



ROCKY
MOUNTAIN
COLLEGE



ROCKY REVIEW

2024-2025

A RECORD OF STUDENT LIFE, EVENTS, AND ACHIEVEMENTS FOR THE YEAR

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT



Dear Friends of Rocky Mountain College,

On April 26, Rocky Mountain College celebrated the achievement of nearly 200 new graduates at its 143rd Commencement. For those of us at the College, graduation signifies the end of our students' time with us, but Commencement truly is the beginning of so many new and wonderful chapters in the lives we have helped transform. Commencement also evokes a great deal of gratitude for those that have come before us to lay the foundation for the future. For more than fifty years, commencement exercises have been held in our Fortin Education Center. Many times, we take for granted our special facility, which has been the setting of memorable moments in the lives of so many students and community members, without acknowledging the family that made it possible. A special thank you to the Fortin family for making commencement, and so many other days, a time of achievement and celebration.

Creating a shared vision for the future is one of the biggest challenges of any organization, and ours is no different. We are an institution that is pragmatic in decision making and believes in continuous improvement as a way to evolve. One thing has remained constant: an unwavering commitment to transforming lives and communities through education. We have remained anchored to the traditional idea that education improves lives and expands opportunities. We have implemented a strategic plan for the institution that is targeted and characterized by clarity and is well-aligned with organizational values. It is actionable and adaptable to the changing landscape and circumstances in higher-education, while also fostering a sense of collaboration and accountability. We see it as a beacon that helps guide many of the accomplishments we will share with you in this year-end report.

Our pragmatic approach has put us in a solid financial position with five years of balanced budgets. While not especially glamorous, this achievement is essential to the ongoing development of the College. RMC has always persevered through difficult times, and this perseverance is a key part of our character. Now is the time, however, for the College to thrive rather than merely survive. Many of our accomplishments are expectations, and we hope this newsletter allows for you to feel connected to our evolution. I thank you sincerely for your continued support and interest in Rocky Mountain College. We will always be grateful.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Robert Wilmoth". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Robert" being more prominent than the last name "Wilmoth".

President Wilmoth

2025 COMMENCEMENT

HONORARY DOCTORATE

During RMC's 2025 commencement ceremonies, Rich St. John, RMC Board Chair and Billings Chief of Police, was awarded an honorary doctorate degree commemorating his years of service to Rocky Mountain College and the city of Billings. Rich is a 1980 graduate of Rocky Mountain College, a member of the Athletic Hall of Fame, and recipient of the Alumni Outstanding Achievement Award. He was elected to the RMC Board of Trustees in 2022 and served as the Chairman of the Board since 2023. Rich has served the city of Billings since 1981 through his work with the Billings Police Department. He has a Masters in Public Administration degree in criminal justice from City University in Bellevue, WA and he is a 1994 graduate of the FBI National Academy.

GRADUATING CLASS PROFILE

At the end of April, RMC held commencement ceremonies for 175 undergraduate students representing 34 majors. The following is an overview of the graduating class profile:

- **LARGEST MAJORS:**
 - Business
 - Aviation
 - Health & Human Performance
 - Psychology
 - Biology
 - Education
- **7 MASTER OF ACCOUNTANCY DEGREES**
- **GRADUATES REPRESENTED** 26 states and 4 countries
- **MORE THAN 60% OF GRADUATES WERE FROM MONTANA** and half of those students were from Yellowstone County
- **13 EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP DEGREES**

The Occupational Therapy Doctoral Program graduated 25 students on November 17, 2024 and the Master of Physician Assistant Studies Program will graduate 48 students this upcoming August.

STUDENT LEADERSHIP

ASRMC

The Associated Students of Rocky Mountain College Student Senate made meaningful strides in building a more engaged, connected, and empowered campus community.

Here are some of the highlights from ASRMC Student Senate:

- **CHARTERED NEW CLUBS** including the Drone Club and Circle K International
- **LAUNCHED AN INSTAGRAM ACCOUNT** to enhance communication with students
- **VOLUNTEERED AT BLACK TIE BLUE JEANS** and supported campus events like Valentine's card delivery to senior citizens and flower handouts to students, staff, and faculty
- **SHOWED APPRECIATION FOR STAFF** with donuts and thank-yous
- **CELEBRATED GRADUATING SENIORS** with custom campus photo canvases through the Senior Prints Project
- **SUCCESSFULLY RECHARTERED** twelve student clubs and two religious organizations for next year
- **PRIORITIZED LEADERSHIP GROWTH** through a retreat and summits
- **STRENGTHENED COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS** and supported student initiatives through thoughtful financial stewardship

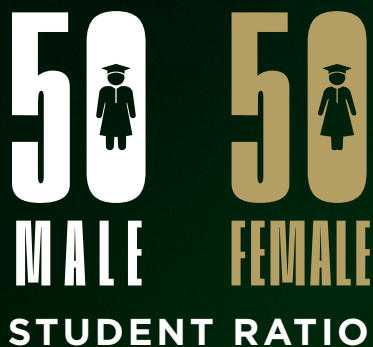
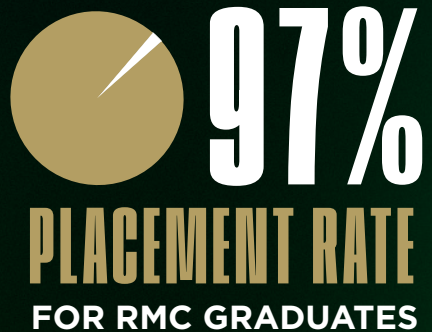


ACADEMIC HIGHLIGHTS

ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE

The Environmental Science program at Rocky Mountain College began a student research project to control the overpopulation of feral rabbits on campus. Working closely with Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks and the Science and Conservation Center at Zoo Montana, RMC is pioneering the use of a birth control vaccine called porcine zona pellucida (PZP). Mammalian birth control with PZP has been used in more than 200 species of zoo animals, including horses in the Pryor Mountains, urban deer, and even elephants. The goal at Rocky is to pioneer the first field trial of PZP in a feral rabbit population and hopefully manage the number of rabbits on campus. The research provides students a unique opportunity to engage in cutting edge science while learning about the challenges of solving a human-wildlife conflict issue. If successful, this research will have global implications for wildlife managers.

RMC QUICK FACTS



13:1 STUDENT TO
FACULTY RATIO



RMC STUDENTS REPRESENT



UNCREWED AERIAL SYSTEMS (DRONES)

Since offering a minor in UAS in 2015, RMC has witnessed the continued growth of the drone industry and its wide-ranging applications. Recognizing this, the college has developed a comprehensive major designed to prepare the next generation of UAS professionals. With input from industry leaders, research of peer institutions and employer demands, RMC's Aviation Department has crafted a robust curriculum aligning with evolving industry standards. The program of study received final approval from the RMC Board of Trustees in February 2025 and will admit its first students this fall.



FACULTY

FACULTY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

DR. GAYLE FALLON, *Assistant Professor*, LITERARY STUDIES

She edited a small special issue of The Bulletin of the International Association for Robin Hood Studies that will be published online in May 2025. The issue focuses on medieval and modern games that feature a ludic Robin Hood figure.

TODD FORSGREN, *Associate Professor*, ART

He published a book of photographs, *New Representations*, helped to publish a book of art by professor emeritus Jim Baken called *Dolittlism: Art for Animals*, and had a solo exhibition at the Polish National Museum's New Museum of Art (NOMUS) in Gdansk.

DR. HOLLY BASTA, *Associate Professor*, BIOLOGY

She published a paper in the National Library of Medicine called: Expanding the Diversity of Actinobacterial Tectiviridae: A Novel Genus from Microbacterium.

DAN HARGROVE, *Professor*, AVIATION

He was recently reappointed to the six-member state-wide Service Academy Selection Board. Dan represents Montana's four members of Congress in interviewing and nominating students to attend one of the U.S. Military Academies.

FACULTY RETIREMENTS

RMC announced the following faculty retirements:

- **SCOTT SEVERANCE**
Professor of Business Administration
- **JAMES SMITH**
Professor of Business Administration
- **DR. BARBARA VAIL**
Professor of Psychology
- **DR. DAVID STRONG**
Professor of Philosophy and Environmental Studies
- **DR. TOM KALAKAY**
Professor of Geology
- **DR. MATT O'GARA**
Professor of Political Science

COMMUNITY AND GIVING

1ST INAUGURAL PIG ROAST

On September 7th, 2024, RMC hosted the 1st Annual Pig Roast. There were over 60 people in attendance for the event that enjoyed freshly roasted pork, sides from the Granary and Buffalo Block restaurants, and drinks provided by Sodexo. Attendees were given "Pig Packs" filled with Rocky swag while they enjoyed all the festivities for the first home football game of the season.



37TH ANNUAL BLACK TIE BLUE JEANS

The 37th Annual Black Tie Blue Jeans Scholarship Benefit took place in November of 2024. The event was sponsored by 60 corporate partners and there were over 500 guests in attendance. Thanks to generous sponsors and donors, RMC was able to raise over \$536,000 for scholarships and student support.



Black Tie BLUE JEANS

WHEATLEY LECTURE

RMC hosted the 2025 Wheatley Lecture Event on Thursday and Friday March 27-28th. The Wheatley Lecture series was established by the Yellowstone Legacy Annual conference of the United Methodist Church and Rocky Mountain College to honor Bishop Melvin E. Wheatley, Jr. The keynote lecture featured Rev. Dr. Kristin Stoneking, Bishop of the Mountain Sky Episcopal Area of the United Methodist Church, speaking on "Crisis of Communities: Building Lives of Purpose, Transcendence and Connection."

BAIR SCIENCE CENTER GRANT

The Bair Science Center, officially named the Charles M. Bair Family Center for the Sciences, was opened in 1981 and became the center of the sciences on campus. The building continues to be utilized by several departments on campus and has been prioritized for renovations. New HVAC systems were installed in 2024 and a generous grant from the Charles M. Bair Family Trust received at the end of April 2025 will help to complete the renovations.



ATHLETICS

ATHLETIC ACHIEVEMENTS

It was a banner year for Battlin' Bears Athletics, with six individual and eight team national championships in men's and women's ski racing, outright Frontier Conference titles in women's basketball, men's and women's golf, and multiple national tournament appearances. Six programs were ranked in the NAIA Top 25. Across all teams, RMC celebrated 45 All-Americans, 93 Academic All-Conference honorees, 56 NAIA Scholar Athlete Awards, and an impressive cumulative 3.33 average GPA among student-athletes.



NEW MEN'S BASKETBALL COACH

In April, Rocky Mountain College announced the hiring of Danny Neville as the new head coach of the Battlin' Bears men's basketball team. With a strong record of athletic and academic leadership, Coach Neville brings a wealth of experience and a proven track record of success to RMC. Coach Neville's career includes eight standout seasons as head coach at the University of Jamestown, where he amassed an impressive 178-84 record and led his teams to four NAIA National Tournament appearances. His student-athletes also excelled academically, earning some of the highest team GPAs in Jamestown history. Most recently, Neville served as Associate Head Coach at Langston University, helping lead the top-ranked team in the NAIA to a 26-8 season and a Round of 16 appearance. A native of Iowa, Neville holds a B.A. in Sports Management and an M.A. in Coaching and Athletic Administration. He is joined in Billings by his wife, Erin, and their children, Emma and Landon.

WOMEN'S BASKETBALL

The Rocky women claimed an outright Frontier Conference Regular Season title this season. The championship is Rocky Women's Basketball's first outright conference title since 1987-88. The Battlin' Bears were co-regular season champions in 2021-22. Sydney Dethman (NAIA Third Team All-American, Newcomer of the Year), Gracee Lekvold (Defensive Player of the Year), and Paige Wasson (Freshman of the Year and Second Team All Conference) earned individual honors and were named to All-Conference teams, while Battlin' Bears Head Coach Wes Keller was also named Frontier Conference Coach of the Year. The Battlin' Bears finished the season 20-11 at the NAIA National Tournament.





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