



MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY NORTHERN

Northern Network News

The Official Newsletter of MSU-Northern - November 21, 2025

New Endowment to Enhance Undergraduate Research at MSU-Northern



MSU-Northern Foundation is proud to announce the creation of a new endowment supporting undergraduate research in the sciences. The fund will provide long-term support for student research projects, including laboratory and field supplies, as well as travel for students to present their work at academic conferences.

The initiative is off to a strong start thanks to lead donors Roger and Darlene Pugh, whose gift was matched by Tim and Kristen Wynne, bringing the endowment total to \$50,000. The Wynne's have also pledged to match all future contributions up to \$100,000, doubling the impact of every new gift. The endowment will benefit students across disciplines such as biology, chemistry, and behavioral science, helping them gain hands-on experience, pursue innovative research, and prepare for future careers.

MSU-Northern Foundation extends heartfelt thanks to the donors and partners who make these opportunities possible, helping build a strong foundation for student discovery and success.

Planning Process Begins for New Aurora Complex



The long-awaited next chapter of the Aurora Complex is officially underway. The Montana Department of Administration awarded the design contract for Phase Two of the Aurora complex to A&E Design and SMA Architecture + Design. These two firms—each known for decades of creative excellence—have recently joined forces to become a single, people-first, community-driven design powerhouse.

The design team arrived on campus this past Monday (Nov. 17) with a clear mission: to listen, observe, and begin shaping the new Aurora Complex into a space that truly serves students, the campus, and the broader community. They met with key members of Northern's administration, faculty, staff, students, and representatives from the Foundation and alumni groups.

Over the course of two days, the design team led a series of collaborative workshops. They revisited the campus community's hopes and fears for the project, reviewed the activities that matter most—not just the rooms that will eventually house them—and refined the guiding principles that will anchor the entire design process. Sessions on design excellence and space adjacency helped the group begin mapping out how the future facility will function and flow.

Help Shape the Future of the Aurora Complex

MSU-Northern is gathering input from the campus and community to help guide the design of the second phase of the Aurora Complex. While the project is supported by a significant investment, careful planning is essential to ensure the final design reflects the most important needs and priorities of those who will use it.

Your voice matters. Please take a few minutes to complete the survey linked below and share your ideas. Your feedback will play a key role in shaping this vital project.

Let your ideas be heard...

[Click here to take the survey today](#)

Chi Alpha Helps with Operation Christmas Child



For over 55 years the Samaritan's Purse organization has been encouraging Americans to bless impoverished children around the world by packing and sending shoeboxes filled with simple gifts. The annual event is called Operation Christmas Child, and this year Northern's Chi Alpha (XA) club is taking part in the festivities.

Campus Becomes 'Crime Scene' for Live-Action Clue Game



The MSU-Northern campus transformed into a giant game board on Tuesday, November 18, as Chi Alpha and the D&D Club hosted their second annual live-action Clue game. Approximately 20 students stepped into the roles of detectives, receiving maps and character backstories before setting out across campus to interrogate suspects and solve a fictitious murder mystery.

Just like the classic board game, participants moved strategically through various locations gathering clues to identify three crucial elements: the murderer, the weapon, and the location of the crime. The immersive experience was enhanced by the following faculty and staff who embodied the iconic game characters and were in various spots across campus: Taryn Wallon as Mrs. Peacock in Donaldson Hall, Amber Spring as Miss Scarlet in the Lights Lounge, Casey Donovan as Rev. Green in the upstairs library, Cannan Smith as Colonel Mustard in Morgan Lounge, Krystal Steinmetz as Dr. Orchid in Mackenzie Hall, Carmen Lunak as Mrs. White in the Fireside Lounge, and Chris Markus as Professor Plum in the library stacks.

After careful investigation and deduction, students Ricardo Haffner and Tevin Keller emerged as the ultimate winners, successfully piecing together the mystery. A handful of other sharp-eyed student detectives also earned bonus prize baskets for their investigative work. The event successfully blended

nostalgia with campus community building, proving that sometimes the best mysteries are solved one clue at a time.

Honoring the Life and Service of Dan Ulmen



MSU-Northern is mourning the loss of longtime staff member **Dan Ulmen**, who passed away on the evening of November 18. Ulmen served the university for 25 years, beginning his career as a janitor and working his way up to Director of the Physical Plant. His commitment, work ethic, and steady leadership left a meaningful impact on the campus and the broader community.

Dan was instrumental in overseeing numerous campus building and renovation projects, including the construction of the Applied Technology Center, the Business Incubation Center, the Advanced Fuels Center, the Diesel

Technology Center, and Tilleman Field. Dan also oversaw many campus improvement projects, including new roofs, updated heating systems, classroom renovations, landscaping upgrades, roads, parking lots, signage, and much more. His legacy can be seen in nearly every major project completed over the past 25 years.

MSU-Northern extends its heartfelt condolences to Dan's family and loved ones. Dan's family will be having a Celebration of Life Memorial Service for Dan, in the MSU-Northern SUB Ballroom on Saturday, December 13th at 1pm.

MSU-Northern Wraps Up American Indian Heritage Month Celebration

MSU-Northern is wrapping up its month-long celebration of National American Indian Heritage Month with a free soup and bread lunch at the Little River Institute, upstairs in the SUB, on Monday, Nov. 24 beginning at 11 a.m. and ending when the soup runs out. Students and the campus community are invited to join for fellowship and fun.

Native American Heritage Month, celebrated each November, is a time to recognize and honor the rich histories, cultures, and contributions of indigenous people in the U.S. First proclaimed in 1990, the month provides an opportunity to educate people about the unique challenges American Indians

have faced historically and, in the present, while celebrating the invaluable contributions they've made to this country.

Throughout the month, MSU-Northern participated in the national "Rock Your Mocs" movement, with students, faculty, and staff encouraged to wear moccasins to honor Indigenous culture and heritage. The campus also celebrated themed weeks showcasing Indigenous artistry and cultural expression, including Ribbon Skirts & Shirts, followed by Braids, Bandanas & Scarves, and indigenous jewelry.

Additional November events included an Indigenous earring-making workshop and a special gathering where Terry Brockie of Fort Belknap helped the campus community with a tipi raising, followed by a listening session sharing Indigenous worldviews and stories.

Student Spotlight – Elaine Reed



When Elaine Reed from Columbia Falls filled out the statewide college application, she didn't even know MSU-Northern existed—until she spotted “Havre” on the list. A quick conversation with her mom revealed a family tie: her cousin, Brandon Matson, teaches at Northern. Combined with strong financial aid, family nearby, and an easy train ride home, Northern quickly became the perfect fit.

Elaine is now majoring in **Business Administration** with double minors in **Small Business Management** and **Accounting**. A summer job with Glacier Bank shifted her career focus from

owning a restaurant to pursuing a more family-friendly path in banking.

On campus, she stays busy through **Chi Alpha leadership**, serving as the **Assistant Resident Director** of Student Family Housing, working as a **writing tutor** in Student Support Services, and volunteering with a local youth group. She also participated in Northern's spring trip to **London**, calling it an unforgettable cultural experience.

Elaine will marry her fiancé this summer, and the two plan to return to Northern next year to finish their degrees together. “Northern wasn't even on my radar at first,” she said. “Now I can't imagine being anywhere else.”

[Read more...](#)

The MSU-Northern Community Orchestra Presented “Seriously Swing’n Jazz”



The MSU-Northern Community Orchestra hosted an evening of toe-tapping tunes with their concert, *Seriously Swing’n Jazz*, last night, November 20, at 7:00 p.m. in the Little Theatre in Cowan Hall.

The lively performance featured a mix of classic and contemporary jazz favorites, including *I’m Getting Sentimental Over You*, *It’s Only a Paper Moon*, *Pennsylvania 6-5000*, *Hello Dolly*, *Pure Imagination*, *The Lady Is a Tramp*, *Can’t Help Lovin’ Dat Man*, and more.

Under the direction of Rhonda Minnick, the concert provided an entertaining evening for music lovers of all ages.

Campus + AI :

What You Need To Know...

By: Scott Guyant

False Flags and Frayed Trust: AI Detectors in the Classroom

Part 1: by Scott Guyant, assisted by ChatGPT 5.1 Thinking model

If the last few years have taught us anything, it's that "catching" AI use with a detector is risky at best and likely methodologically unsound. Even OpenAI shelved its own AI-text classifier because of low accuracy, noting that it mislabeled human writing often enough that it was unreliable to base decisions on (OpenAI, 2023).

Independent research raises a second red flag. A 2023 study of widely used GPT detectors found that they consistently misclassified non-native English writing as "likely AI-generated" (Liang et al., 2023). That's not a minor bug; in classrooms with multilingual and international students, it means some students are more likely to be wrongly accused based purely on their writing style.

Add in everyday tools like Grammarly, Microsoft Editor, or built-in "Rewrite" and "Tone" buttons. These systems adjust sentence structure, vocabulary, and make students' writing sound more "academic." When detectors are tuned to older, less-polished human writing, that stylistic polish can become yet another reason to flag legitimate work as "suspicious." Jisc's recent guidance notes that the line between "support" and "substitution" is thin and over-relying on AI detection risks bias against students who rely on language-support tools (Attewell, 2024).

Even the companies behind detectors admit the limits. Turnitin, for example, explains its false-positive rates and urges instructors not to treat an AI score as proof of cheating but as a "smoke alarm"—useful for spotting a possible fire, but not the fire itself (Turnitin, 2023). District- and system-level guidance echoes this. Maricopa Community Colleges warns that AI detectors "are not, on their own, effective measures of academic misconduct" and notes the risks of false positives, especially for non-native speakers (Maricopa Community Colleges, 2025).

Universities are also changing course. Vanderbilt University disabled Turnitin's AI detector in 2023, citing reliability and student impact (Vanderbilt University, 2023). More recently, reporting from Australia described a university that used AI to accuse thousands of students of cheating—only to find many had done nothing wrong, after degrees and visas were already in jeopardy (ABC News, 2025).

The real cost of treating detector scores as verdicts instead of hints is borne by students. Academic integrity policies meant to protect fairness, due process, and trust can end up pulling students into misconduct investigations based on a single AI score—even when vendors and researchers say the tools misfire. At that point, tools designed to defend integrity risk eroding the very trust they're supposed to uphold.

So where does that leave instructors? Detectors might still have a narrow role as a smoke alarm—a nudge to look more closely at a piece of work. But the heart of academic integrity in the age of AI can't be automated. It should come

from **assessment design, transparent policies, and documented learning processes** that make it easier to see what a student actually knows and can do over time. That's what I'll go into for Part 2.

Full references and further reading for this column are available at:

<https://libguides.msun.edu/c.php?g=1502960>

As always please reach out to me with questions, comments, or topic you would like me to address next.

Scott Guyant

Research Librarian

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Campus Thanksgiving Schedule

- Nov. 26 No Classes, Offices OPEN
- Nov. 27 No Classes, Offices Closed
- Nov. 28 No Classes, Offices Closed

Library Thanksgiving Schedule

- Mon.-Wed. Nov. 24-26 - Open 8-5
- Thurs.-Sat. Nov. 27-29 - Closed
- Sun. Nov. 30 – Open 12-5 pm

UPCOMING EVENTS

Community Meal - Nov. 24

On Monday, November 24 at 11:00 AM, you're invited to enjoy a simple meal of soup and bread at the Little River Institute, upstairs in the SUB. Soup will be served until gone—come share in fellowship and community.



NEXT WEEK

Friday, November 21

- Skylights Basketball @ Bellevue University - 4:00 PM
- Lights Basketball @ Bellevue University - 6:00 PM

Saturday, November 22

- Skylights Basketball @ Dakota State University - 4:00 PM
- Lights Basketball @ Dakota State University - 6:00 PM

Sunday, November 23

- Lights Wrestling @ Spokane Open

Monday, November 24

- Community Meal - 11:00 AM at the Little River Institute.

Wednesday, November 26

- Thanksgiving Break - No Classes, Offices OPEN

Thursday, November 27

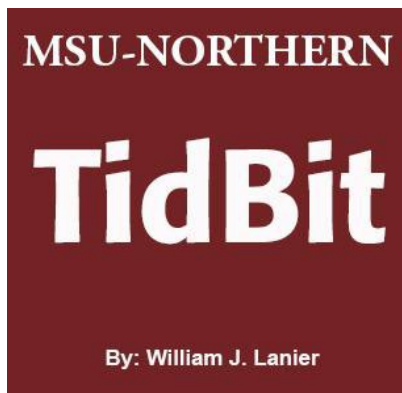
- Holiday ~ Thanksgiving ~ No Classes, Offices Closed

Friday, November 28

- Holiday ~ Thanksgiving* ~ No Classes, Offices Closed

Saturday, November 29

- Skylights Basketball vs Stephens College - 5:00 PM



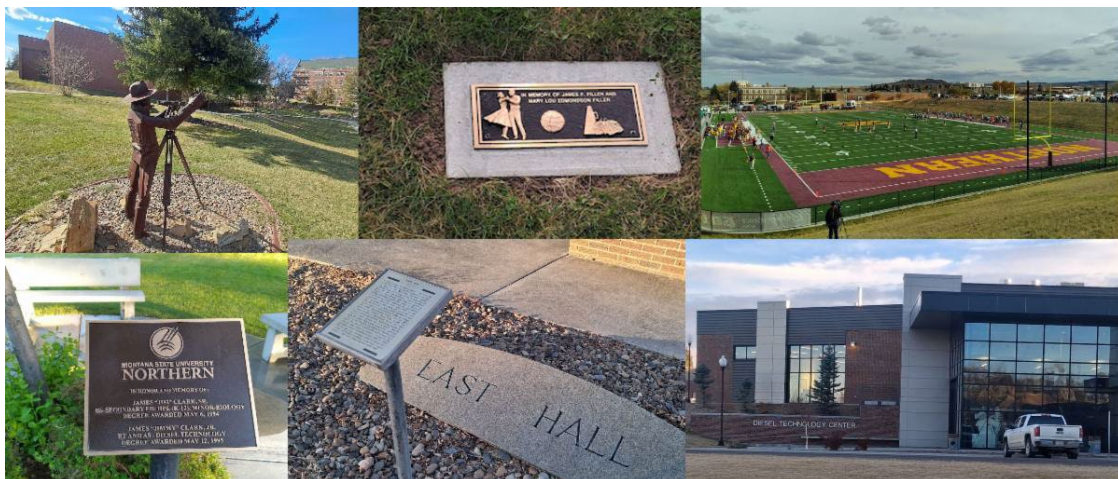
(#447) Remembering Dan Ulmen Part 1

Not going to lie here, this is the hardest NNN TidBit I have written. As mentioned above in this week's NNN, Facilities Director Dan Ulmen passed away. Dan was a personal friend for nearly 40 years, from our early days as residents of Morgan Hall.

Dan was not only a Northern Staff member and a Northern Alum; he was also a father, an uncle, a friend, a boss, and, most of all, a conversationalist who could and would talk on any subject. Not knowing anything about a particular topic did not stop Dan from having advice or giving his own insights. Most will remember Dan Ulmen from office or store aisle visits.

But Dan's lasting legacy and footprint on the Northern Campus are evident everywhere. While he did not do it alone, he had a hand in almost everything, facility-wise.

Here are a few pictures from the campus where Dan was involved.



For part II on remembering Dan Ulmen, please check back in two weeks. If you have any stories, pictures, or comments regarding Dan, please share and e-mail them to me at wjlanier1963@yahoo.com.

Visit our website

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