



MEDIA RELEASE

Miles Community College • 2715 Dickinson Street • Miles City, MT 59301

1-800-541-9281 • milescc.edu • mccnews@milescc.edu

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IMAGE: MCC Sophomore Tori McClelland

Student Tori McClelland Earns Two National Phi Theta Kappa Honors

MILES CITY, MONTANA: Miles Community College sophomore Tori McClelland, originally from Red Deer, Alberta, Canada, has been recognized on a national level, earning two prestigious Phi Theta Kappa (PTK) honors: the 2026 New Century Transfer Pathway Scholar award and selection to the 2026 All-USA Academic Team.

McClelland, a resident assistant, member of the Pioneer Softball team, and president of the MCC PTK chapter, is the first student in Miles Community College history to receive both awards in the same year.

The New Century Transfer Pathway Scholar award recognizes the highest-scoring PTK member in each state based on academic achievement, leadership, service, and significant endeavors. Sponsored by the Coca-Cola Foundation, the Coca-Cola Scholars Foundation, and Phi Theta Kappa, the award includes a \$2,750 scholarship. McClelland was recognized at the College Presidents & New Century Scholars Recognition Luncheon during PTK Catalyst in Baltimore, Maryland.

"To be honest, I was caught off guard," McClelland said. "I wasn't expecting to get it—I was super happy and excited."

In addition, McClelland was named to the 2026 All-USA Academic Team, a national recognition honoring high-achieving community college students for their intellectual achievement, leadership, and campus and community engagement. Supported by the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) and Phi Theta Kappa, the honor includes a \$3,000 scholarship. She was recognized at the PTK Presidents Breakfast during the AACC Convention in Seattle, Washington.

"After I got the first one, I thought that was it," McClelland said. "This one completely caught me off guard!"

McClelland attended both national events this spring, describing them as memorable and impactful experiences. The PTK Catalyst conference in Baltimore featured large-scale sessions and influential speakers, while the Seattle ceremony provided a more intimate setting where she was joined by family members.

"The conference in Baltimore was huge, with lots of sessions and influential speakers," she said. "Seattle was shorter, but having my family there made it really special."

Beyond the ceremonies, McClelland valued the opportunity to connect with other high-achieving students from across the country.

"It was great to meet other students doing amazing things at their schools," she said. "It made me feel less out of my league."

She credits her success in part to the opportunities and support she found at Miles Community College, including her involvement in Phi Theta Kappa and guidance from faculty. MCC Business Instructor Kristy Atwood serves as the PTK chapter advisor and has supported student engagement within the organization.

"Phi Theta Kappa provides so many valuable opportunities for students to grow as leaders and scholars," said Atwood. "Tori is a great example of the dedication and hard work we see in our students, and it's exciting to see her recognized at this level."

"I'm not sure I would have had these opportunities at a bigger school or even known about PTK," McClelland said. "Here, I know everyone in the chapter, and that connection makes a big difference."

McClelland said one of her favorite aspects of MCC is the close-knit campus environment, where students are known by name and instructors provide individualized support.

"The instructors here care and really want you to succeed," she said. "Being a smaller campus, they really take the time to get to know you and help you one-on-one."

After graduating from MCC, McClelland plans to attend Dickinson State University to pursue a degree in business administration. She hopes to gain experience in the business field and eventually work her way into a leadership role, with long-term goals of owning or operating her own business.

While she is excited for the next step, she acknowledged that leaving MCC will be bittersweet.

"I'm a little nervous to leave for a bigger school," she said. "I'm so comfortable here and have gotten to know everyone, but I'm excited for what's ahead."

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