

PIONEER PROFILES



IMAGE: MCC English Instructor Tonya DeCock

Pioneer Profiles: Meet Tonya DeCock

MILES CITY, MONTANA: Tonya DeCock, one of MCC's newest English instructors, grew up in Forsyth and still carries the warmth and openness of a small-town upbringing into her work every day.

Her first job was selling popcorn at a movie theater, a role that helped her learn early on how to connect with people from all walks of life. Now, in her first semester at Miles Community College, those skills translate naturally into the classroom—both in person and online.

Her days are full and varied, and she spends much of her time checking in on her online courses, updating assignments, posting resources, and keeping up with the steady stream of student emails that come with managing digital classes. She prepares lessons, teaches her in-person sections, and meets with students during office hours, where conversations often drift from assignments to future goals. With 56 online students, Tonya also dedicates considerable time to one-on-one writing conferences, talking through drafts and helping writers take the next step with confidence.

"What has stood out most to me during these first months at MCC is the people," she states. "The faculty and staff are welcoming, kind, and always willing to help."

The job itself offers a flexibility she values—both in schedule and in the freedom to design courses that reflect her approach to teaching. She has especially enjoyed teaching Introduction to Business Writing. Coming from an English major's background, she finds it refreshing to explore the art of concise, purposeful communication and is learning right alongside her students.

Tonya describes herself as innovative, flexible, considerate, energetic, and upbeat—traits that helped her accomplish what she considers her greatest achievement so far. During the height of the pandemic, she completed her master's degree online with a 4.0 GPA while also teaching and coaching full-time. It was a demanding time, but one that brought her closer to her long-held goal of becoming a college instructor.

Outside of work, Tonya loves cooking, baking, and canning, especially when her garden is in full swing. She enjoys long walks with her dog and spending time with her family. Books are a constant in her life—she reads voraciously and is always ready to offer recommendations. She journals and writes creatively when she can, finding joy in words even off the clock.

If she weren't teaching, Tonya imagines she would be searching for another role much like this one—or possibly heading back to school herself. And while she has already traveled on two backpacking trips through Europe, one adventure still waits: a long, extended trip abroad with her husband.

Tonya's presence at MCC is marked by thoughtfulness, enthusiasm, and a genuine love for her students' growth. In her words, the best advice she can offer is simple: don't be afraid to ask for help. "It's honestly the bravest thing you can do," she says, echoing her father's reminder that the worst anyone can say is no. It's a philosophy that has guided her, and one she now passes on to the next generation of writers and explorers at Miles Community College.

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