

# BECON

2/6/2026

Happy February!

There is a lot going on this month. The Winter Olympics are starting and, of course, what we have all been waiting for—the Super Bowl is being played this weekend. Whether you are invested in who is playing, or *INVESTED* in the scores at the end of each quarter, Sunday is the big day!

We had three guests in attendance this morning. Wade Austin introduced Mark “Lumpy” Cloud, who recently retired from NW Energy after 38 years and is looking to stay busy. Mike Gordon joined us for his second visit; he is a Maternal Fetal Specialist at Intermountain, nearing retirement, and looking for ways to give back. Darrel introduced Mike. Our guest speaker this morning was Montana State University Billings Chancellor, Stefani Hicswa (and yes, I had to Google the spelling of her name).

## Announcements:

- The Shrimp Boil will take place on February 21st at the Legion, starting at 4:00 PM. A sign-up sheet went around today, so please be sure to get signed up. Cost is \$10 per person.
- We will be holding another membership drive on February 18th at Gordy’s, in their back room. It kicks off at 5:00 PM and runs to the wee hours of 8:00 PM. Members are welcome—just don’t forget to bring a friend!
- Today was Maria’s last day, and she really put on a feast. As I write this, I’m thinking I should have grabbed a to-go box. Shawnee has met with the new team leaders at the Legion and feels confident that everything will be just fine.
- There will be a board meeting next week at the Billings Association of Realtors office, just to spice things up. If you need to address the board for any reason, that’s where you’ll need to be. Committee chairs—please don’t forget to keep Shawnee informed about what’s going on.

Mike Bazemore introduced Chancellor Hicswa. She shared that one of the hardest metrics for colleges is enrollment—both new enrollment and retention—with retention often being the more challenging of the two.

MSU Billings currently has approximately 4,000 enrolled students. About 2,000 are on campus, 1,000 attend the West End campus, and another 1,000 are dual-enrolled in both college and high school. The

## Upcoming Volunteer Opportunities

university offers many programs both in person and online. Because of this flexibility and strong adult enrollment, the average student age is over 26.

The university employs more than 500 people and offers over 100 different programs, including Colleges of Business; Liberal Arts & Social Sciences; and Health Professionals & Science. MSU Billings began in 1927 as a normal school for teachers. In 1994, it became affiliated with the National Champion Montana State Bobcats. A fun piece of trivia—there have been more graduates since 1994 than prior to 1994. The university also supports 14 sports programs, including cheer and stunt.

MSU Billings is currently working on its strategic plan for the next 100 years. As part of that process, they are engaging with the local workforce to understand future community needs. Planning sessions will be held on Monday, March 30th, and April 6th, and a survey will also be available for input.

One of the university's largest fundraisers is WineFest, taking place April 16th and 17th. Last year, 16 of our club members volunteered to serve at the event. It's a bow tie and white shirt affair—lots of fun, and the food was great. Chancellor Hicswa also mentioned that JazzFest is happening this evening, so if you're looking for something to do, head on down.

MSU Billings is heavily invested in military and veteran programs and even has a dedicated staff office on campus. They also offer several Native American programs. Their medical program is operated through the University of Washington.

That wrapped up the presentation, followed by several questions—including discussion around a potential collegiate club on campus.

One final tidbit: Jeff Roache's wife is currently in Singapore participating in a bell-ringing symphony. Please keep her in your prayers and wish her good luck!

Attached is the Super Bowl board. Winners by quarter will be announced during the game.

Go Hawks!!!



