



DEAN, NORM ASBJORNSON COLLEGE ENGINEERING



INTRODUCTION

Montana State University invites applications, nominations, and expressions of interest for the position of Dean of the Norm Asbjornson College of Engineering. Faculty and staff in the college embrace Montana State's land-grant mission and excel in teaching, research and service that address the technological and scientific challenges of our time.

Offering more than thirty majors and twelve minors, the college provides both undergraduate and graduate students with rigorous, hands-on education in high-demand engineering and computing disciplines. Many faculty are nationally and internationally recognized for their contributions to research and innovation. In fiscal year 2025, faculty in the college accounted for more than \$26.5 million in research grant expenditures, helping drive Montana State University's designation as an institution of "R1: Very High Spending and Doctorate Production" by the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education—one of only 187 universities in the nation with that distinction.

MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY (www.montana.edu/about)

Founded in 1893 as Montana's land-grant institution, Montana State University has established a national and international reputation for excellence in undergraduate and graduate education, high research activity and active community outreach and engagement in the colleges of agriculture; arts and architecture; business; engineering; education, health, and human development; letters and science; and nursing. The university also boasts a highly successful graduate school, honors college, and a two-year college. Routinely listed by U.S. News and World Report as one of America's best buys for undergraduate education, it is accredited by the

Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities. Montana State's strategic plan, Choosing Promise (www.montana.edu/strategicplan/), establishes the university's goals and priorities, while emphasizing the strengths and responsibilities of the land-grant mission.

MSU has enjoyed strong state legislative support, an enrollment growth of about 24% over the past decade, exceptional growth in research expenditures and grants awarded, as well as partnerships with agencies and private benefactors who have provided several new buildings on campus, including the newest engineering building opened in 2018. Norm Asbjornson Hall is a 110,000-square-foot, \$53 million state-of-the-art facility that integrates advanced laboratories, collaborative classrooms, design studios and innovation spaces to foster hands-on learning and interdisciplinary engineering education.

Mission

Montana State University, the state's land-grant institution, educates students, creates knowledge and art, and serves communities by integrating learning, discovery, and engagement.

Vision

Montana State University is as remarkable as its setting. Created as a land-grant institution, it is a welcoming, adventurous community of students, faculty, and staff, distinguished by its commitment to address the world's greatest challenges. The university energizes individuals to discover and pursue their aspirations. It inspires people to engage with the university to improve the human prospect through excellence in education, research, creativity, and civic responsibility.

Strategic Plan—"Choosing Promise" (www.montana.edu/strategicplan/)

The Montana State University strategic plan, called "Choosing Promise," articulates the university's strategic direction and guides colleges and departments with goals and priorities. It states the university's mission, vision, and values. It also lists areas of intentional focus and goals, as well as metrics that will be used to measure progress toward those goals and the specific actions needed to help reach them. Faculty, staff, students, and community members carefully considered the Montana University System's strategic plan as well as the accreditation process to ensure that the goals and metrics articulated in "Choosing Promise" move MSU forward.

NORM ASBJORNSON COLLEGE OF ENGINEERING (<https://coe.montana.edu/>)

The Norm Asbjornson College of Engineering (NACOE) at Montana State University is home to more than 3,350 students and a vibrant community of faculty and staff dedicated to advancing engineering education, research, and innovation. The college offers a broad range of accredited undergraduate and graduate programs that prepare students for successful, high-impact careers in fields that drive the nation's economy, including mechanical, electrical, civil, chemical, industrial, computer, environmental and biological engineering, as well as computer science and construction management, with NACOE conferring 697 degrees in 2024-25. Montana State University's Army ROTC and Air Force ROTC programs are also housed in the college, supporting students in earning an academic degree as they prepare to serve in the US military.

NACOE graduates are highly sought after by employers across the state, region, and nation. Nearly all graduates secure employment or pursue advanced degrees within months of graduation, reflecting the college's strong reputation and close partnerships with industry leaders, government agencies and national laboratories. The college's advisory boards, internship programs, and world renown research centers ensure that its academic programs remain closely aligned with the needs of today's engineering and technology workforce.

The college is housed in some of the most advanced engineering and research facilities in the Rocky Mountain region. The recently completed Norm Asbjornson Hall integrates classrooms, design studios, research laboratories and collaborative learning spaces that promote teamwork, creativity, and the practical application of engineering principles. Additional facilities such as Barnard Hall, the Advanced Manufacturing Lab and numerous Core facilities provide students and faculty with access to cutting-edge tools and instrumentation. In 2026, Gianforte Hall is scheduled to open and will feature two large classrooms and laboratories dedicated to robotics, cybersecurity, augmented and virtual reality, data science, artificial intelligence, and machine learning. A video production studio will be available, as will an audio recording facility. Some of the spaces will be designed to highlight the contributions of computing pioneers Grace Hopper and Alan Turing.

Research within the college addresses critical challenges in cybersecurity, energy, water, infrastructure, materials, data science, advanced manufacturing, and sustainable systems. Faculty are recognized nationally and internationally for their research productivity and success in securing competitive funding from federal agencies, foundations, and private industry. In fiscal year 2023, the college's research expenditures exceeded \$24 million demonstrating its significant role in Montana State University's status as a Carnegie-designated institution of "Very High Research Activity." MSU has leveraged federal and state funding to lead in smart photonic sensor systems, quantum, and optics technologies. MSU is a key partner in the Headwaters Tech Hub (a regional technology & innovation hub), which received a \$41 million grant to accelerate photonic sensing and related technologies. MSU engineering faculty have helped spin off dozens of optics-related companies (many founded by MSU alumni) and licensed MSU-developed inventions in optics and photonics to Montana companies. Several research centers are within the college including [MilTech](#), [the Center for Biofilm Engineering](#) and the [Western Transportation Institute](#).

Across every discipline in the college, students achieve at high levels. Norm Asbjornson College of Engineering undergraduate students have been regularly recognized with national awards (www.montana.edu/honors/major_scholarship_awards.html), including the prestigious Goldwater Scholarship for excellence in math and science, the Udall Scholarship for students intending to pursue careers related to the environment, the Truman Scholarship for leadership and public service, the Boren Scholarship for international study and the Rhodes Scholarship. Awards such as these testify to the high quality of the College and to its genuine concern for students.

SELECT MSU RESOURCES

The Norm Asbjornson College of Engineering is a cornerstone of Montana State University's mission and reputation for excellence in research, innovation and applied learning. The college's achievements reflect the university's broader commitment to preparing graduates for meaningful careers, advancing discovery that benefits society and supporting Montana's economic vitality through education and partnership. Montana State University offers one of most comprehensive interdisciplinary Native American Studies programs in the region. MSU is located near a major traditional crossroads for Plains and Plateau Native nations, a meeting place where these nations congregated to trade, celebrate and negotiate. Today, that tradition is continued through MSU's nationally recognized commitment to Native students- their education, communities, and nations- through the exchange of ideas.

Office of the Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost–
www.montana.edu/provost/

Administration–www.montana.edu/data/about-msu/index.html#Presidents

Facts and Stats—www.montana.edu/data/facts/index.html

Graduate School—www.montana.edu/gradschool/

Alumni Foundation—www.msuaaf.org/s/1584/rd18/home.aspx

Mountains and Minds— www.montana.edu/news/mountainsandminds/

Museum of the Rockies—www.museumoftherockies.org/

Organizational Charts—www.montana.edu/opa/orgcharts/

MSU Accreditation— <https://www.montana.edu/accreditation/index.html>

MSU Budget Office—www.montana.edu/budget/

CAMPUS SETTING—BOZEMAN, MONTANA (www.bozeman.net)

Montana State University is located in the city of Bozeman, one of the fastest-growing small metropolitan areas in the United States, with a 2024 population of nearly 58,500. Bozeman and Gallatin County together are home to approximately 112,000 people. The region is renowned for its breathtaking mountain vistas, access to Yellowstone National Park and an active outdoor recreation culture. World-class opportunities for fly fishing, mountain biking, hiking, climbing, and trail running are minutes from campus, while multiple downhill and Nordic ski areas offer some of the best winter recreation in the country.

A depth of cultural life, typically found only in much larger cities, matches the area's natural beauty. Bozeman supports a wealth of artistic organizations, including the university's world-class dinosaur museum, a symphony orchestra, opera, ballet, community theatre and numerous galleries. Bozeman is frequently ranked among the top ten most desirable places to live in the United States.

MSU faculty and students maintain deep research and creative ties to the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem. Scientists study life at the microbial scale in Yellowstone's thermal features, explore wildlife ecology and life in extreme environments, and conduct avalanche and snow science research. The park's landscapes and unique natural features also inspire numerous artistic, design, and literary works by MSU faculty and students.

Bozeman's vibrant innovation ecosystem extends beyond the university, with a growing number of high-tech and optics-photonics companies founded by MSU alumni and faculty. This entrepreneurial energy, combined with the region's outdoor lifestyle and strong research culture, makes Bozeman a distinctive place to live, learn and create.

City of Bozeman—www.bozeman.net/

Bozeman Life—www.montana.edu/marketing/about-msu/bozeman/

Bozeman Convention and Visitors Bureau—www.bozemancvb.com/



THE POSITION

Montana State University seeks a creative, energetic, accomplished, and respected leader to build on the considerable strengths and opportunities of the Norm Asbjornson College of Engineering.

Reporting to the executive vice president for academic affairs and provost, the dean is the senior academic and administrative officer of the Norm Asbjornson College of Engineering and is responsible for working with senior administration, faculty, students, and staff in setting strategic, operational, and financial directions.

STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP PRIORITIES

The Norm Asbjornson College of Engineering seeks a strong and visionary leader who will collaborate with faculty, students, staff, and senior university leadership in addressing the opportunities and challenges facing the college and will lead the college toward the following strategic priorities:

- **Providing effective management, administration, and leadership for the college**
The dean will make timely decisions, respond directly to issues of importance, and will ensure the smooth operation of the college, the departments, and affiliated offices. The dean will effectively contribute to and enhance the tripartite land-grant mission of Montana State University.
- **Foster a culture of continuous improvement**
The college's reputation is founded on its unique array of respected and high-quality academic and research programs. The new dean will focus on continual enhancements of faculty-student engagement measures and curriculum streamlining of academic programs to continue advancements of student persistence and degree completion efforts. The dean will work with department heads and the 130 faculty (120.5 FTE) to enhance the research enterprise, to grow scholarly and creative products, and to broaden the impacts of research on the people and communities of Montana. With that, the dean must also be able to communicate the value of these programs to a broad constituency that includes students, colleagues, and Montana University System administrators. The dean will contribute to MSU's institutional reputation by helping faculty set and meet the highest standards of teaching and research and will ensure that new faculty hired into the college are dedicated to furthering the three pillars of the tripartite land grant mission.
- **Advocate for interdisciplinary collaborations**
Within the college, university and community, there are myriad opportunities for partnerships and collaborations. The dean will work with the administrative team, faculty, and dean colleagues to develop initiatives that benefit all stakeholders.

- **Ensure positive accreditation outcomes**
Implicit in the dean's responsibilities will be to meet and exceed professional accreditation standards in individual programs, as well as overall university accreditation with the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities.
- **Improve student retention and grow enrollment with an emphasis on student success**
The dean will lead initiatives and decisions to support steady growth in student enrollments and will champion faculty-student engagement, mentoring, retention, and timely graduation. A particular area of emphasis is the continued growth of graduate student enrollment.
- **Represent the Norm Asbjornson College of Engineering**
The dean will be an enthusiastic and articulate spokesperson for both NACOE and MSU with internal and external constituencies, while continually advancing the college's mission and its innovative academic and research programs.
- **Secure external funds in support of the Norm Asbjornson College of Engineering**
The dean will raise external funds for college initiatives. This will involve intensive planning with the President, Provost and the MSU Foundation, as well as with department heads, faculty, and staff, to establish fundraising priorities, identify potential grants, friends, and donors, and encourage their engagement and support of NACOE initiatives and programs. Through this process, the dean will establish current and future fundraising goals for the college and will monitor its success in meeting those goals.
- **Nurture, celebrate and support the primary responsibilities of faculty in the areas of teaching, research, and scholarship**
The dean will articulate the value and role of research and scholarship consistent within the broader context of MSU's Carnegie Classification of "Very High Research Activity." The dean will support efforts of faculty to attract external funds for essential research activities. Likewise, the dean will encourage and support faculty efforts to educate students in ways that will allow them to succeed in their academic programs and careers. Moreover, the dean will support professional development of staff and faculty and foster shared governance in the development of college policies and procedures.
- **Contribute to the University's mission**
The dean will advance the strategic direction of Montana State University by serving on the university's academic leadership team and on university committees under the direction of the Provost and President. The dean's contribution to MSU's future will be advanced through engagement with academic governance on the Provost's Academic Council, university governance on the President's Leadership Council and the University Council, and through positive interactions with other deans, vice presidents, the executive vice president for academic affairs, and the President.
- **Build a bright future for the Norm Asbjornson College of Engineering**
To be successful, the dean will be an ethical, compassionate, creative, communicative, energetic, and engaging leader—one who will join forces with the many constituencies of the college to build upon its national and international recognition. Personal integrity and a collegial style are required traits for this position.



MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS

The successful candidate will:

- Have an earned doctorate from an accredited institution
- Have an exemplary record of research/scholarship activities, teaching and service to university and broader communities
- Qualify for tenure within an academic unit in the Norm Asbjornson College of Engineering at the rank of full professor

ESSENTIAL QUALIFICATIONS AND LEADERSHIP CHARACTERISTICS

A broad-based record of administrative and scholarly experience in research university settings, with direct supervisory experience for academic units, along with significant budget management experience

- A strong ability to communicate effectively as exemplified by the candidate's writing, speaking and listening skills
- Ability to foster teaching, research/scholarship, service, and professional development of faculty in a student-centered environment
- Experience with and responsibility for faculty development, faculty performance assessments, and evaluation of promotion and tenure
- Demonstrated understanding of and support for the broad range of programs comprising the college and within the unique mission of a land-grant university
- Demonstrated experience of leading with sound fiscal management
- Demonstrated commitment to shared governance and collaborative leadership
- Desire to share, support and successfully articulate the President's/Provost's vision for the strategic direction and administration of the University
- Evidence of commitment to the land grant mission

PREFERRED LEADERSHIP CHARACTERISTICS

The Norm Asbjornson College of Engineering's next dean will possess a combination of professional experiences and personal qualities appropriate to the strategic priorities listed herein. The successful candidate will demonstrate integrity of the highest order, an intellectual curiosity and self-confidence balanced with humility, authenticity of character and a strong work ethic. In seeking its next dean, the Norm Asbjornson College of Engineering will give preference to candidates who demonstrate.

- Leadership skills that include experience in an academic program that offers baccalaureate and graduate degrees
- Experience in effective strategic planning and assessment
- Experience in dealing with multiple constituencies—internally and externally
- An understanding of research and the opportunities for research/scholarship within a broadly diverse college environment
- A demonstrable record of developing external resources through fundraising, grants and contracts
- A record of positive staff and personnel relations and interactions
- A creative and approachable manner that kindles the innovative spirit of others
- Evidence of leading transformational change
- Demonstrated accomplishments in innovative partnerships
- A strong team player in terms of university governance
- Demonstrated ability to communicate effectively with stakeholders at the university, state and national levels
- Demonstrated ability/success in fundraising

NOMINATION AND APPLICATION PROCESS

Nominations, applications, and expressions of interest are welcome. Application materials must include 1) a letter of interest that responds directly to the position qualifications and Strategic Priorities listed in the Leadership Profile, 2) *curriculum vita* and 3) the names, addresses, telephone numbers, and email addresses of five references (indicate your professional relationship with each). Please include your personal email and cell phone number. All candidate names will remain confidential, except for those individuals invited to campus interviews. Nominations and expressions of interest may be made by contacting the chair of the search committee, William G. Thomas III via email at William.thomas22@montana.edu.

Application materials should be submitted electronically to [**Montana State University Employment Opportunities | Dean, College of Engineering**](#)

Montana State University is committed to providing a working and learning environment free from discrimination. As such, the University does not discriminate in the admission, access to or conduct of its educational programs and activities nor in its employment policies and practices on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, ethnicity, creed, service in the uniformed services (as defined in state and federal law), veteran status, gender, age, political beliefs, marital or family status, pregnancy, physical or mental disability, genetic information, gender identity, gender expression, or sexual orientation or preference.

Montana State University makes accommodation for any known disability that may interfere with an applicant's ability to compete in the hiring process or an employee's ability to perform the duties of the job. To request an accommodation, contact the Office of Human Resources, PO Box 172520, Montana State University, Bozeman MT 59717-2520; 406-994-3651; recruitment@montana.edu.

In compliance with the Montana Veteran's Employment Preference Act, MSU provides preference in employment to veterans, disabled veterans, and certain eligible relatives of veterans. To claim veteran's preference, please complete the veteran's preference information located in the Demographics section of your profile.

MSU's Non-Discrimination Policy and Discrimination Grievance Procedures can be located on the MSU Website: www2.montana.edu/policy/affirmative_action/

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