

Hive Connection

Spring 2024

Staff Spotlight



While the focus of our work with students is often on exploring career pathways and building their work readiness skills, connecting students with internship and employment opportunities is integral to what we do as a team.

Career specialist Juanita Hooper has been actively cultivating relationships with employers and community partners through her participation in Leadership Billings and the Job Service Employer Committee.

These connections have fostered in Juanita a stronger sense of community and a better understanding of initiatives and services to address community challenges. Her involvement also helps our team keep a pulse on the local labor market and hiring trends.

Most importantly, Juanita notes that these collaborations have boosted awareness in Billings of Career & Employment Services, leading to enhanced internship and employment opportunities for our students.



Services we offer:

- ✓ Major & Career Exploration
- ✓ Occupational Profiles
- ✓ Job Shadowing & Occupational Interviews
- ✓ Internship & Job Searches
- ✓ Résumés, Cover Letters & Mock Interviews
- ✓ Professional Networking Opportunities
- ✓ Virtual Internship & Career Fair
- ✓ CareerLink Online Job Board

Preparing students for the workforce

Recent reports highlight the importance of career services in helping college students prepare for the realities of today's job market.

A 2024 Handshake survey of 2,687 graduating seniors reported that only about 30% had secured a job or admission to graduate school by March of their final semester. Many new graduates are overconfident about finding well-paying jobs in their field, especially in a climate where employers are increasingly seeking out entry-level candidates with experience in addition to a degree.

A lack of workforce preparedness is another barrier that new graduates often face. A 2023 survey, commissioned by Intelligent.com, reported that 38% of surveyed employers were reluctant to hire recent graduates because they were often unprepared for interviews, lacked professionalism, and had unrealistic salary expectations. Two-thirds of the surveyed employers noted that the recent graduates they did hire frequently couldn't manage the workload.

Other reports echoed the disconnect between anticipated and actual salaries upon graduation. Based on a 2023 survey of 610,000 Class of 2022 graduates, the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) reported an average starting salary of \$47,903 for an associate's degree and \$61,869 for a bachelor's degree.

These figures are dramatically less than the average starting salary of \$103,880 that new graduates expected in 2022, according to a CBS survey. A 2023 Real Estate Witch survey of 1,000 American undergraduates found the gap between anticipated and actual entry-level salaries had closed but were still unrealistic; new college graduates expected to earn an average of \$84,855 one year after graduation, and 97% reported that the average minimum salary they would accept at their first job was \$72,580.

The personalized approach to career services at MSU Billings helps students and alumni anticipate and overcome some of the hurdles to post-graduation employment. Our career specialists encourage students to gain valuable work experience through internships and part-time jobs while earning their degrees. We help them craft professional résumés and cover letters and coach them through practice interviews. We also research employment trends and survey graduates to provide accurate salary and job outlook data so students have more realistic expectations of the job market. Our office also connects students with employers through networking and recruiting events.

As visibility of Career and Employment Services grows through outreach and collaborative campus partnerships, more graduating students will recognize the importance of using our services as they transition into the workforce.

Student Employee Appreciation Week



Campus employers helped us recognize 128 student employees on both campuses in April by expressing their appreciation for their commitment, energy, and impact. Throughout the week, students and staff were invited to enjoy appreciation-themed treats each day and encouraged to write thank you notes to student workers.

Stay connected with us!





Congratulations to our BEE Award recipients!

Student workers are recognized for going **Beyond Everyday Expectations**.



Bryor Smith

ACADEMIC SUPPORT CENTER

Bryor, an ASC Peer Navigator, "is always willing to lend a hand in the ASC by filling in at the front desk and training other staff and Peer Navigators. Bryor is a go-to resource to help his fellow students utilize Navigate and other systems, and has proven himself to be incredibly reliable, dependable, and willing to lend a hand wherever help is needed. Bryor is an incredibly valuable student employee in the ASC and we appreciate his willingness to help out in ways that go above and beyond everyday expectations." — Katie Moffat



Jorie (J.J.) Rodgers

TRIO STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

"J.J. goes above and beyond in the TRIO SSS office. She has the natural ability to connect with students who visit the office and make them feel welcome. It is obvious that she cares deeply for the TRIO SSS office as J.J. has the drive to jump in when tasks need to be completed around the office. J.J. is more than deserving of the BEE award as she is an exceptional student worker who makes the TRIO SSS office a welcoming space for all students." — Rylie Wiebe



Logan Brown

RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES

"Logan is a student supervisor here at the Recreation Center. Logan is a model employee and leader on the Recreation staff. He is our go to student for the tougher evening shifts. He handles himself to poise even when the unexpected happens. Logan also assists us by training new students in Rec. Center policy and procedure. He is an excellent example to his coworkers and our customers. Logan is an asset to our department and MSUB." — Aaron Murrish



Selbi Ilmuradova

ACADEMIC SUPPORT CENTER

"Selbi is a Peer Navigator with the Academic Support Center, and she goes above and beyond in helping answer students' questions and support their success. She meets with students one-on-one, providing guidance and support, and tackles numerous other projects and tasks that I throw at her. Selbi's calm and caring demeanor draws students to her, and she is fantastic at helping them navigate challenges." — Katie Moffet



Kennedy Skinner

NATIVE AMERICAN ACHIEVEMENT CENTER

Kennedy, a work study student and the All Nations representative, "brings a positive energy to our center, fostering a welcoming and inclusive atmosphere. Her dedication extends beyond her role as a representative, as she has consistently taken care of our garden, contributing to the beauty of our space, and organizing craft classes. ... Kennedy has demonstrated exceptional leadership and initiative. Stepping up to fulfill responsibilities and ensuring the continued success of our programs, Kennedy's commitment is truly commendable" — Sunny Day Real Bird

Connecting students with employers

Spring semester brought a flurry of events aimed at connecting students with employers through a series of networking and recruiting events. At the Virtual Internship & Career Fair in February, 62 students signed up to visit one-on-one with 19 regional employers, ranging from Head Start and Alternatives, Inc., to Billings Clinic, Kampgrounds of America, and KSVI.

"Thank you for providing the tools for students to connect with organizations and businesses in such a seamless manner and vice versa," noted Michelle Haiven of United Way, adding that she hired one of the students she spoke with during the two-day event.

Jessica Martin of Alternatives, Inc., also shared her impressions of the event. "This was much better than last year. More prepared, informed, and great students signed up. I spoke with several about internship opportunities, tours, and more."

In addition to the Virtual Internship & Career Fair, Career & Employment Services also hosted four Jobs & Java recruiting events and 19 individual Employers on Campus tabling events throughout the year.



Etiquette Dinner makes a comeback after a five-year hiatus

Nearly 40 students attended the Etiquette Dinner in March. Over the course of the evening, nervous trepidation transformed into energetic chatter as students learned dining etiquette while conversing with hosting employers over a formal five-course meal. One student later commented, "I think etiquette is becoming a lost art in any form. The information was presented in an entertaining way, the food was delicious and prepared perfectly. My compliments to the chef and his staff!"



Intern of the Semester Awards

Congratulations to our Summer and Fall 2023 interns! Selection is based on employer and faculty nominations.

CITY COLLEGE

Noelle Jenness

Human Resources | Mirror Lake Inn Resort & Spa (NY)

"Noelle learned hands-on methods in onboarding, financial records, and working with international employees. "[She] picked up on the responsibilities quickly and contributed to the business. [Noelle] did excellent work onsite with onboarding new employees to the resort. Employees at the site were surprised at her young age. She presented herself with maturity." — Cindy Millard

COLLEGE OF HEALTH PROFESSIONS & SCIENCE

Brennan Larson

Human Services | DPHHS Child & Family Services

"Child and Family Services is not an easy job. The job of working with people in their most vulnerable and often worst time in their life can be trying and stressful. There is anger, sadness and unpredictability in much of the work we do. Brennan handled these hard situations with grace and tact. ... She made sure to be involved in a variety of aspects of child protection, including investigations, ongoing casework, court appearances, Indian Child Welfare Training, and numerous visits between parents, children, and their CPS workers. Brennan participated on our Permanency Committee that plans for children in foster care and was able to observe our foster care review committee. Brennan was selected to receive a scholarship to attend the McGuire Conference on Domestic Violence during her internship. She attended with several other CPS workers and supervisors. Brennan truly made the most out of her internship experience." — Danielle Metcalf

COLLEGE OF BUSINESS

Emmanuel Ajanaku-Makun

Accounting | Spitfire Accounting Group

"Emmanuel is one of the kindest and [most] personable individuals I have ever met. His interpersonal skills and work ethic are absolutely incredible and will be an asset to any organization. He continually demonstrates an eagerness to learn, willingness to tackle any task given to him and the ability to get the job done accurately and on time. Having Emmanuel as an intern for our organization was not only an asset, but also a tremendous joy. ... I was able to watch Emmanuel accelerate his capabilities within his role at our organization. His tenacity and ability to learn will take him far in whatever he decides to do personally and professionally." — Jeff Lethert

COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS & SOCIAL SCIENCES

Christian Barber

Criminal Justice | Musselshell County Sheriff's Office

"You asked for a letter grade and forgive me if I can't really suggest one. ... If there was one above an A+, that is where he would fall for this particular [emergency] call. Most people would not have accepted that assignment, and many others would have attempted it and failed. You can't assess a number or letter to those types of situations. Furthermore, Christian is doing a great job. His attitude, work ethic and appearance have been top notch." — Deputy Patrick Contini

Intern Site Supervisor of the Semester Awards

Selection for this new award recognizing outstanding site supervisors is based on nominations submitted by Summer and Fall 2023 interns.

Tom Lipko | West Electronics

"Tom Lipko helped me every step of the way, giving me just the right balance of supervision and space to learn the tasks required. ... He is the type of manager that works right alongside us. He does not just sit in an office giving orders. He has many things that he is especially good at and spends time teaching those things to me. ... Tom Lipko is an amazing mentor. He is a great role model and someone I will always respect and admire. He gives opportunities to employees that seek advancement and is always available for questions." — Nicole Leno, Business Management

Darrel Williams | MSU Billings IT/Help Desk

"Darrel facilitated a positive work culture by fostering a sense of inclusivity and teamwork. [He] encouraged open dialogue, recognized my contributions, and celebrated milestones, creating a supportive atmosphere that motivated me to excel. ... Darrel's role in helping me succeed involved clear communication, personalized development, exposure to diverse experiences, mentorship, and creating a positive work environment. Through these efforts, he not only supported me in meeting my objectives but also contributed to my overall professional growth and success." — Ryan Reynolds, Computer Programming & Application Development

Undersheriff Jason Bednar | Musselshell County Sheriff's Office

"Almost all opportunities I have had with the sheriff's office can be attributed to the Undersheriff. I had been talking with him years prior, doing ride-a-longs and having conversations about the job. ... It's a great and integrity-driven office, and I think the Undersheriff highlights those qualities. It requires a passion for the career, and I believe the Undersheriff exemplifies that. The internship was a great experience, and I think anyone looking to pursue a career in law enforcement should look at becoming a reserve." — Christian Barber, Criminal Justice

Glynn Maddox | Boys & Girls Club of Yellowstone County

"My site supervisor helped me succeed because he was very encouraging and let me have an active voice in the organization rather than just assigning me tasks. ... A lesson that my site supervisor helped me to learn is that setting boundaries is important, and setting healthy boundaries is not going to make people get upset with you. [He] was very good at diffusing tension and talking with me and not at me. He made me feel like a valued member of the team and encouraged me to be vocal about what I want from the internship and in life." — Ashtyn Ator, Psychiatric Rehabilitation