

INSIDE AG | MARCH 2026

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It's time for championship basketball! The Bobcats will head to Boise for the Big Sky Conference tournament from March 7-11. Go 'Cats!

A Message from the Dean

Dear colleagues,

Happy March! You have likely heard that we are starting the new strategic planning process. A preliminary survey link was shared with you by President's office and my own. The campus has been organizing listening sessions to hear thoughts on what **bold ideas and new projects** MSU can undertake to spur the next level of excellence.

If you haven't taken the survey, please take a few minutes to do so. You can access the survey, see the schedule of listening sessions, and watch the progress in the process at www.montana.edu/strategicplan. We hope members of our greater agricultural community will participate as well! The **new strategic plan will be launched in November 2026**.

Recently, Darrin Boss, Cody Stone, I, and Ryan McCormick (MAES delegate on Council on Agricultural Research, Extension and Teaching) visited the Hill to talk to our congressional representatives about formula (Hatch) funds and AFRI that support research. Thanks to your hard work and impact stories, **we had a lot to share about the importance and impact of the research you do for Montana**. Please continue the good work you do for the people of our state and beyond, and keep submitting your impact stories, which you can do online.

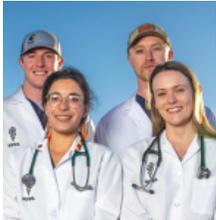
Yours in service,

Sreekala Bajwa

VP, Dean and Director



College of Ag in the News



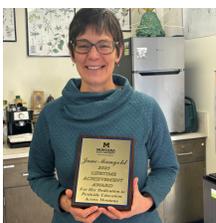
For Montana State students, veterinary medicine is a family affair



Montana State's Luke Howe takes collegiate polo to the international stage



Montana State students and their mentors honored at 44th annual Founders Day Student Awards



Montana State University Extension trainers recognized for pesticide education impacts



Jour de Vol (Flying Day) - Bringing STEM to life (by Dr. Michael Walach of Ag & Tech Ed!)

Faculty of the Month

The February Faculty of the Month is **Dr. Mensur Dlakić** of the Department of Microbiology and Cell Biology!

Dr. Dlakić received an impressive and heartfelt nomination from a student:

"I am nominating Dr. Dlakić because of his exceptional mentorship, his genuine investment in student development, and the significant impact he has had on my undergraduate career. Even with his busy schedule, he always explains concepts thoroughly so I understand not just the steps, but the reasoning behind them. After hearing him discuss his research, I was inspired to join his lab and became a research assistant.

Dr. Dlakić truly wants his students to learn and succeed. I have especially appreciated his willingness to share academic and professional opportunities with me, which has contributed greatly to my growth and confidence as a developing researcher and future medical student. Dr. Dlakić truly embodies what it means to be a Bobcat by upholding the values MSU strives to promote. Dr. Dlakić's commitment to mentorship, education, and student success truly sets him apart."



Accomplishments and Highlights

Four College of Ag students were recognized at the **Founders Day Student Awards on February 17**, along with their faculty mentors!

- **Cody Johannes**, animal science livestock management and industry, Worden. Mentor: **Liz Greenfield**.
- **Grace Lerner**, environmental science land rehabilitation, Taos, New Mexico. Mentor: **Lisa Rew**.
- **Mandy Ly**, microbiology, Kalispell. Mentor: **Jovanka Voyich**.
- **Carly Jensen**, microbiology, Billings. Mentor: **Jovanka Voyich**.



Recent and Upcoming Events

Nominations are open for the annual College of Ag/MAES Awards of Excellence! The deadline to submit nominations is **March 13**. More information can be found at ag.montana.edu/awards.html.

Towne's Harvest **CSA shares** are available for 2026! Learn more below and grab your share [on the THG website](http://www.townesharvest.montana.edu).



Fresh • Local • Certified Organic
18 week subscription of veggies
10-12 types of veggies in each box
Unique veggies not found in stores
Supports sustainable AG education

Jun 10-Oct 14
Reg share: \$650
Student rate: \$540
Over a \$35 value each week



Sign up & more info at:
www.townesharvest.montana.edu

Recent and Upcoming Events

Pre-vet adviser Jamie Arndt will host informational sessions for students who are ready to apply or who recently applied to veterinary school.

Upcoming sessions will be held **March 11, April 8 and April 22** - please encourage interested students to attend! More information is available at ag.montana.edu/students/prevet/current.html

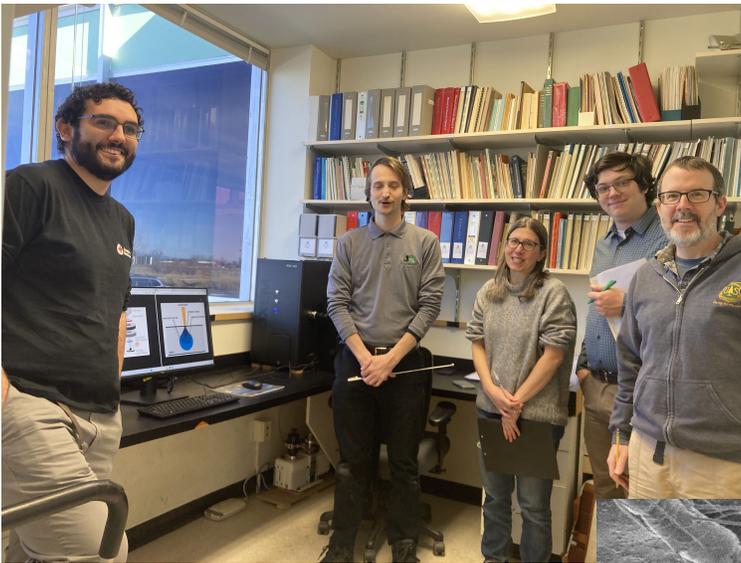


The Dan Scott Ranch Management Program hosted its **annual Spring Gather on February 26**, bringing together all Ranching Systems students for program updates and a keynote presentation from James Stuart, manager of AU Ranches, a Nevada operation that oversees livestock across more than 1 million acres.

Stuart and his wife Kenda shared their journey from growing up on the edges of agriculture to earning degrees in Rangeland Resource Management from Utah State and a master's degree from Texas A&M. James offered an engaging and candid look at the highs and lows of building a career in ranch management, blending humor with encouragement and a healthy reality check. Members of the DSRMP Advisory Board and managers from several partner ranches also attended.

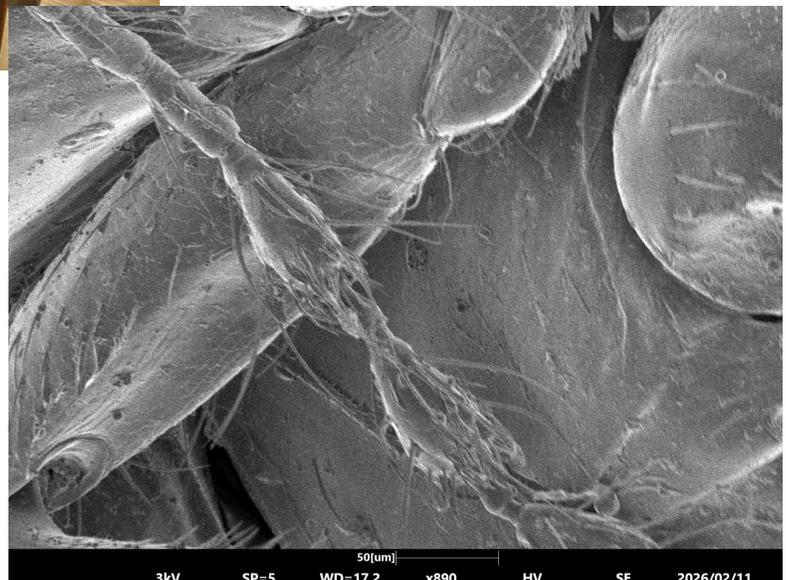
Recent and Upcoming Events

On February 10, equipment purchased with a grant from the **MAES Multi-Use Equipment proposal** was installed in Marsh Laboratory, and several sessions of on-site training of faculty, staff and students was completed. This proposal was supported by PSPP, LRES and ARS Departments. This new equipment will allow imaging of microstructures of insects, plants and fungi for research and support graduate education in the College. (Principal investigators: Drs. Michael A. Ivie and Tiziana Oppedisano; Cooperators: Drs. Jessica Kansman, Silvia Kinosian, Chance Noffsinger, Hayes Goosey, William Wetzel, David Weaver, Robert Peterson.)



Left: Eric Hubacz of JT technologies (second from left) conducted one of the SEM training sessions with Ben Patterson, Casey Delphia, JP Kole and Justin Runyon. Photo by Dr. Mike Ivie.

Right: Scanning electron micrograph of the antenna of the tiny beetle *Anamorphus*. Photo by JP Kole.



Publications and Grants

Recent Grants

- MAES Equipment Grant: “Bioprocessing of Rangeland Biomass: Enhancing nutritional value while reducing toxic load of invasive weeds in Montana” submitted by **Dr. Wilmer Cuervo and Dr. Carol Vasco** has been funded. From Dr. Cuervo: "The grant will give us the opportunity to purchase a Gas Chromatography–Mass Spectrometry Detector for the Department of Animal and Range Sciences which will enhance the scope of our research , allowing us to determine a wide variety of compounds such as grasses, rangeland species, milk, meat and grains, and more importantly, to reduce the costs and time of processing samples."
- **Dr. Michael Giroux (PSPP) and Dr. Chengci Chen (DRC)** were awarded a USDA NIFA grant.
- **Rachel Johnston and Dr. Cahya Prihatna (PSPP)** received a Montana Department of Agriculture grant.
- **Dr. Jessica Kansman (PSPP)** received a Montana Department of Agriculture grant.
- **Dr. Aritra Roy Choudhury (PSPP)** received a Montana Department of Agriculture grant.
- **Dr. Clain Jones (LRES/Ext) and Dr. Hayes Goosey (ARS/Ext)** received \$25,000 from General Mills to write one Extension document on the effects of perennial forages on soil health, and a second on alfalfa management.

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