers to American higher education. Nearly 8 million veterans filled the nation's classrooms thanks to its benefits.

Yes, the GI Bill still exists, although in a different form now known as the "Montgomery GI Bill," and it still offers education benefits. But today's version makes education benefits a voluntary, contributory program; to receive any tuition benefits from Uncle Sam, you must have agreed in advance to a monthly deduction from your meager paycheck. Worse yet, the benefit is just a fraction of what is needed to meet today's tuition costs.....

By contrast, the grandparents of today's veterans attended college free of tuition payments and free of the burdensome tuition-generated debt that most of today's veterans will shoulder.

While some in Washington have sought to right this wrong by restoring a measure of the benefits of the original GI Bill, efforts have so far been roadblocked in Congress.

...The nation must meet its moral obligation to all the young men and women who have risked their lives in defense of our country's ideals.

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