



ACADEMIC TECHNOLOGY AND OUTREACH
ANNUAL REPORT
SEPTEMBER 2024 - AUGUST 2025



A Message from the Director

Dear supporters and friends,

The 2024-2025 academic year (AY) at MSU's Academic Technology and Outreach (ATO) was marked by exciting growth and change. Our mission to advance excellence in teaching, learning, and public education came to fruition through engaging Continuing, Professional, and Lifelong Learning (CPLL) courses, impactful outreach efforts, and new and improved campus-wide academic technologies.


While there are countless stories to share, please enjoy the following highlights and know that your ATO engagement and support help make this dynamic work possible! We look forward to working with our academic and community partners to provide our local and state-wide communities with even more learning and outreach opportunities in the coming year.

Sincerely,

KIM OBBINK

Director

MSU Academic Technology and Outreach

A young boy with glasses and a grey hoodie is looking into a clear rectangular container on a table. A woman with long dark hair, wearing a patterned blouse, is sitting at the table and looking towards the boy. The background shows a well-lit indoor space, possibly a community center or library, with a blue sign with the letter 'B' visible. The text is overlaid on the top right of the image.

IN AY 2024 - 2025 ATO FACILITATED
252 courses and programs
with a total of **6,338 participants.**

*numbers include ATO Continuing, Professional, Lifelong Learning, and Outreach courses, programs, and participants.

A Transformative Summer Experience for Montana Youth



During the week of June 15, 2025, 55 campers attended Peaks and Potentials, ATO's educational youth camp that provides participants with hands-on learning experiences and opportunities to explore academic, recreational, and social activities with their peers on the MSU campus. Led by experts from MSU and the community, daily workshops covered topics such as microscopy, drones, ceramics, wilderness skills, creative writing, and medical mystery-solving.

Additional daytime highlights included analyzing a mock crime scene and exploring patrol cars with Bozeman Police, building and launching rockets with ATO's NASA grant partners, and participating in outdoor water activities on campus grounds. Evening activities offered more fun and opportunities to connect with dodgeball in the new Student Wellness Center, arcade games in the Strand Union Building, and movies in the Procrastinator Theater. The annual evening at Hyalite Reservoir, rated "10,000 out of 10!" by one camper, featured dinner, s'mores, campfire songs, and ukulele tunes.

For over 30 years, camper families have planned their summers around Peaks and Potentials, and camp director Kathleen Linder has observed the lasting friendships and excitement for learning that the camp encourages. "For me, as camp director for the past decade, Peaks and Potentials is more than a week of activities—it's a place where kids find their people, light up with curiosity, and discover passions that can last a lifetime. Their joy and enthusiasm make the week fly by, and I'm already counting the days until we do it all again," said Linder. The 2026 camp is scheduled for the week of June 14 and offers campers both overnight and commuting options.

*"I'll use my wilderness skills
for the rest of my life!"*

- Peaks and Potentials camper



ATO supported the delivery of 5 MSU summer camps serving 202 youth.

Students in grades 5-12 from across Montana explored a wide range of topics including carpentry and healthcare with Gallatin College MSU, creative writing with the Yellowstone Writing Project, and STEAM subjects with ATO's Peaks and Potentials.

Continuing Education - Exploring Digital Literacy and Design



Academic Technology and Outreach launched a new community continuing-education course titled “Exploring Digital Literacy and Design with Adobe Express.” From April to July 2025, two sections, one in-person and one online, gave participants of all backgrounds the opportunity to strengthen their ability to understand, evaluate, and create digital content in today’s online world.

Led by ATO staff member Nicole Hopkins, the course brought together 59 participants, including college students, local business owners, and MSU staff. Students engaged in hands-on design work and multimedia creation, simulating real-world branding and communication scenarios. After developing a unique logo for an existing or imaginative company, students then created visually consistent content such as videos, posters, flyers, and webpages. Along the way, the course also addressed current themes such as generative AI, accessibility in design, and personal marketing strategy.

One student captured the goals of the course saying,

“Understanding the ‘language’ of digital literacy is important, and working with these tools has helped expand my vocabulary in that area.”

By the end of the sessions, students developed tangible creative assets as well as a broader understanding of how to tell stories, build brands, and better navigate the digital world.

For more information: ato.montana.edu/continuinged



In AY 2024-2025, ATO Continuing and Professional Education supported the delivery of **119 programs**, serving **1,465 non-credit students** across **Montana and 28 additional states**.

ATO courses ranged from in-person community health workshops to online water operator modules, while partner offerings spanned self-paced gaming disorder courses to hands-on building trades trainings.



Osher Lifelong Learning Institute Encourages Curiosity for Life



As part of Montana State University's land-grant mission, the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at Montana State University (OLLI at MSU) provides intellectually stimulating and enjoyable non-credit programs that foster lifelong learning and community engagement for individuals ages 50 and better. Over the course of the year, OLLI at MSU offered over 120 programs with high-caliber instruction on a wide range of topics, including history, science, culture, and the natural world.

One popular flagship program, "OLLI on Campus" -- a half-day visit to a featured MSU college or department -- fostered connections and helped members learn about MSU's diverse range of programs, services, and research. Having previously visited the College of Agriculture's Department of Land Resources and Environmental Science (LRES) and MSU Library Archives, OLLI on Campus explored Gallatin College and the College of Engineering during the year.

Among many other offerings, OLLI at MSU partnered with Yellowstone Forever to run a seasonal multi-day immersion travel program to Yellowstone National Park in both summer 2024 and winter 2025. Based at the Lamar Buffalo Ranch, participants experienced firsthand the ecology, geology, and history of the world's first national park, guided by renowned researchers and resource managers.

With a record 863 members in the 2024-2025 academic year, an increase of around 100 members from the previous year, OLLI at MSU's continued growth reflected the expanding OLLI demographic in the Gallatin County region, the enthusiasm and curiosity of members, and generous community support. Over 100 volunteers, 34 MSU staff and faculty, and dozens of community professionals dedicated their time to delivering courses and events.

For more information: montana.edu/olli



"As a lifetime learner with a big-time curiosity and thirst for learning, OLLI is a wonderful opportunity we must take advantage of."

- OLLI member

In AY 2024-25

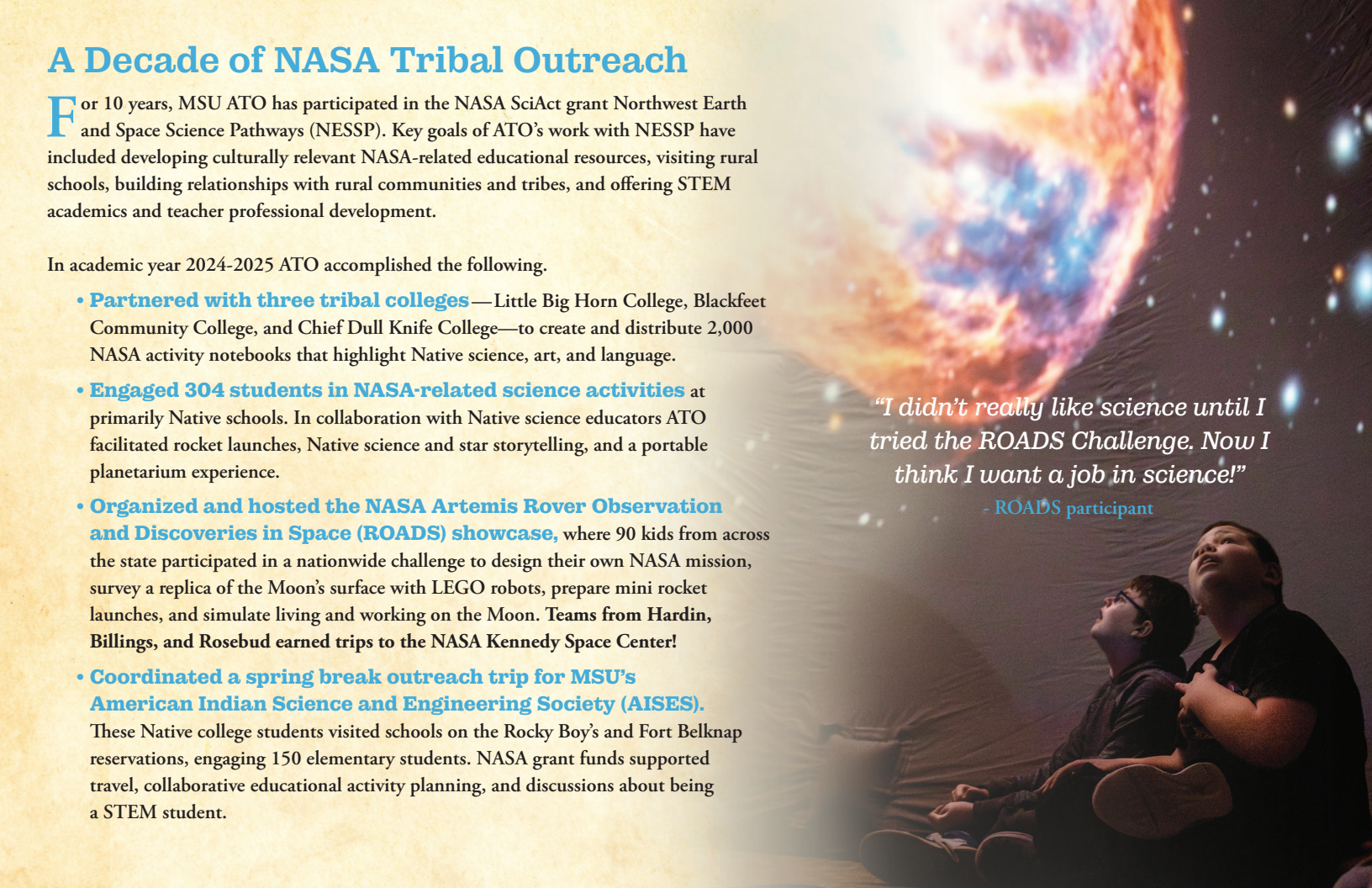
863 OLLI members participated in **121 programs**
resulting in **7,227 program registrations.**

A Decade of NASA Tribal Outreach

For 10 years, MSU ATO has participated in the NASA SciAct grant Northwest Earth and Space Science Pathways (NESSP). Key goals of ATO's work with NESSP have included developing culturally relevant NASA-related educational resources, visiting rural schools, building relationships with rural communities and tribes, and offering STEM academics and teacher professional development.

In academic year 2024-2025 ATO accomplished the following.

- **Partnered with three tribal colleges**—Little Big Horn College, Blackfeet Community College, and Chief Dull Knife College—to create and distribute 2,000 NASA activity notebooks that highlight Native science, art, and language.
- **Engaged 304 students in NASA-related science activities** at primarily Native schools. In collaboration with Native science educators ATO facilitated rocket launches, Native science and star storytelling, and a portable planetarium experience.
- **Organized and hosted the NASA Artemis Rover Observation and Discoveries in Space (ROADS) showcase**, where 90 kids from across the state participated in a nationwide challenge to design their own NASA mission, survey a replica of the Moon's surface with LEGO robots, prepare mini rocket launches, and simulate living and working on the Moon. Teams from Hardin, Billings, and Rosebud earned trips to the NASA Kennedy Space Center!
- **Coordinated a spring break outreach trip for MSU's American Indian Science and Engineering Society (AISES).** These Native college students visited schools on the Rocky Boy's and Fort Belknap reservations, engaging 150 elementary students. NASA grant funds supported travel, collaborative educational activity planning, and discussions about being a STEM student.



"I didn't really like science until I tried the ROADS Challenge. Now I think I want a job in science!"

- ROADS participant

MSU Science Day

MSU Science Day, an annual two-part event, offers local community members the opportunity to engage with MSU's science and research. At the February 2025 event, 425 participants engaged with MSU students, staff, and faculty while circulating through hands-on demonstrations and experiments in a science festival atmosphere. In the morning, 5th graders from local schools took part in the activities, and at night, the event opened to the public.

Over 70 MSU volunteers from 35 groups, including departments, labs, and student clubs, participated, presenting a wide range of topics such as math, photonics, music, biofilms, fluid dynamics, polar science, space science, computer science, entomology, and more. The free event transformed MSU research into an interactive community experience, encouraging curiosity, participation, and meaningful discoveries.



ATO Outreach Programs For more information: ato.montana.edu/outreach

Engaged over
3,700 K-12 students
in science outreach

Trained
47 K-12 teachers in
hands-on standards-
based science lessons

Provided science
communication training
to more than
50 undergraduates

Distributed
\$19,000 of scientific
equipment to
Montana's schools

Assisted over
40 faculty members
with activities related to
community engagement

MSU Receives the Carnegie Community Engagement Classification



MSU's Outreach and Engagement Council, chaired by ATO Director Kim Obbink, spent much of the 2024–2025 academic year collecting data and crafting narratives that showcased the university's extensive outreach initiatives in support of its application for the Carnegie Community Engagement Classification.

The Carnegie Community Engagement Classification is an elective designation awarded by the American Council on Education and the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, recognizing institutions that demonstrate an exceptional commitment to community engagement. The designation brings national recognition to MSU's work with external partners across teaching, research, and service in support of the public good.

MSU's application highlighted a diverse portfolio of university–community partnerships that reflect both the breadth and depth of MSU's engagement. These included Shakespeare in the Schools, a College of Arts and Architecture program that partners with rural and underserved schools to inspire a love of the arts in young audiences; the MSU Snow and Avalanche Workshop, an avalanche safety education program offered by MSU faculty and Student Engagement in partnership with Friends of the Gallatin National Forest Avalanche Center for avalanche professionals, students, and community recreationists; and Boardroom



MSU Outreach and Engagement Council

ATO's director, Kim Obbink, chairs MSU's Outreach and Engagement Council, which includes other ATO staff members and MSU partners. This 13-member council actively promotes engagement at MSU through outreach, leadership, and service, supporting the land-grant mission. It operates as a campus-wide coordinating body guiding university involvement in outreach and engagement activities, fostering collaboration with community partners, and aligning with MSU's strategic plan, *Intentional Focus 3: Expanding Engagement*.

In spring and summer of 2025, the council facilitated the selection and distribution of approximately \$38,000 in seed grant funds, awarding up to \$8,000 to five programs intended to serve communities across Montana. The seed grants, designed to promote external and multidisciplinary partnerships, have supported programs across fields such as architecture, health initiatives, and sustainability. Since its inception in 2015, the seed grant program has awarded nearly \$288,000.

For more information: montana.edu/outreachengagementcouncil

Bobcats, an experiential leadership initiative that places MSU students as non-voting members on local nonprofit boards, strengthening community connections while creating meaningful and lasting impact for nonprofit organizations.



As a result of this work, in January 2026, MSU proudly received the 2026 Carnegie Community Engagement Classification, joining 237 colleges and universities nationwide to earn this distinction. MSU first achieved classification in

2010, reaffirming its long-standing commitment to meaningful community engagement.



CANVAS Learning Management System

In 2024, the Montana University System began transitioning all campuses to a single learning management system (LMS): Canvas by Instructure. Guided by the Montana Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education, this initiative aimed to create a unified LMS that fosters seamless collaboration across campuses and better supports the growing number of Montana students participating in dual enrollment or transferring between institutions. The system also offers students a more intuitive user interface, stronger third-party tool integrations, and a robust mobile app.

At MSU, the transition was implemented by ATO's academic technology team who established the new LMS environment, integrated it into the MSU campus technical ecosystem, and migrated and archived courses from the previous LMS (D2L Brightspace). The team created a custom MSU-branded course template, launched a comprehensive campus outreach and communication campaign, and provided extensive training and support materials, including a Canvas

support website. MSU-Bozeman's Canvas instance officially launched in July 2025 for delivery of summer semester courses. Post-launch, training and support resources expanded to include online tutorials, videos, and guides to meet the ever-changing needs of MSU students, faculty, and administration. ATO staff also provided continual in-person and webinar trainings to assist faculty in the transition and successful course delivery into the fall semester.

To further strengthen MSU's educational outreach, ATO also acquired a non-credit instance of Canvas. This upgrade strengthens statewide delivery of online and in-person programs, allowing faculty and staff to provide an extensive range of non-credit community-oriented offerings, including personal enrichment courses, professional development trainings, and grant-funded outreach initiatives.

**For more information: montana.edu/ecat
– and – montana.edu/ecat/noncredit**



Vital Tech Upgrades for Healthcare Instruction

With the opening of MSU's new Student Wellness Center, MSU repurposed unused medical and dental clinic spaces at the Swingle Annex for Gallatin College MSU's Allied Health classrooms, fully moving the program to the MSU campus. In preparation for the fall 2024 semester, ATO's audio visual (A/V) team coordinated the procurement, installation, and maintenance of technology and equipment that is essential to the program's in-person and online healthcare instruction.

Technological upgrades included the installation of new monitors, TVs, cameras, speaker systems, microphones, podiums, instructor and student computers, and mobile medical computer charting carts. According to DeeDee Dalke, the college's Allied Health Program Director, these equipment enhancements significantly improved the student training experience. "Swingle Annex now serves as a learning environment that closely simulates healthcare industry settings for our Allied Health students... [the updated technology] enhances students' skills and better prepares them for healthcare careers," said Dalke. The upgrade also allowed Gallatin College to expand its OneMSU programs in Bozeman, which include satellite lectures from MSU Great Falls faculty and local student skill validation through live video feeds.

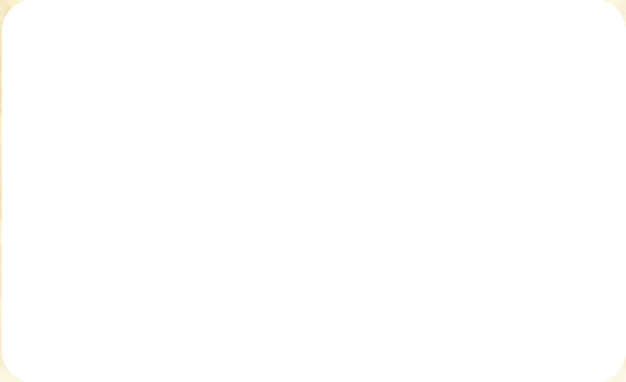
For more information: ato.montana.edu/technologies





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