

**From:** [Office of the MSU Provost](#)  
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**Subject:** Let's Start the Semester with Purpose and Momentum  
**Date:** Monday, January 12, 2026 8:00:04 AM  
**Attachments:** [image.png](#)

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Dear Colleagues,

We start this spring semester with tremendous momentum after the Bobcat football team brought home the national championship! Their season reflected experiences common to many of our students: moments of brilliance, periods of discouragement, stepping up to challenges and overcoming adversity. These are lessons we all can take to heart.

To help us kick off the new year, I encourage you to stop by the [MSU Library's annual open house](#) today between 3pm-6pm. This year's event is themed "Read Across America" in celebration of the United States' semi-quincentennial. Focused on faculty and our community, the event features regionally themed food, live music from Woodsmoke Jazz and fun features about library services.

We are teaching and mentoring students at a time when public confidence in higher education is under pressure. Although we experience firsthand the transformative power of education, a growing number of our students are questioning the purpose and relevance of a college education. Therefore, it's increasingly important that we are intentional about helping students recognize the value of the degree they are pursuing. Here are a few suggestions:

- Make learning outcomes visible and purposeful and reiterate how specific assignments help them attain these outcomes.
- Incorporate real-world elements into assignments, e.g., use case studies or data from fieldwork.
- Highlight the durable skills that remain essential in an AI-powered world, such as critical thinking, problem solving, creativity and communication.
- Invite professionals as guest speakers.
- Design assignments that encourage reflection on academic and professional growth.

The adage, "Students don't care what you know until they know that you care," remains as relevant as ever. When students feel recognized, supported, and challenged, they are more likely to understand the purpose of their education and persist toward their goals.

As the semester begins, let's remain attentive to the influence we have on students' confidence and sense of possibility. MSU is a transformational place for students because of the daily

investment of faculty and staff. Thank you for that commitment and for being an exceptional colleague.

With kind regards,



Dr. Robert L. Mokwa | Executive Vice President and Provost  
Montana State University  
Tel. 406-994-4371

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### **Upcoming Events**

TODAY: Library Open House, 3-6pm  
Jan. 17: Cat/Griz Basketball @ The Brick: W 2:00 pm; M 7:00 pm  
Feb. 17: Founder's Day Faculty Awards, 8:30am, Inspiration Hall, NAH  
Feb. 17: Provost Distinguished Lecture, Yves Idzerda, 7:00 pm, Museum of the Rockies  
Feb. 24: Spring Career Fair, 10:00 am-3:00 pm, Strand Union Building  
May 8: Spring Commencement, Brick Breeden Fieldhouse

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