



CENTER FOR TEACHING & LEARNING

MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY BILLINGS

NEWSLETTER

September 11 - October 13 | 2026

Meet the Faces of the CTL

Amber West Martin
Director



Erica Shea
Faculty Co-Director

Daniel Charlton
Faculty Co-Director





Tyr Hawkaluk
Instructional Design Manager

Nick Drzycimski
Instructional Technologist
(Canvas Support)





Sierra Dolezal
Program Coordinator

Learn more about the team on our [About Our Team page](#)

HELLO 2026-2027 ACADEMIC YEAR!

The CTL is excited to begin a new school year! We spent the summer preparing for New Faculty Orientation, planning our fall programming, and keeping the new April 2027 accessibility deadline on our horizon.

This summer also brought some exciting changes within the CTL! We are thrilled to welcome **Amber West Martin as our new Director**. Amber also serves as the Director of the Academic Support Center, so she certainly keeps busy! We are also excited to welcome **Daniel Charlton as our new University Campus Faculty Co-Director**. Please join us in welcoming them both to their new roles!

Our fall programming schedule is now available on the [CTL Events page](#). Be sure to check it out and see what we have planned for the semester! We will also be adding accessibility trainings for this semester soon, so keep an eye on the events page for those opportunities.

And don't forget to explore our [Faculty Resources page](#)! We have recently added a [Syllabi Repository page](#), and the Faculty Resources page also includes our [Guide to Peer Evaluation](#), along with other helpful resources for faculty.

Have questions or need to speak in person to one of the CTL team? Both CTL offices will now be staffed **Monday–Friday!** Stop by and say hello at either location:

- **University Campus:** COE 328
- **City College Campus:** Tech B001

We look forward to seeing you and supporting you throughout the new school year!

In the Can: Canvas Tips from Nick

Publisher Integration Support

Our Canvas site has integrations from a few of the top publishers. If you're using a product from Pearson, McGraw Hill, or Cengage, you have the option of pairing it with your Canvas course. If you want grades to pass back to Canvas, both pairing and student registration through Canvas are required. CTL support can assist instructors with the initial pairing of your Canvas course and the publisher's resource, if needed. Student account issues go to the individual publisher's support. If students need help locating their access codes, they may contact the Campus Store for additional details.

New Faculty Orientation

The CTL welcomed fourteen faculty to campus at New Faculty Orientation that spanned August 31st and September 1st. Please welcome our new faculty when you get the chance to meet them!



The CTL directors also hosted the first-ever evening virtual orientation for part-time faculty. Several part-time faculty attended, and even more tuned into the recording of the orientation before the start of the semester. We are looking forward to continuing and growing our support of all new faculty.

CTL Happenings....

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

Faculty Reading Group

September 14th at 3:00 pm, COE 328 & WebEx

September 15th at 3:30 pm, COE 328 & WebEx

Join the CTL Faculty Reading Group for this semester's read: *Slow Productivity* by Cal Newport. We'll gather and discuss teaching ideas from the book and how they apply to your courses. Participants receive a free copy of the book.

[Sign up here](#)

Online Teaching Series: Session I

September 25th at 11:30 am - 12:30 pm, WebEx

Faculty who attend all three sessions in the Online Teaching Series will earn a Canvas Badge in Online Pedagogy.

Session I – Designing Your Course

A good online course starts with a good plan. Whether you are teaching fully online, hybrid, or HyFlex, this session covers best practices in course design. You'll learn more about tools in Canvas, options for discussions and group work, and other strategies in designing an online course that works for you and your students.

[Sign up here](#)

AI Conversation Group

September 30th at 2:00 pm - 3:00 pm, COE 328

October 2nd at 2:00 pm - 3:00 pm, Tech B001

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

[Sign up here](#)

SEP

14

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SEP

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SEP

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OCT

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Click on each event's title for more information
Our full fall schedule can be found on our [CTL Events page](#)

Provost's Corner

A note from Dr. Lee Vartanian

At the beginning of a new MSUB academic year I find myself reflecting on meaningful teaching. As a teacher educator for many years, I was surrounded by veteran educators with tremendous skill and experience. The best ones had the same disposition: a strong work ethic coupled with a sense of curiosity and wonder at the craft of teaching. They were eager to learn and explore teaching strategies that brought new life into their classroom. Like champion athletes, these teachers were at the top of their game but never fully satisfied. They knew there was always something else they could try or do to enhance a lesson, and that understanding propelled them into constant reflection and improvement. As a sometimes visitor in their classrooms, I would marvel at the teaching performance in front of me. Feeling like I was witnessing some virtuosic performance, I was often tongue-tied when the very same teacher asked, "What advice do you have for me?"

Our Center for Teaching and Learning is served by faculty and staff who have the same humble passion for teaching and a commitment for constant improvement. This academic year, they have a number of exciting opportunities for pedagogical reflection, exploration, and excellence. I encourage you to utilize the CTL as a powerful ally in support of your teaching journey. By doing so, you expand your support network and open yourself up to collaborating with other inspired faculty members committed to teaching excellence. Along the way, you become the best teacher you can be.

First Week Tidbits

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

Erica Shea

Let students solve their own problems and answer their own questions as much as possible. It might be quick and easy to give them the answer, but in the long run it creates more work for you (and them).



Daniel Charlton

While teaching, I am always having the 3Rs in my mind: Relationships, Rigor, and Relevance. They really speak for themselves, but this allows me to really think

about being intentional in each "leg" of quality teaching. Consider ways to bolster strong, lasting, and authentic relationships with your students and get the year started on a strong start. Perhaps doing welcome videos, meeting with students during office hours, a questionnaire to kick off the new semester, or any other great ideas that you have when working with students.

Contact the CTL:

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