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Connecting Campus and Community

Fall 2000

## UM leaders answer students' questions

The University of Montana's current budget shortfall is not a new problem, according to a faculty representative, and adjunct faculty cuts proposed for spring semester are only the latest in a series of hard hits the campus has had to take during an ongoing fiscal crunch.

"There have been financial difficulties on this campus for a long time," said William McBroom, Faculty Senate chair. "I'm having a crash course in budgets .... There isn't as much flexibility in the budget as one might imagine. All other choices have been exhausted. Truly, there aren't many choices left."

McBroom was among several campus representatives who answered student questions about the adjunct cuts at a n Oct. 18 forum held in the University Center. The forum was sponsored by the Associated Students of UM and UM's Center for Leadership Development.

ASUM President Molly Moon Neitzel served as moderator.

"Everyone is working for the common good," Neitzel said. "We just all have different ideas on how that good can be accomplished."

Student questions ranged from administrative values to budget specifics. A hearing-impaired student upset that an American Sign Language course is being cut from the spring schedule asked if education truly were a priority to the administration. Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs Lois Muir responded by saying that administrators have chosen education as their life's pursuit precisely because it is so important to them.

In response to a question about why this issue has arisen now, Muir pointed out that the budget shortfall was known about when academic

*(continued on back)*

## Coach really *is* a rocket scientist

The tight end coach for the Montana Grizzlies football team is nicknamed "The Wiz," but not just because he's an actual rocket scientist.

Ron Wisniewski said people have trouble pronouncing his last name, so Wiz is often just easier for them. But he also has more education than your average football coach. A lot more.

"I have a bachelor's degree in astrophysics, so technically I am a rocket scientist," Wisniewski said. "I like space and all that stuff. I also have a master's degree in aerospace engineering and a Ph.D. in mathematics and mathematics education."

The 35-year-old wears two hats at UM: that of assistant football coach and adjunct professor of mathematics. So when he isn't teaching players blocking techniques and passing routes, he's introducing students to subjects like calculus and mathematics for elementary educators.

Wisniewski admits it's a bit unusual for a coach to have his academic credentials.

"I've met a few other college coaches who have Ph.D.s, but they usually have degrees in something like psychology or sports physiology," he said. "For me, math and physics just came easier. But I want to say right off that I'm not an overly bright guy. I'm just Joe Average, but I'm disciplined in my work."

Wisniewski said being an academician doesn't help him much in the football world in terms of physics and math except for the teaching skills it helped him acquire.

"When you're coaching, you are still teaching," he said. "I've been teaching for about 10 years or so, and whether it's physics or football, these teaching skills have been important everywhere I've been."

His Wiz skills mean Griz players don't have to look far for a math tutor.

"A lot of the guys come to me for help," he said. "I like the tutoring because I get to know the guys in a more complete, well-rounded way."

Wisniewski said that while many Griz players seem to respect his educational background, "the bottom line is that they have to respect you for what you are teaching and the football techniques you know."



Ron "The Wiz" Wisniewski

A native of East Brunswick, N.J., Wisniewski earned his undergraduate degree at Rutgers University. He played wide receiver and tight end positions in high school and college. At Rutgers he played in a 185-pound-and-under league before an injury prompted him to focus on coaching.

The Wiz went west to earn his master's degree at the University of Colorado in Boulder. He then returned to New Jersey to hone his coaching skills, working two years of high school ball and five years at Pennsylvania's NCAA Division II East Stroudsburg University and New Jersey's NCAA Division III Kean University. He was offensive coordinator at Kean.

Then he headed back west to the University of Northern Colorado, where he earned his doctorate. It was at NCAA Division II UNC that Wisniewski joined Joe Glenn's coaching team six years ago. When Glenn was hired as UM head coach last December, the Wiz came along to round out the new Griz coaching team.

Wisniewski believes that society often makes people choose between coaching and academics.

"I think one of the reasons I get to do this is that I'm single," he said. "If I were married, for financial reasons I probably would have focused more on my engineering training."

As it is, the Wiz is a rare breed: a 5-foot-9 rocket scientist who works well among the hulking tight ends and linemen who play football at the college level.

"It's been a wild ride," he said.

—Cary Shimek

# UM earns brain research boost

UM will establish a new center for the study of brain function and disease, thanks to a start-up grant from the National Institutes of Health that will provide about \$7 million over the next five years.

"This is a huge award in terms of dollars and impact," UM pharmaceutical sciences Professor Richard Bridges. "This may be the largest research contract NIH has ever awarded in Montana."

The award to UM is one of 19 funded through the NIH Institutional Development Award (IdeA) Program. As a grantee, UM will expand its research capacity by establishing a Center of Biomedical Re-

search Excellence focused on investigating the way brain cells function at the biochemical level and how those functions change following injury or disease, such as stroke or Alzheimer's.

UM already has several active neuroscientists and strong clinical ties with the Neuroscience Institute at St. Patrick Hospital in Missoula and ongoing projects with research laboratories at Montana State University in Bozeman and the McLaughlin Research Institute in Great Falls.

President George Dennison, the College of Arts and Sciences and the School of Pharmacy and Allied Health Sciences teamed up to write the grant proposal.

## Budget — *continued*

departments were planning for fall semester. As in past years, she said, some chose to overspend their allocations, placing their bets on more cash coming in. Lower-than-expected out-of-state enrollment is one reason that didn't occur.

"Lots of people were hoping for a windfall," Muir said. "We're all disappointed that didn't happen."

However, Muir stressed that finger-pointing is useless and that fault lies with a combination of factors. "Blame is not productive," she said. "We need to work together for the same outcome."

Muir later said that, despite cuts, UM still is offering 35 percent more classes this spring than last.

Several students asked about alternative sources of funding. "Aren't there any other places you could get money from?" asked one.

Rosi Keller, acting vice president for administration and finance, answered that during the past five years of tightening budgets, the University's schools and colleges have been spared the worst of the cuts.

Administration and finance, student services and research already have undergone significant cuts in this year's budget. And in previous years, money from faculty and administrative pay raises and the faculty computing fund has been rechanneled to academics.

"The bulk of reductions have been taken from other areas," Keller said. "There is no more to take."

In response to questions about the avail-

ability of UM Foundation dollars, Muir said the Foundation is independently run by a board, and donations — including those made to the Excellence Fund — are earmarked for specific purposes such as scholarships, endowed professorships and construction.

Some students questioned staff, faculty and administrative raises, alleging 15 percent pay increases in some areas and 76 percent increases in others.

The latter number, explained Keller, was the result of a statewide reclassification to help retain information technology personnel, who were being lost to better-paying positions in private industry and out-of-state. It applies to some employees in Computing and Information Services.

Keller also said the Board of Regents approved a 3 percent raise for administrators, which is allocated on a case-by-case basis.

University Teachers Union representative Bill Chaloupka said most faculty members are covered under the collective bargaining agreement and received minimal raises. "None of them are getting 15 percent," he said. "A few may get more if they receive a grant."

The panelists overwhelmingly agreed on one point: State funding for higher education is too low.

"This university is not funded enough by the state," Neitzel said to a round of applause. "Everyone needs to help to get the state Legislature to give us more money so these budget problems don't keep coming up."

## UM Calendar

### Tuesday, Nov. 7

**Holiday**—Election Day; UM offices closed.

**Basketball**—Lady Griz vs. Basketball Travelers (exhibition), 7:05 p.m., Adams Center.

**Drama production**—"Dracula," 7:30 p.m., Masquer Theatre, Performing Arts and Radio/TV Center. Tickets \$5/general. Also "The Heiress," 7:30 p.m. nightly through Nov. 11. Montana Theatre, Performing Arts and Radio/TV Center. Tickets \$12/general, \$10/students and senior citizens, \$5/children 12 and under. Call 243-4581.

### Wednesday, Nov. 8

**Art exhibits**—"Remnants," assemblages of found painted wood, by Mike Wright, 10 a.m.-4 p.m., Mon.-Fri., through Nov. 17, University Center Gallery; Also "Natural Alchemy," by Ricki Klages and "Women of Pompeii," by Ellen Ornitz, 11 a.m.-4 p.m., Mon.-Fri., through Nov. 21, Gallery of Visual Arts, Social Science Building. Free.

**Concert**—Missoula Symphony Orchestra benefit performance, featuring the Empire Brass, 7:30 p.m., University Theatre. Call 721-3194 for ticket information.

### Friday, November 10

**Basketball**—Grizzlies vs. Delta Jammers (exhibition), 7:05 p.m., Adams Center.

**Holiday**—Veterans Day; UM offices closed.

### Saturday, Nov. 11

**Banff Festival of Mountain Films**—2000 award winners, 6 p.m., University Theatre. \$10/advance, \$12/at the door. Tickets on sale at all TIC-IT-EZ outlets and the Trail Head. Call 243-5172 for more information.

**Multimedia slide program**—"The Yellowstone Wolf: 5 Years and Running," by Greg Smith, educator and naturalist, 6 p.m., Urey Lecture Hall. \$4/general and \$3/students.

### Sunday, Nov. 12

**Basketball**—Lady Griz vs. Deja Vu (exhibition), 3:05 p.m., Adams Center.

### Monday, Nov. 13

**Concert**—University Orchestra Festival, all day, University Theatre. Free.



Main Hall to Main Street is published by University Relations at The University of Montana. Send questions, comments or suggestions to Rita Munzenrider, editor, 327 Brantly Hall, Missoula, MT, 59812, or call (406) 243-4824. Photos are by Todd Goodrich. Terry Brenner, David Purviance, Cary Shimek and Patia Stephens are contributing editors and writers.