



NEWSLETTER

October 13 - November 10 | 2026



Midterm Momentum

The leaves are changing and the wind is swiftly blowing them away. And it just may feel like a whirlwind for the semester as we approach midterm!

Need a mid-semester revitalization? The CTL has some great workshops coming up to take you through! Join us for a DegreeWorks workshop as Jaki Penninger and Karen Mikelson walk through the recent changes, building a plan of study, basic tracking of degree requirements, and more. The next AI conversation group will focus on the use and options of AI in the classroom. And Tyr continues with his working sessions in Accessibility Basics and Panorama. Speaking of Tyr, if you haven't had conversation with him about transparency in learning and teaching (TILT) check out his section in this newsletter and contact him for more information! The Online Teaching Series continues with session two this month as well.

Speaking of teaching, if you haven't seen the call for nominations for the Faculty Excellence Awards, read on and follow the links to nominate an outstanding colleague. Also, please consider volunteering for teaching-focused peer evaluation. If you need a refresher or you're not sure what this entails, visit our webpage for the [Faculty Guide for Teaching-Focused Peer Evaluation](#).

As always, the CTL is here to support your journey as a faculty member at MSUB. Feel free to stop in either of our locations at City College or University Campus. In fact, if you haven't stopped in the CTL at City College come on in and check out the new arrangement – we hope that it will suit your workshop needs. Until next time, enjoy the mid-semester!

Message from Chancellor Hicswa

We begin this academic year with the university's highest retention on record. Data for fall semester of 2026 show that a record 62.2 percent of new freshmen and transfer students who enrolled in the fall of 2025 returned to college for fall 2026. The retention achievement is 5.7 percentage points higher than a year ago.

We have also achieved the highest fall enrollment since 2019, welcoming 872 first-time freshmen and transfer students this fall. This is an 8.2 percent increase from fall 2025. That growth builds on the momentum of the previous year, when first-time freshman enrollment alone increased 9.1 percent from fall 2024.

This fall marks my seventh academic year as Chancellor, and I am honored to be part of MSUB. This amazing university is focused on empowering resilient and determined students. Our students often share stories with me about the challenges they face as they pursue their degrees, but they also share their accomplishments. I am grateful for the opportunity we have to make a difference in students' lives and hearing their stories renews my resolve to ensure that they persist in achieving their goals.

Surviving the Momentum

The CTL's Co-Faculty Directors, Erica & Dan, share midterm words of wisdom

Erica Shea

My midterm check is to take a pause and do a CAT in class. Checking in with students using a simple anonymous tool might give a picture of how they perceive the teaching and learning is going. I like a Keep-Stop-Start right now.

Daniel Charlton

With October underway, consider not only who you're "seeing" in your classes - engagement, physical presence, submitting work - but also who you're not. Think about what networks of support are available for your students. Sending an email, a Navigate, or a way to engage with your students at this pivotal time can truly be a sink or swim moment. Think about the "lifejackets" we can provide through various means of support!

CTL Happenings...

Please be sure to RSVP to each event you plan to attend

Accessibility Basics & Panorama

October 22nd at 4:00 pm, Webex

Join us for this training/working session where you'll learn more about creating accessible documents and videos as well as using the accessibility checker tool, Panorama, in Canvas. Tyr Hawkaluk will facilitate a 30-minute training followed by 30 minutes of open work time where you can work on your course materials and get individual help from Tyr. No RSVP needed for this workshop.

[Sign up for Calendar Invites Here](#)

Online Teaching Series: Session II

October 3rd at 11:30 am - 12:30 pm, WebEx

Session II – Student Engagement

Sometimes it feels challenging to build community in an online course. Or you find yourself wondering if students even care about an online course. Our second session in the online teaching series focuses on student engagement and building connections. You'll learn more effective strategies for class discussions, assignment design, and student support.

[Sign up here](#)

DegreeWorks Workshop

October 26th at 2:00 pm - 3:00 pm, COE 328 & WebEx

Learn basic DegreeWorks information such as making course exceptions and how to utilize the notes function. We will also cover how to use Degree Works in an advising capacity by going over how to build a plan of study, read course hyperlinks, and basic tracking of degree requirements. Come with your questions!

[Sign up here](#)

AI Conversation Group

November 4th at 2:00 pm - 3:00 pm, COE 328

November 6th at 2:00 pm - 3:00 pm, Tech B001

Topic: Implementation in the Classroom. Gather with colleagues to discuss uses, innovation, and implications in the ever-evolving world of AI in higher education.



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Accessibility Basics & Panorama

November 9th at 11:00 am - 12:00 pm, COE 328 & Webex
November 12th at 12:00 pm - 1:00 pm, Tech B001 & Webex

Join us for this training/working session where you'll learn more about creating accessible documents and videos as well as using the accessibility checker tool, Panorama, in Canvas. Tyr Hawkaluk will facilitate a 30-minute training followed by 30 minutes of open work time where you can work on your course materials and get individual help from Tyr. Bring your laptops! No RSVP needed for this workshop.

[Sign up for Calendar Invites Here](#)



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In the Can: Canvas Tips

When using Lockdown Browser in a copied course, you will need to visit the Lockdown Browser section once to reactivate it for the new section or semester. You may see a "Fix it" option if the quiz has been renamed. If using Respondus Monitor, there is a setting, Advanced > Allow use of an iPad, to enable it for students using iPads. Here's a quick rundown for how students would use it with different devices:

Windows or Mac Desktop/Laptop- Download and install Lockdown Browser directly from the Quiz in Canvas.
iPad- Download the app from the App Store first, then launch the quiz from the course in Canvas
Chromebook- Install the add-on from the link in the Quiz in Canvas. Students can also search the Chrome Web Store for it. The quiz is also launched from Canvas.

Pearson, ALEKS, and Hawkes may have their own special instructions for using Lockdown Browser; check the More Tips section in the Lockdown Browser settings area for more information.

Pedagogy Pick-Me-Up

from the desk of Tyr

Do you want your students to perform better in your courses? Understand your assignments? Increase retention? All with one simple trick? No, this isn't clickbait, it's Transparent Design. There's a lot to be said about Transparent Design, and plenty of research has been done on its efficacy (with very positive results), but to get started, the only important thing to know is this: Tell your students what you already know.

- What's the purpose of the assignment?
- How does it fit into the course? (e.g. what course objectives does it help them meet)
- Why this assignment? (Why do they have to write ANOTHER essay?)
- What does a good finished product look like?
- When is it due?
- Where is the capital of Azerbaijan located?

These are things we know that students have often **never** been told, and it keeps them from doing well in our courses. You don't have to answer all of these questions every single time for every assignment, but the more you do, the better your students will do in turn. [Check out these resources from TILT](#) (Transparency in Learning and Teaching) for helpful guides, FAQs, and more about Transparent Design, or contact Tyr for personalized help in adding it to your courses.

Oh, and the capital of Azerbaijan is Baku, which lies on the southern shore of the Absheron Peninsula (the large peninsula jutting out of the center of the eastern edge of the country).

Nominations Are in the Air

It is that time of year again! The leaves are changing, and nomination season is upon us for the Faculty Excellence Awards. This is the perfect time to reflect on your colleagues' contributions and achievements from the 2025-2026 academic year.



Awards with Nominations Include:

- Early Achievement Research and Creative Accomplishments Award
- Outstanding Career Achievement Research and Creative Accomplishments Award
- Dr. Tasneem Khaleel Award for Mentoring Young Professional Women
- Promoting International Student Success Award
- Outstanding Service Learning Faculty Award
- Excellence Award for Part-Time Faculty
- Excellence Award for Non-Tenured Faculty
- City College Leadership Award
- Faculty Excellence Award
- The Walter and Charlotte Pippenger Excellence in Innovation Award

Click each award's title to see its nomination criteria or visit the [Award Criteria page](#)

Nominations (except the Pippenger) are due on Friday, October 23, at 5:00 pm

Pippenger nominations are due Friday, October 30, at 5:00 pm

[Submit Nominations Here](#)

[Submit Pippenger Nominations Here](#)

Please note the Pippenger Award is the only award with its own nomination form.

If you have any questions about nominations or the Faculty Excellence Awards, please reach out to Sierra Dolezal at sierra.dolezal@msubillings.edu

Registrar Update

DocuSign Shared Forms

The Registrar's Office recently took on the task of turning all registration forms into ADA accessible fillable forms and DocuSign Powerforms. The Registrar's Office will no longer be utilizing the DocuSign templates that were previously shared with Program Coordinators and Advisors. The drop form, late add form, late drop form, petition to the academic standard committee, and readmit form can be found as a fillable PDF or a DocuSign PowerForm on the [Registrar's Forms page](#).

Moving forward, these specifically updated forms are the only DocuSign forms the Registrar's Office will be accepting for these processes - initiated by the student using the PowerForm linked on the Registrar's website. We are hopeful that with students initiating their own forms, it will help alleviate the administrative labor and responsibility of staff members in this process.

The direct link to each form's "landing page" is listed below:

- [Drop Form](#)
- [Late Add Form](#)
- [Late Drop Form](#)
- [Petition to the Academic Standards & Scholastic Standing Committee](#)
- [ReAdmit Form](#)