



THE DATE DIGEST



THE NEWSLETTER OF AGRICULTURAL & TECHNOLOGY EDUCATION

NO. 2

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VIRTUAL



Focus on Key Topics

- Welcome Message
- Congratulations Graduates!
- Student Spotlight
- Faculty Highlight
- Engagement Initiatives
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A Message from Dr. Perry

This spring, I am especially proud to celebrate our largest graduating class in recent history, with 28 students earning degrees across our undergraduate and graduate programs. Their accomplishments reflect the dedication, professionalism, and spirit that continue to define our department and the land grant mission. I am equally proud of the work our students, faculty, and staff contributed during the Montana State FFA Convention in Great Falls, where they represented the department with tremendous pride and professionalism while helping host numerous CDEs and LDEs.

In this edition of the DATE Digest, we recognize many of the exciting things happening across our department, including student and faculty achievements, teaching and research initiatives, state convention involvement, and the meaningful work taking place both in and beyond the classroom.

Thank you for being part of our community and for your continued support.

~ Dr. Perry, Department Head



CONGRATULATIONS GRADUATES!

CELEBRATING YOUR HARD WORK & BRIGHT FUTURE

We are proud to announce the following graduates...



- | | |
|-------------------|----------------------|
| Samantha Alvarado | Jemma Loughery |
| Macey Aoki-Chance | Teagan McAvoy |
| Edward Bullard | Wallace Neaton |
| Cody Carson | Evelyn Nelson |
| Gino Cicerone | Shealyn Otto |
| Olivia Collins | Aidan Pacor |
| Caroline Dietz | EmmaLee Rotlisberger |
| Jack Ehrke | Chloe Rowland |
| Mikayla Englert | Patrick Sandiland |
| Ashlee Fraker | Gabrielle Sexton |
| Matthew Gozo | Gweneth Shafter |
| Kallen Hansen | Isabel Snee |
| Ciarrah Hebert | Emma Stumpf |
| Cadence Hess | Sigourney Tuttle |

RECIPIENT OF LAND GRANT EXCELLENCE AWARD

Congratulations to Macey Aoki Chance for receiving the Graduate School's Land Grant Excellence Award!

She received an honor cord for graduation as well as a letter from **President Brock Tessman**. This honor recognizes individuals who excel at community engagement by sharing and applying new knowledge in ways that are locally relevant and mutually beneficial. Congratulations Macey!





STUDENT & SPOTLIGHT



The Department of Agricultural Education is proud to recognize Anthony Hernandez, who was recently featured by MSU News Service for his resilience and leadership at Montana State University.

Originally from Lodge Grass and a member of the Crow Tribe, Hernandez is pursuing a degree in agricultural education and has been actively involved on campus, including serving as president of the American Indian Council.

Hernandez was recently selected as a recipient of the GRIT Grant, a scholarship that supports students who are overcoming significant obstacles as they work toward graduation. His story reflects the determination, leadership, and perseverance that we value in our students, and we are proud to see him recognized at the university level.



ANTHONY HERNADEZ

ALUMNI IN THE NEWS



We're excited to see our alum Neela Hammerstein recognized in the news for her work as an agricultural education teacher at Corvallis High School. Through her program, students are gaining hands-on skills and competing at high levels, including success at the National FFA Organization Convention. It's great to see the impact our graduates are making in agricultural education across the state. Check out the full story [here](#).





FACULTY HIGHLIGHT

We are proud to recognize **Dr. Shannon Arnold** who is making a meaningful impact both within our department and beyond. Dr. Arnold received the College of Agriculture's Impactful Outreach and Community Engagement Award.

Dr. Arnold is recognized for exemplary outreach and community engagement that connects university scholarship with the needs of Montana producers and rural communities. Through sustained leadership in agritourism education, she has built a statewide ecosystem of programming, partnerships, and professional networks that strengthen rural economies while expanding public understanding of agriculture. Her Montana Agritourism Fellows Program uses a "train-the-trainer" model to develop regional leaders through seminars, field tours, and collaborative planning, ensuring research-based resources reach geographically diverse and often isolated communities



SHANNON ARNOLD

Dr. Arnold also helped establish the Montana Agritourism Conference and co-founded the Montana Agritourism Association, creating enduring structures for collaboration among producers, educators, agencies, and organizations. By lowering barriers to participation and delivering practical, scholarship-based tools, her work has enabled producers to diversify operations and build resilience, exemplifying the land-grant mission through mutually beneficial partnerships.

Congratulations Dr. Arnold!

ENGAGEMENT INITIATIVES

2026 Montana FFA State Convention

In April, it was all hands on deck for the Montana FFA State Convention! Many of our undergraduate students were enrolled in AGED 363 - *Event Planning & Management*, which focuses on running various state contests. This provides critical real-world opportunities for our students to learn the logistics behind planning an event and networking with supporters of youth development and agricultural education.

We'd also like to thank the many volunteers and sponsors of our events! We could not do it without you and your dedication to the next generation of leaders. Thank you!



Superintendents Hard at Work



The events our students and faculty put on this year were:

- Agricultural Communications
- Agricultural Technology & Mechanical Systems (ATMS)
- Agri-science Fair
- Employment Skills
- Extemporaneous & Prepared Speaking
- Junior & Senior Creed
- Junior Ag Mechanics Show
- Marketing Plan
- Parliamentary Procedures

TEACHING & RESEARCH INSIGHTS

Soaring into STEM!

What happens when you combine aviation history, hands-on learning, and a classroom full of curious students? According to Dr. Michael Walach, some seriously impressive and sometimes unpredictable flights!

In his recent article, Dr. Walach shares how students in his



Technology and Society course took on the challenge of designing and flying their own model paragliders. Using simple materials like fabric, string, and clips, students explored big ideas like lift, control, and wing design—by actually putting them into action.

Hands On Learning in Action!

The result? A classroom full of experimentation, problem-solving, and plenty of trial and error. Some gliders soared, some needed a little more “engineering,” but every student walked away with a better understanding of how flight really works.

Even better, this project engaged students from all majors, not just those with technical backgrounds, showing that STEM learning can be approachable, creative, and genuinely fun.

Dr. Walach’s work is a great reminder that sometimes the best way to learn is to build, test, tweak, and maybe even crash a few times along the way!



DATE BANQUET

On April 30, the Department of Agricultural and Technology Education hosted its Annual D.A.T.E. Banquet at the Gallatin County Fairgrounds. The evening brought together students, faculty, alumni, and supporters for a celebration of camaraderie, recognition, reflection, and dancing. This event was organized by the banquet committee in the AGED 363 class.



Outstanding students and department members were recognized with awards, attendees participated in a raffle featuring donations from local businesses, and the Ag Ed Club hosted a silent dessert auction during the evening. Spring and Fall 2026 graduates were also recognized and celebrated for their accomplishments.

The department was also honored to welcome Eric Tilleman as the keynote speaker. A Montana State University agricultural education alumnus, Tilleman has served as an agriculture teacher, agricultural education specialist, and past president of the National Association of Agricultural Educators, bringing valuable insight and encouragement to attendees.





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Thank You For Reading!



SOCIAL MEDIA



SCHOLARSHIPS



We Want to Hear From You!

If you have any news, achievements, or stories you'd like to share in the next edition, please reach out to us!

We are excited to include fresh content to highlight our amazing department.

Contact: DATE@montana.edu