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Montana (ASUM)

12-8-2022

Montana Kaimin, December 8, 2022

Students of the University of Montana, Missoula

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MONTANA MAIN



GRIZZ GOING UP?



UM considers its home in the Big Sky Conference

Story by Max Dupras

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Cover design by MaKayla O'Neil

December 8, 2022 | Volume 125 | Issue No. 14

Kiosk



The Montana Kaimin is a weekly independent student newspaper at the University of Montana. The Kaimin office and the University of Montana are located on land originally inhabited by the Salish People. Kaimin is a derivative of a Salish language word, "Qe'ymin," that is pronounced kay-MEEN and means "book," "message" or "paper that brings news."

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THE GARAGE: SE 3 EP 14



WALTER MEDCRAFT | MONTANA KAIMIN

ASUM is breaking the law while failing students on transparency

Last week, the Associated Students of the University of Montana broke Montana public meeting law.

ASUM closed its meeting to the public for more than an hour last Wednesday, citing a student privacy issue that needed to be discussed. Every person allowed to stay in the room had to promise silence on the matters discussed.

But, Montana public meeting law requires that such a closure of an otherwise public meeting come with a justification that student privacy outweighs the public's right to know what is going on.

The full story included in this week's edition shows that the leaders of ASUM closed the meeting without telling the public the reason.

That's a breach of the law, plain and simple.

The Kaimin demands that this meeting be reconsidered or voided if ASUM broke the law. Other illegal actions by ASUM have been voided as recently as last semester.

We call on ASUM adviser and Vice

Provost for Student Success Leslie Webb to follow the law if the student government won't.

ASUM's Vice President Alexandra Berna admitted later that the senate closed the meeting to discuss a disciplinary issue concerning Senator Zyanne Cervantes.

Cervantes was elected to the senate last spring.

She was removed from a position on a hiring committee because she shared a student's interview for a senate seat outside the committee in October.

The whole committee had to be replaced thanks to that breach of assumed confidentiality. More recently, Cervantes was removed from her position as vice chair of the senate's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion committee. ASUM gave no reason for her demotion.

Cervantes said it was for the best because of issues with her communication in the position, according to previous Kaimin reporting. No person in power is willing to take responsibility for her actions.

In fact, the whole senate is trying to

keep her problems quiet, which is why ASUM held the closed session.

Publicly elected officials don't enjoy the same rights to privacy as the average person. And, at the University of Montana, most ASUM senators are publicly elected officials who run and are selected to lead by their peers.

Cervantes is one of those elected senators. She received 337 votes to earn her seat when she ran last spring. In her capacity as a senator, Cervantes doesn't enjoy the same privacy rights as a regular student.

There's another legal argument to make here: that Cervantes's privacy rights were not more important than the public's right to know why the student government shut its doors for over an hour and disciplined her for actions they are refuse to disclose.

One of the senate's core values is transparency. The senate voted to reaffirm that earlier this year.

Transparency is important, because ASUM holds sole control over student groups, enjoys student fee money to fund

its efforts and bridges the gap between University administration and the student body.

The senate's actions are not matching its values — nor are they in line with the law — with last week's complete failure to inform students of what's happening on our own campus and with our own elected senators.

This also begs the question: is ASUM a real governing body, or do its members just want to use the power of ASUM as they please?

As far as the Kaimin's concerned, covering up disciplinary action taken against a senator not only constitutes a lack of transparency from a student government we elected to represent our interests, but it also raises concerns about corruption within ASUM.

Whatever the senate is covering up on Cervantes's behalf, students deserve to know.

Like it? Hate it? Let us know.

Email us your opinions at griffen.smith@umontana.edu



Up on the Busstop

University of Montana music students who work for UDASH get ready to play "Up on a Housetop" while a family walks by carrying warm drinks outside Break Espresso at the Parade of Lights festival on Dec. 3.

CHRIS LODMAN | MONTANA KAIMIN

THIS IS OUR LAST ISSUE OF THE YEAR! THE KAIMIN WILL RETURN THE FIRST THURSDAY OF THE SPRING '23 SEMESTER, JAN. 19.
HAPPY HOLIDAYS!

SUDOKU

Edited by Margie E. Burke

Difficulty: Medium

			2	5	8	6		3
				1			4	
3								
				5	7			
4	6	2						
				3			1	6
		4			6		7	
					4	8		
1	8		3	2				9

HOW TO SOLVE:

Each row must contain the numbers 1 to 9; each column must contain the numbers 1 to 9; and each set of 3 by 3 boxes must contain the numbers 1 to 9.

Answer to Previous Sudoku:

7	9	3	1	6	4	8	2	5
2	1	4	9	5	8	3	6	7
8	5	6	2	7	3	4	1	9
3	7	2	6	4	9	5	8	1
9	8	1	5	3	2	7	4	6
4	6	5	8	1	7	2	9	3
6	2	8	3	9	5	1	7	4
1	3	7	4	2	6	9	5	8
5	4	9	7	8	1	6	3	2

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Montana sex ed bill complicates classes, Missoula gets opioid settlements, local youth use more marijuana

EMILY TSCHETTER

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UM'S EDUCATION COLLEGE RECEIVES NATIONAL ACCREDITATION

The University of Montana's education school received accreditation from a national agency for its teaching leadership programs.

The Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation is a recognized accreditor by the U.S. Department of Education. The Phyllis J. Washington College of Education met all of the peer reviewed excellence standards for full accreditation.

Standards include clinical practice, candidate recruitment, content and teaching knowledge, program impact, quality assurance systems and continuous improvement. UM offers 29 teaching programs for all age groups in STEM, arts, languages, social studies, special education, reading and library.

The Montana Board of Public Education also reviews preparation programs and gives accreditations based on an Office of Public Instruction's review team. The education college met all of the MBPE's state and national education standards to also gain its accreditation, according to the UM news service.

NEW MONTANA SEX ED LAW IMPACTS MULTIPLE SUBJECTS, NOT JUST HEALTH CLASSES

Montana's Senate Bill 99 allows parents to opt their children out of lessons involving any human sexuality subjects. School districts have found adjusting their policies to comply has been more difficult than originally expected, according to Missoulian reporting.

The 2021 legislation requires informing parents 48 hours prior to lessons involving sex ed, anatomy, intimate relationships, sexual orientation, gender identity, contraception and reproductive rights. This has led to some schools' leadership, like administrators in Billings, to send letters to parents from the outset of this school year.

Billings' parent notice included literature like "The Great Gatsby," some U.S. Supreme Court civil rights cases and reproduction lessons in biology classes.

However, the Missoulian reported no school districts have changed their curriculums to accommodate SB 99. Schools are actively consulting attorneys to determine what materials fall under the definition of

human sexuality.

Montana's education department requires all schools' sex ed programs to be abstinence-based and age-appropriate. The legislation also prevents people who work with a clinic or organization that provides abortions from teaching in schools, even if the lessons they're visiting schools with are not related to abortions.

The 2021 Montana Youth Risk Behavior Survey found more than 40% of high schoolers have had sex, and just under half do not use condoms regularly.

MISSOULA TO RECEIVE OPIOID LAWSUIT SETTLEMENT PAYMENTS

First installment funds from a historic pharmaceutical opioid settlement will be allocated in Missoula within the next 30 days.

Pharmaceutical manufacturer Janssen (Johnson and Johnson) agreed to pay a \$26 billion settlement with three distributors, the second-largest settlement in U.S. history after the \$206 billion tobacco industry disbursement for unethical marketing in 1998. The companies paid out based on claims that their drug sales have fueled the opioid crisis.

The Missoula city-county region is eligible for \$223,000 during this first year, then about \$150,000 annually for the next 18 years from the settlement. The city will also get \$17,000 in direct funds, and the county can receive about \$30,000.

Dale Bickell, the city's chief administrative officer, said the funds have to address opioid rehabilitation, but he's not sure where they will go yet. He told the Missoulian the city and county will team up to use the money as efficiently as possible.

The funds could go anywhere from law enforcement to awareness education and addiction services.

MARIJUANA USE INCREASING AMONG MISSOULA YOUTH

The 2021 Montana Youth Risk Behavior survey found that while regular alcohol and cigarette use has been steadily decreasing for years, marijuana use has risen significantly and defied the trend.

Missoula high schoolers' regular marijuana use rose from 20% in 2019 to 25% in 2021. Missoula City-County Health Department Substance abuse expert Leah Fitch-Brody told KPAX that she's observed youth normalizing marijuana use more recently, which has led to an increase in emergency room visits.

The survey also showed a decrease in high schoolers trying and regularly using vapes, trying and regularly smoking cigarettes and currently participating in binge drinking.

Fitch-Brody also told KPAX the rise of more potent marijuana products has led to increased side effects in youth like anxiety, paranoia and agitation. Missoula City Council reported more than 220 local youth have been treated or hospitalized for marijuana-related illness in Missoula this year.

Public health recommendations suggest cities should have no more than one dispensary per 15,000 residents, which would round out to eight recommended dispensaries in Missoula County. In reality, Missoula has 52 marijuana storefronts, according to the Missoulian's reporting.

Fitch-Brody recommended local compliance checks, dedication of marijuana tax revenue to public health efforts and retail location limits in Missoula City Council.

Ward 3 Representative Gwen Jones said she thinks "we're letting [kids] down with this whole scenario" as legalized weed becomes a fact of life in Missoula.

POLICE BLOTTER

CAVEN WADE

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UMPD is wrapping up the semester, and trying to keep up with campus crimes until students depart on a much deserved winter break. Officers responded to reports from a drunk Santa Claus to a damaged fence. Here are four reports from Nov. 26 to Nov. 29.

SATURDAY 11/26: DISORDERLY DEBACLES

UMPD responded to multiple conduct reports during Griz football's last home game. Officers responded to three different reports of intoxicated individuals being disorderly. In the first two incidents, the two men decided that they weren't going down without a fight and ended up getting charged with disorderly conduct and resisting arrest. The third report took place in the beer garden, where a man dressed up as Santa Claus was reported to be very intoxicated. Before officers arrived at the beer garden, Santa magically disappeared into the night on his sleigh, never to be found by UMPD.

MONDAY 11/27-29: CAR CONUNDRUM

UMPD responded to a total of five reported car-related thefts. The first theft took place in Lot K, where somebody stole a rifle. There is currently no known suspect. UMPD cannot tell if this rifle theft involved the same suspect as the Rimini Court car rifle theft a few weeks ago. The next four reports all occurred on Nov. 29. The first was reported in the morning at Jardine Court when someone noticed that their 1997 GMC Jimmy was nowhere to be found. The vehicle has not been located following the report. The next three reported thefts were simple item thefts from vehicles at Lewis & Clark, Landusky Court and Jardine Court. The contents of those three thefts were considered low-value items. There are no current suspects.

MONDAY 11/27: FENCE FIASCO

UMPD officers responded to two reports of cars sliding into a chain link construction fence outside of Lot P. Both crashes were considered to be minor, only dealing small amounts of damage to the fence and the cars involved. Following a heavy week of snow and ice, there was bound to be some slipping and sliding on the roads. Maybe students are so mesmerized by the new buildings on campus that a fence won't stop them from getting a closer look.

TUESDAY 11/28: FAKE ID FRENZY

UMPD responded to a request to pick up a fake ID that was found at Jesse Hall. The ID was found in the morning by staff at the residence hall, and they were unable to determine to whom it belonged. If you're going to leave evidence of a crime just lying around on campus, try to make sure it isn't something with your picture on it.

Can't get enough? Start listening.

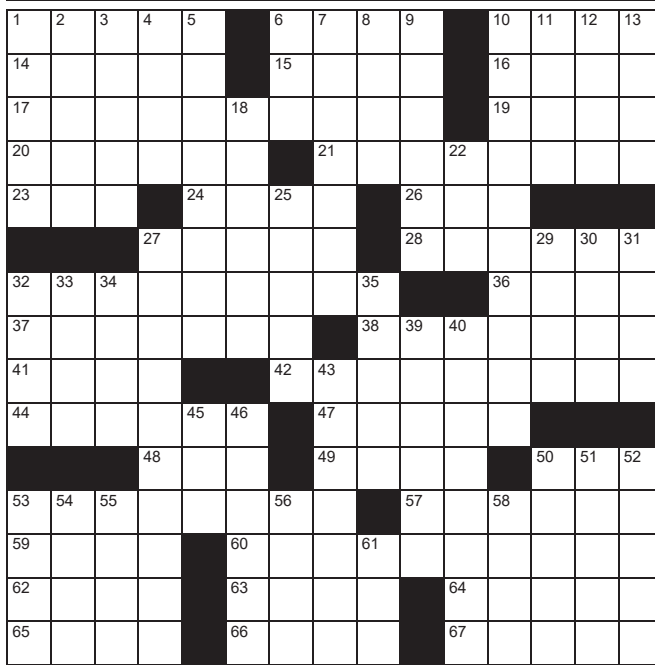
This week on **THE KAIMIN CAST**, Clay Murphy talks about Seasonal Secrets!

THE KAIMIN CAST



New episodes out Monday. Scan for the latest.

The Weekly Crossword by Margie E. Burke



ACROSS

- 1 Fathered
6 Sleeveless top
10 Santa's spot, often
14 Do penance
15 Revival cry
16 Mixed dish
17 Worn through, as carpeting
19 Gravy dish
20 Big bother
21 Barracks residents
23 OH to MA direction
24 December 24 and 31
26 ROFL alternative
27 American frontiersman
28 Playing for two
32 Word in a Pee-Wee movie title
36 Trapper's ware
37 More raucous
38 Audiophile's collection
41 Twiggy digs
42 Financial expert
44 Wipes out
47 Fluster
48 Psychic's claim
49 Legal title
50 Presidents' Day mo.
53 Fanciful yarn
57 Shoot for, with "to"
59 Face shape
60 Gamer's device
62 Puff of a joint
63 To ___ his own
64 Change, chemically
- 65 Pitcher in paintings
66 Patella's place
67 Doo-wop song, "___ Angel"
- DOWN**
1 Take to the tub
2 Embry or Hawke
3 Spiny shrub
4 Aces, sometimes
5 "Madam Secretary" star
6 Barfly's bill
7 Stockpiler
8 Roman ruler
9 Solemn tolls
10 Prefab in a park
11 Balm ingredient
12 Truth twister
13 A whole bunch
18 Give, as time
22 Forest denizen
25 Get used (to)
27 Any Stephen King novel
- 29 Voice of the iPhone
30 Tosses in
31 Adam or Mae
32 King Charles' only sister
33 Person of action
34 Way to pay
35 Lose ground?
39 Win over
40 Lip affliction
43 Marching chant
45 NY time zone
46 "Coal Miner's Daughter" star
50 Threadlike
51 Standing tall
52 Ship's mooring place
53 Carryall bag
54 Assert
55 Camp site, often
56 Student aid
58 "Guilty," e.g.
61 Bite-bullet link

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Answers to Previous Crossword:

D	A	B	S		O	C	C	U	R		A	S	A	P			
U	T	A	H		R	O	U	S	E		V	I	N	E			
M	E	S	A		A	M	B	A	S	S	A	D	O	R			
B	A	S	M	A	T	I		P	A	T	E	N	T				
O	M	G			C	O	C	A	C	O	L	A					
					U	S	E	R		C	O	N	T	R	A	S	T
C	R	I	E	D		P	R	O	S	Y		P	L	Y			
H	A	T	E		S	L	O	P	E		S	P	U	R			
E	R	A			S	C	A	N	T		F	O	R	G	O		
F	E	R	O	C	I	T	Y			C	A	N	E				
					R	O	S	E	M	A	R	Y		C	A	T	
A	L	T	E	R	S			L	E	E	T	I	D	E			
D	I	A	G	N	O	S	T	I	C		H	A	I	R			
A	C	R	O		R	O	A	C	H		A	T	O	M			
M	E	A	N		S	P	R	E	E		N	E	S	S			

FIFA-scope

KATRINA SABOL

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MACKENNA GLEAVE

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After three weeks of the 2022 FIFA Men's World Cup, there's been a fair share of excitement and drama. Between the dramatic flops from Brazil, the magnificent overkill wins from Spain and the multitude of sweaty men feigning injuries for penalty kicks, this tournament is one to remember. Although you may be watching from the comfort of your couch, you're probably wondering which ball-kicking baddie you're most like on the field. Only the stars have the answers.

SAGITTARIUS (NOV. 22-DEC. 21):

Sagittarius, you are Richarlison from the Brazil national team. You are full of passion, take advantage of every opportunity given to you and look ready to kick other players in the balls if they look at you sideways. Some may not be able to rock platinum blonde hair, but you pull it off and look sexy and *serious* as hell. Take this as a sign.

CAPRICORN (DEC. 22-JAN. 19):

Kylian Mbappé is the only man you can compare to Capricorn. Your cheeky French ass is allllll about the fame. Like Mbappé, you're quick and determined to get whatever you want. You don't mind carrying your team to a win using your goals only. It just inflates your ego.

AQUARIUS (JAN 20-FEB 18):

Aquarius, you are Erling Haaland from Norway. You didn't qualify for the tournament this year, but you could give two fucks. You're content enough basking in the sun with your six-pack, trying not to drink your sorrows away while playing golf until you actually have to be a professional soccer player again.

PISCES (FEB. 19-MARCH 20):

As Luka Modrić, you're out for revenge for your last World Cup failure. Just because you're from the small nation of Croatia doesn't mean that you're not a big baller. Pisces, sometimes you can rely too heavily on unnecessary purchases just as Modrić relies on that headband to hold back that luscious Lord Farquaad hair.

ARIES (MARCH 21-APRIL 19):

Aries, you hold the spirit of the young Spaniard star himself, Gavi. You're a firecracker on the field and you know how to ignite passion within your peers. You might've just scored the second-youngest international goal ever, but you've already been scoring in our hearts. <3

TAURUS (APRIL 20-MAY 20):

Taurus, you and Harry Kane are two sides of the same coin. You're one of the all-time top scorers, and we're not just talking on the field. An English accent might be what you're missing to level up your game. Just don't get too good at it and end up on Love Island.

GEMINI (MAY 21-JUNE 20):

You are Mexico's Guillermo Ochoa, a real keeper. Gemini, we know that consistency maybe isn't your forte, but we all love what you can do with your hands (on and off the field). Once every four years, you can muster up the strength to save your country's ass in front of the net and sacrifice your body for our entertainment.

CANCER (JUNE 21-JULY 22):

You should quit your day job with the acting skills you have, Cancer. You and Neymar are basically twins. No inconvenience is too small for you and trust us, we aren't fooled by your Brazilian bullshit. We all know you aren't truly that big of a pussy, but the fake tears do look nice.

LEO (JULY 23-AUG. 22):

Leo, you are the embodiment of Portugal's Cristiano Ronaldo. You're cocky and sometimes for good reason. You are one of the most expensive players in the Premier League, but that still isn't enough. It's more than soccer, it's stardom. If anyone challenges your greatness, their opinion is simply wrong (or at least that's what you tell yourself to help you sleep at night).

VIRGO (AUG. 23-SEP. 22):

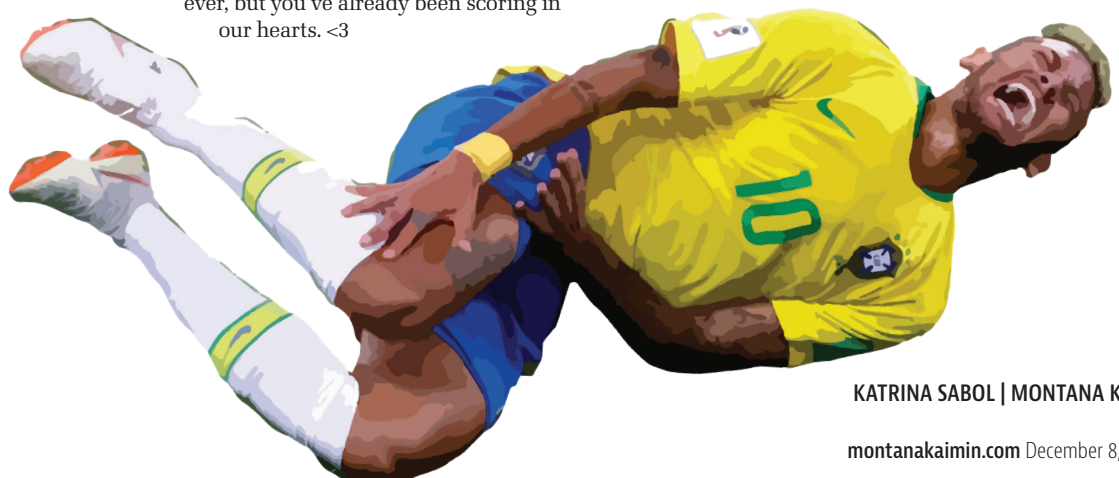
You're a short king, Virgo, so naturally, Lionel Messi is your man. No one looks better on a poster than you, and we mean it. Everyone's dream lives within your 5-foot-7 toned and tattooed Argentinian body. You ensure everything is perfect, because deep down you know it's better for everyone if you're in control.

LIBRA (SEP. 23-OCT. 22):

Libra, you're the people's prince, Christian Pulisic. As the Captain America of the U.S. team, scoring is easy for you, wherever you are. A pelvic contusion doesn't mean shit as long as the bitches are sympathizing for you. Life is all about balance, right? #It'sCalledSoccer

SCORPIO (OCT. 23-NOV. 21):

Like Kevin De Bruyne, a star for Belgium's highly praised team, you love drama. You've always wanted your own reality show, so you made one for yourself by fighting every player who dares to touch your fluffy hair. You're the type to instigate and pull up a chair and popcorn to watch it unfold.



KATRINA SABOL | MONTANA KAIMIN

ASUM closes public meeting for ‘student privacy’ to discipline senator

EMILY TSCHETTER

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Members of the University of Montana’s student government swore to confidentiality Wednesday before closing its Nov. 30 meeting because of “student privacy law,” a move that one open-meetings expert said could be illegal under Montana law.

The senate met privately as an entire chamber for 73 minutes. The meeting focused on disciplining Senator Zyanne Cervantes, but the reason has not been released to the public. Cervantes was demoted from the vice chair of the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee in October.

The Associated Students of the University of Montana told members of the public to leave the room for a private “executive session” called by Vice President Alexandra Berna. ASUM’s constitution says any member of the senate can recommend the senate enter executive session.

Berna said she would state the reason for closing the meeting when she called for executive session, but told the public to leave the room before explaining any reason outside of student privacy law, according to a recording of the meeting from the Kaimin.

Berna said on Friday that Cervantes was the reason for the closed meeting. She claims that she gave the reason before closing the meeting. The Kaimin’s audio of the meeting posted with this story at montanakaimin.com shows that is not the case.

Berna said the senate took minutes during the closed session, but the minutes will not be publicly shared. ASUM also took an “informal vote to guide [her] judgment” during the private meeting. Under Montana law, formal votes cannot be taken during closed meetings.

Montana law requires that meetings of public bodies, like ASUM, be open by default. The law allows for legislative bodies to close meetings, but it requires that a presiding officer explain why the need for privacy outweighs the public’s right to know.

Mike Meloy, a Montana attorney specializing in public access issues, said ASUM violated the state constitution by not properly explaining the basis for closing the meeting, which also deprived the public’s ability to challenge the closure.

“There were very significant issues involved here,” Meloy said. “The Montana Supreme Court said if the meeting involves a discussion of privacy issues, it can be

closed. But if the matters involve a person who is vested with the public trust, then that person has a diminished right of privacy and does not justify closing a meeting to talk about some potential violation of that trust.”

The Montana Constitution states that no person may be deprived of the right to observe the deliberations of public agencies, except where the right to privacy clearly outweighs the right to know.

Leaders of public meetings must also generally explain all the topics the body plans to discuss in the closed session.

The Kaimin asked during public comment for the senate’s legal basis to close the meeting and why the session needed to be kept private. Berna said the session would not be open to the public because it “falls directly under student privacy laws.”

“I felt it was crucial that everyone in the room regarding that topic was going to have the ability to speak freely,” Berna said in an interview Friday. “That was the only mode where we were actually going to make any progress in terms of finding a solution for the topic of the session. It was the only place where everyone had an opportunity to say whatever they needed to say.”

She said she would share the senate’s legal basis to call it after it took place. Berna said she based the decision on “general student privacy” and ASUM legal counsel Lou Villemez would have more information.

When the Kaimin asked Villemez about the decision to close the meeting, he stated that meetings of public bodies can be closed to protect the privacy rights of employees. He claimed not to know exactly how that law applied to student senators.

When Berna called for the session, she told the room that any senator unable to refrain from sharing what was discussed had to step out of the room for the closed session. None of the senators left.

Berna then told any members of the public to leave and wait to be called back in. She allowed acting ASUM adviser Leslie Webb and ASUM legal services representatives Courtney Damron and Villemez to stay.

While Webb is listed as ASUM’s adviser, she told the Kaimin on Thursday that she is only a “liaison,” and has no authority over the chamber. She said she had no knowledge the closed session may be violating Montana public meeting laws.

She added she did not have the authority to step in and correct any violations.



The members of the ASUM senate begin with opening remarks, roll call for members and addressing the minutes of the end of term meeting from spring on Aug 31. **ASTON KINSELLA | MONTANA KAIMIN**

Senator Taylor Curry agreed with the decision to close the meeting and said he thought it was necessary to respect student privacy because of “sensitive materials.”

“I can assure you we had a productive and respectful conversation,” Curry said in an emailed statement. “I feel confident that ASUM is open about things that affect the student body, and our executive session did not keep anything hidden that people have a right to know about. It was a choice to respect privacy and provide an appropriate place for sensitive discussion.”

The Montana Supreme Court ruled in 2015 in *Missoula County Public Schools v. Bitterroot Star* that discussion of personnel matters or records does not give a blanket exception to the public’s right to know.

Josie Hess, a UM sophomore who co-authored a resolution the senate was seeing that night, sat outside in the University Center to wait for the closed session to end.

Hess said she was confused. Wednesday’s meeting was the first ASUM meeting she attended and she wondered if the closed session was a usual practice.

“It was definitely a bit alarming,” Hess said. “I didn’t realize it would be this long ... I definitely feel a little bit left out, but I also understand that they have more important things to talk about. I just don’t really know what it’s about.”

Villemez, ASUM’s legal counsel, said that

closed executive sessions were a matter of routine in the state of Montana. As an example, he cited school boards closing their meetings to protect an employee’s right to privacy.

Villemez said he did not know exactly how this exception applied to the closed meeting. He said he could not comment on if his office talked with ASUM beforehand about closing the meeting.

Berna said in an interview UM Legal Counsel Lucy France knew the legal basis for ASUM’s executive session. When asked if she helped guide ASUM for the meeting Wednesday, France said “absolutely not.”

Webb stepped out and invited Hess and the two Kaimin reporters at the meeting back into the room after an hour and 13 minutes.

Business Manager Joselyn Jolly immediately began her weekly report after the closed session by calling a 20-minute recess for the senate to celebrate President Elizabeth Bowles’ birthday.

Berna said she may share more information about the closed session in future meetings, but will not disclose anything about what student representatives discussed in the session.

**Additional reporting
contributed by Andy Tallman**

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Provost continues to solicit academic restructure feedback at town hall

ANDY TALLMAN

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Provost Pardis Mahdavi held a town hall meeting on Nov. 29 to seek feedback from staff and faculty on the ongoing academic renewal plan, where attendees voiced their support for interdisciplinarity and sought answers on how the proposed plan would solve structural problems in their programs.

Mahdavi began by reiterating some of the challenges the University of Montana faces, including recovering from the worst pandemic in 100 years, a global climate emergency and public doubt in higher education.

"The only way that we can meet these challenges is if we come together," Mahdavi said.

The academic renewal includes a proposed restructuring of schools into different "pillars" that incorporate more subjects into single courses and programs. Several plans have been brought before the faculty senate, but nothing has been nailed down yet since they aren't finalized.

In an earlier interview, Mahdavi said that restructuring colleges was the best way to make coursework pathways more accessible and remove barriers to collaboration across disciplines.

According to senate member and journalism professor Dennis Swibold, there are no plans in the immediate future to vote on a restructure plan.

Laurie Baefsky, dean of the College of Arts and Media, was involved in the restructure plans early on. Some of the early proposals placed Arts and Media in a pillar tentatively called "Build/Create" with the Business college and a category called "complex adaptive systems" encompassing computer science and technology. Baefsky was in charge of making sense of how those disciplines would be connected.

Creativity is the bread and butter of Arts and Media, Baefsky said, and that it's a necessary attribute in both business and technology. Arts and Media could learn marketing and entrepreneurship from business, and technology would be the connective tissue.

"Everything feeds into technology," Baefsky said.

She pointed out technology-heavy disciplines in Arts and Media, such as documentary film, game design and esports.

Baefsky said that the conversation has started to move away from Arts and Media.

"I think that framework has stalled at this point," she said.

Now, the conversation is more about what to do with Humanities and Sciences and the Franke College of Forestry and Conservation. Baefsky said she thinks there's going to be a phased approach to the restructure. Phase one will focus on H&S, and Phase two will combine and aggregate colleges.

Baefsky anticipates the provost's office will put in a "request to plan" at the January or March Board of Regents meeting.

Baefsky has been at the University for almost two years. Before coming here, she oversaw more interdisciplinary programs at other schools, so she's eager to see UM do something similar.

"The opportunity around interdisciplinarity is immense," Baefsky said. "The reason I know it can work is because I've been at other universities where it works. Part of why I came to the University of Montana is because I saw that potential for change here."

Mahdavi said she hopes the restructure will create clearer pathways and expectations for students by making curriculum requirements more clear and cleaning up redundant coursework. She claims it will also allow students to pursue more of their interests without the need for having multiple majors.

Mahdavi stated that internships are a lot more important to employers than multiple degrees. She claims students will have more time for internships once their degree paths are more streamlined and require fewer credits under her proposed restructure.

"The point of everything that we are doing is the students," Mahdavi said.

However, some degrees are easier to streamline than others, Jolie Scribner, an H&S academic adviser, pointed out. This is because some degrees require a certain amount of credits for certain accreditations.

For example, the College of Health probably won't be affected much by the restructure, according to Dean Reed Humphrey. It consists of six schools that are largely professional, accredited programs.

Humphrey served as provost from 2020 to 2022 and said that he didn't oversee much work on the restructure during that time, as UM was more focused on handling COVID-19. Before Mahdavi's arrival to campus this year, the renewal wasn't focused on a restructure, Humphrey said. Instead, academic renewal efforts were concerned with how to sustain UM's existing academics.

Mahdavi mentioned that UM is currently

in a period of growth and needs to think of sustainable growth in money and enrollment.

"It's always better to make changes from a place of strength," Mahdavi said.

Mahdavi introduced the provost's Faculty Advisory Committee at the town hall meeting, which is made up of UM faculty and meets every week to discuss feedback on the renewal.

Committee member and theater professor John DeBoer explained that they hoped to implement a recommendation from the office of the Office of the Commission of Higher Education of "percentage of effort." Practically, Mahdavi explained that this would involve each faculty member sitting down with a chair and deciding what percentage of their time would be allocated to teaching, research and service.

Michael Murphy, a professor in media arts, said that he was confused about where the renewal and restructure plan was at. He said he was excited about interdisciplinary colleges, and was worried a possible STEM college would just silo STEM disciplines.

Creagh Breuner, associate dean of biological science, responded to Murphy, saying that in her department, opinions on a STEM department vary wildly.

Vicki Watson, a faculty member of environmental studies, brought up high turnover in its advising center, and said she'd like to see more support for Missoula College.

"We have a lot to learn from Missoula College," Mahdavi agreed, and added that it has a good way of thinking about general education.

Breuner pointed out that rearranging departments could place faculty researchers side by side with people who didn't know



UM provost Pardis Mahdavi leads a town hall on Nov. 29 to try to clear up some of the confusion surrounding the proposed academic renewal.

MADDIE CRANDALL | CONTRIBUTED

much about the process of their research.

Doug Emlen, an advisory committee member and biology professor who's been involved in restructure plans under multiple administrations, said he's optimistic that the restructure will work out soon.

"We're not flying blind here. We're building on a foundation that's fairly robust," Emlen said. "There's an alignment of the stars here."

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'Intentional, autistic space': new student group creates student-led network for autistic peers

CHRISTINE COMPTON

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As an autistic student, 19-year-old sophomore Mebust knows college wasn't built for people like them in mind. The summer before their freshman year, they scoured the internet for tips on how to be an autistic college student. All they found were advice columns for parents with 14-year-old geniuses and scary statistics.

Around 40% of autistic Americans will graduate college, according to the National Library of Medicine. Nearly 60% of non-disabled and neurotypical students graduate. It's one of the biggest reasons Mebust, who only goes by their last name and they/them pronouns, decided to create the University of Montana Autism Network, or UMAN. They said they wanted to create a place to help beat the statistics — and, more importantly, help fellow autistic and otherwise-disabled students know they aren't alone.

"My goal for creating UMAN was to create an intentional autistic space for other autistic students at UM," Mebust said. "Talking about our own experiences and identity is something that I tend to do with any autistic person I meet. It's something integral to myself and others that few can relate to, and UMAN was made to make the most out of that."

UMAN was created by Mebust and their roommate Clio Whittington in the past semester. It meets on Tuesdays from 4-5 p.m. in a conference room in the Branch Center. It's currently the only autism social support group run by, and for, autistic students on campus.

Autism refers to Autism Spectrum Disorder, a group of developmental disorders that are caused by differences in the brain, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention said. Autism is commonly associated with difficulties in communication and repetitive behaviors.

"People with ASD may also have different ways of learning, moving or paying attention," the CDC said. "It is important to note that some people without ASD might also have some of these symptoms. But for people with ASD, these characteristics can make life very challenging."

The social differences are what make college so much harder, Whittington said. It's not that the students can't do the work. The students are being asked to complete classes that won't accommodate them or don't match their learning needs. If classes require students to make eye contact or speak in public, autistic

students may have to focus harder to accomplish the same goals.

"I've been thankful to have a lot of support from my peers and faculty, but there is always constant ableism thrown my way," Mebust said. "Learning isn't ableist, but the academia and social environment it exists in does."

While UMAN isn't tackling classroom barriers for autistics itself, it provides a space for autistic and other disabled students to speak freely about the obstacles they face.

Mebust and Whittington talked about how non-autistics, or allistic people, tend to expect autistic people to be either hyper-intelligent prodigies or incapable. Mebust remembers playing into the stereotype by using bigger words.

"It's not that I'm lying to allistic people," Mebust said. "It's just that they expect something different. I don't even realize I'm doing it half the time."

A big stressor that students talk about is masking. Masking is when neurodivergent people try to hide or suppress behaviors that neurotypical people aren't familiar with. It basically means hiding symptoms of autism, like resisting the urge to make repetitive motions or forcing oneself to make eye contact. Neurodivergent people may not always be successful at masking, and that can put them up for further scrutiny or vulnerability, Mebust said.

"That's a lot of pressure," Mebust said. "At UMAN, we try to make a sensory-friendly environment and a social space where masking isn't expected from anyone."

UMAN isn't affiliated with the Associated Students of the University of Montana, or



Anthropology major Mebust, 19, started the University of Montana Autism Network. Meetings are held in the conference room of the Branch Center. **NATE SANCHEZ | MONTANA KAIMIN**

ASUM, but Mebust said it's interested in getting access to funding and connections with the other student groups. However, one of the biggest challenges is establishing an official list of members.

In order to register as a recognized ASUM student group, UMAN would need a president, treasurer, an adviser and eight other members to be listed on GrizHub. While UMAN has been gaining a steady stream of 15 members per meeting, UMAN prides itself on maintaining confidentiality of members who don't publicly want to share their disability, Mebust said.

"That may limit our publicized support, but we're not here for that," Mebust said. "We're here for each other."

UMAN isn't the University's only resource for autistic students, but it's the only organization that's run by autistic students. Other

resources like the Mentoring, Organization, and Social Support for Autism Inclusion on Campus program, or MOSSAIC, can evaluate classrooms and spaces on campus for autistic students. MOSSAIC will then develop a kit that will help mute distracting or harsh stimuli that could bother neurodivergent people. It's directed by UM doctoral candidate Jennifer Schoffer Closson, and it has placed UM as the seventh most autism-friendly campus in the United States by Best Value Schools.

Mebust said while programs like MOSSAIC are important, it's also important for students to have a space where they don't feel like they're being evaluated, judged or serviced.

"We can talk about special interests or unwind with crafts," Mebust said. "Whatever it is, it's important for us to have a place to just be."



CALLING ALL CONTENDERS *UM considers its home in the Big Sky Conference*

Story by Max Dupras | Photos by Maddie Crandall

WHEN YOU ENTER the Champions Center at the University of Montana, you see top-of-the-line weight training sets, ellipticals and even a small island cafe where athletes relax. You might also see UM Athletic Director Kent Haslam.

"This is my favorite part of my job," Haslam said while waving to students on the elliptical. "It's like I'm the dad to 300 kids."

Haslam has been at the University since 2012. He has seen changes in every program, from the second stint of Montana's winningest football coach, Bobby Hauck, to the departure of Montana's winningest head coach in any sport, former women's basketball coach Robin Selvig.

He helped create the building he stands in, a multi-million dollar facility equipped with high-end equipment and luxurious locker rooms that only continue to upgrade.

Haslam peeks into the locker room and says hi to the various athletes — mainly football players — taking some time to rest. He recalls the days when the men's locker room was not even a quarter of the space.

The locker room was just one piece of the Champions Center, completed in 2017 with

a price tag of \$14 million. As Haslam waves to athletes on his walk, he said there is an unprecedented tension in college athletics that the entire country is adjusting to.

UM currently plays in the FCS or Football Championship Subdivision, a level of Division I football where each team at UM's level is seeded and then placed by the rank of schedule and record into a playoff bracket.

If Montana moved to the Mountain West, it would now have to play in the Football Bowl Subdivision or FBS. This is the highest level of collegiate football you can play in and each conference competes in its respective championship game or "bowl game."

The new challenges of staying in Division I are on the minds of every school, mainly Football Championship Subdivision schools like Montana.

For FBS schools, it is easy at the top because of these schools' strong competitive status. But for FCS schools, some have only been Division I for a couple of years. That puts newer Division I schools at risk of dropping back down.

"There's a lot of nervousness and a lot of chaos right now in college athletics," Haslam said. "It was an industry that certainly had

a lot of stability over the years. Conferences were stable. Rivals were stable. But certainly, there is a huge change that's coming in college athletics and I personally think some of that change was needed."

Competing with other schools combines so many factors. Changes to how athletes move schools, name, image and likeness deals, and changes to the requirements for being a Division I school all play into one question: Will Montana move to a different, possibly better conference?

"My answer always is that we've got to be in a position where we're strong, where we're taking care of the things," Haslam said. "We wanna be in a position where we don't chase something financially that's just not sustainable. That's not a wise thing to do."

THE FOREVER HOME

Montana has known a couple of previous conferences before the Big Sky Conference, but none have been as inviting.

A collegiate athletic conference is a group of schools that agree to play each other in all sports each year. This deal with the conference helps give each school money through

TV deals and partnerships that give schools the money to have scholared student-athletes.

The Grizzlies joined the Big Sky in 1963 along with its rival, Montana State. Other schools like Weber State, Idaho, Idaho State and Gonzaga — which is now in the West Coast Conference — joined the Big Sky too.

The Big Sky has added and lost members over the years. Most recently, it lost Southern Utah University, which played in the Western Athletic Conference this year.

Other schools in the conference have also left. Idaho jumped through two conferences before returning. Schools like Boise State and Nevada stayed in the Big Sky through the late '90s before jumping ship to bigger conferences. There are currently 10 full-time members in the Big Sky.

Big Sky Conference Deputy Commissioner Dan Satter said he knows what makes a Big Sky Conference member. It's all about what a school offers for the greater good of the conference. Whether that be attendance or location, Satter said the Big Sky is set up to be equitable.

"When you're cutting up one more slice of that pie to divide it up equally, you have to

LEFT: Griz football players relax in the 7,100-square-foot locker room on Nov. 30, 2022. To help raise money for the Champions Center project, some of the lockers were sold for \$10,000 each for sport plaques to recognize the donors.

RIGHT: Student athletes train in the 19,400-square-foot Athletic Performance Center within the Washington-Grizzly Champions Center on Nov. 30, 2022. The facility was a privately funded project and opened in 2017.

make sure that there's enough going into the entire pot, that everybody's still getting the same slice they're supposed to get," Satter said about the addition of teams to the Big Sky.

Only four of the Big Sky's original six members have stayed loyal to the conference since 1963. The real change has come with what makes a Division I program. And with the Grizzlies' history, it isn't hard to see why a change wouldn't be at least considered.

PLAYING THE FIELD

There are three main factors that a conference will consider when taking in a new member: facilities, revenue and geography.

The Grizzlies have a \$23 million budget and plentiful facilities that continue to be added. A brand-new women's locker room is in the works. An indoor practice facility is projected to be built in the fall of 2023.

Washington-Grizzly Stadium is the largest outdoor stadium in Montana. These facilities are all donor-funded. Montana alums pile on most of the \$18 million that helped improve and add to the athletic program's facilities.

The next piece is revenue. UM has a lot, raking in the most money of all Big Sky Conference schools.

"We're in a state where we're not competing against professional sporting teams," Haslam said. "We're not competing against a lot of that other sporting noise that's out there."

The Grizzlies have sold out nearly every home football game this season. Other teams like soccer and volleyball broke single-game attendance records.

Now, it all comes down to geography. For Haslam, geography is a huge piece of any conference. You want to play close teams. Even with the spending money that UM has, the department doesn't want to blow it all on travel.

"We wanna be regional. We wanna be able to get on a bus as much as we can," Haslam said. "We want to be competing against schools that are out here in the region."

But in recent years, geography for conferences has become more of a minute detail.

One example came with the announcement that the University of Southern California and the University of California in Los Angeles were taking the move to the



Big Ten Conference.

USC and UCLA are both currently in the Pac-12, a conference that consists of West Coast schools, except for the University of Utah and the University of Colorado.

Big Ten Conference teams span the Midwest to the East Coast. USC and UCLA's closest opponent will be Nebraska, a school that is approximately 1,520 miles from Los Angeles.

The move would net both California schools roughly \$1 billion in media rights deals, according to reports from ESPN.

These deals make airfare inconsequential for these programs. If Montana moved to a conference with a better TV deal, it would help bring in extra money to match those in the Power Five conferences.

CLEANING THE BIG HOUSE

Haslam said he's aware of the Grizzlies' imprint on mid-major Division I athletics. He is also aware of the fans and their perception that Montana might be too good for the Big Sky.

For Haslam, plans to move Montana to a different conference would require a lot of stipulations.

"We're certainly, in the Big Sky Conference, a driver along with Montana State," Haslam said. "We're a driver of that TV revenue. Griz-Cat football is a driver of TV revenue because those rights are held by the Big Sky Conference. So, you wanna find a good match for us and it makes no sense for us to be moved around for every sport."

The Pac-12 is a Power Five conference, a status given to the five most competitive

conferences in the country, so Montana would be far outmatched by every school it competed against. The first choice for a potential move is to the Mountain West Conference.

The Mountain West is a conference that has ties to Montana and houses former Big Sky members Boise State and Nevada. The move would have big implications for football.

Montana would not only come into a subdivision with higher competition, but it would be one of the lowest-grossing schools in the conference.

"We have a \$23 million budget," Haslam said. "We generate 70% of that revenue. But for us to, let's say, go into the Mountain West Conference, the average athletic budget in that conference is about \$40 million. So there's a \$17 million gap. We're gonna want to be competitive. We're gonna wanna be competing for championships. We're not gonna just want to be the team that everybody beats up on."

Haslam said that conferences provide major TV deals. The Big Sky Conference, for instance, signed a contract with Scripps and has a partnership to stream games on ESPN+.

Moving to the Mountain West would mean more TV money. But Haslam said it would take a lot of convincing to make a move that big. Athletes might be at a disadvantage by putting them at a higher level of competition.

"I think college athletics as a whole, I think we have completely minimized the value of a college education," Haslam said.

LIMITATIONS

There are clear issues with moving. The competition, the cost and the sacrifice the student body would make are all factors.

Haslam made it clear that staying in the region is important for Montana. But even with the options here, it doesn't seem like the Mountain West has a spot.

Mountain West Deputy Commissioner Bret Gilliland said that every conference has a baseline of what it takes to be a member. He also said the Mountain West would expand if needed on two main principles.

"As it relates to realignment, it depends upon your reason that you're looking to add member institutions," Gilliland said. "Is it a situation where you've lost member institutions and you're trying to backfill and you need to get back to a certain number? ... Or is it simply where there is an opportunity to strategically improve our league make-up?"

Even when reports stated the Mountain West could expand in 2018, it stayed put with the 12 members it had and has continued with those members since the addition of San Jose State and Utah State in 2013.

But the Pac-12 losing its two largest schools in terms of revenue put the Mountain West Conference in a spot where teams might look to move out.

"If (member universities) have an opportunity that they feel is better for their institution and it's higher profile and more revenue, they're likely going to pursue that," Gilliland said. "But certainly we would do what we could to keep them."

For UM, the transfer portal makes it easier for athletes to come and go. Name, image and likeness deals give students the power to make money on their own and possible changes to the requirements that make a school Division I stand in the way of any game-changing moves.

"It's only fair to think that athletics have to do something to help benefit the University as a whole," Haslam said.

Haslam believes that all of these things can co-exist. He even thinks many of the rules put in place were "archaic," such as how name, image, and likeness, or NIL were governed by the NCAA for years. But he is worried that this NIL change and how easy it is to get in and out of the transfer portal affects the "student" part of student-athlete the most.

If UM is to stay put in the Big Sky Conference, these changes could either boost or relegate Montana's status if it can't keep up.

But Haslam remains optimistic. He said he believes these changes are for the better and it is only a matter of time before the effects start to take hold.

"Changes happen," Haslam said. "It's nice when you're in a spot where you can make decisions instead of having decisions made for you. And I think we're in that spot."

'Peppa Pig's Adventure' play is a nightmare before Christmas

KAYLA INGRAHAM

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Groups of children jumped up and down, shouting "Peppa" in unison as they waited in anticipation to see the famous cartoon British pig take center stage. Their impatient calls were soon answered as some college students' nightmares emerged: giant, life-size pigs and their faceless puppeteers.

On Tuesday, Nov. 29, parents, children and some University of Montana students gathered in UM's Adams Center to watch the live performance of "Peppa Pig's Adventure," a production by Round Room Live, producer and promoter of exhibitions and family show entertainment. The play follows Peppa, her family and friends on an "outdoor adventure."

Since Peppa Pig took to the screen in 2004, the rumors surrounding the beloved character have only grown more outlandish. The preschool pig has stirred online commotion among Gen Z-ers who have taken to plat-

forms, such as Twitter and TikTok, to discuss conspiracies around Peppa being 7 feet tall, having four eyes and the dark origins of her upbringing.

While you can take a breath of fresh air knowing that Peppa only stands about 3 feet high with only two haunting and emotionless eyes, your fear of cartoon pigs is not invalid. After witnessing "Peppa Pig's Adventure," viewers can validly shift their fears to the true terrors of the show: Madame Gazelle, Mommy Pig and Daddy Pig, who tower over the audience. They actually might be 7 feet tall.

If that isn't nightmare fuel enough, the smaller puppets on stage were operated by highly visible puppeteers dressed in all black. This, combined with pig giants, created an unsettling ambiance reminiscent of a scene out of the animatronic horror video game, "Five Nights at Freddy's."

Fortunately or unfortunately, for a self-titled tour, the spotlight failed to shine Peppa's way. Contradictory to the show's name, the main character was Daisy, the only human charac-

ter, aside from Santa, who showed up in the final act to perform "Jingle Bells."

With the puppeteers controlling Peppa and her friends, and the abnormally large size of the adult figures in the play, it's somewhat understandable why Peppa was outshined by a cast of mostly giants. But for a touring show, it lacked character development and was barely hanging on by musical numbers that, aside from appealing to the (mostly children) audience, failed to add any meaning to the storyline.

While the show's set list may not have saved the play, the soundtrack itself, "Peppa's Adventures: The Album," has managed to receive a 6.5-star rating on Pitchfork Media. This rating puts the album on the same playing field as Taylor Swift's "Reputation."

Peppa's songs might not be fueled by the vengeance of 2017 Swift, and Peppa might not have been the top artist on many listeners' Spotify Wrapped, but if Peppa and her crew keep producing hit songs such as "Bing Bong Zoo," and children keep listening, who knows

if the next Swift is sitting in the audience, or is Peppa herself.

The songs were amusing enough and children danced, clapped and hollered absurd things back to the puppets on stage, but the unsettling aura of Peppa Pig never dissipated. The scenes for songs "Bing Bong Zoo," and nursery rhymes like "Hickory Dickory Dock," were almost reminiscent of haunting scenes from the "Hunger Games" franchise.

Looking past the questionable plot, possibly over-rated soundtrack and the overall lack of Peppa, the most successful component of the show was the interactive learning experience it created for young children. The character of Daisy engaged the children from the start, and the efficient use of lighting, sound effects and backdrops carried the show and transported viewers into a decently realistic cartoon world but still did not distract from the unnerving dark undertone of it all.

Maybe "Peppa Pig's Adventures" should model themselves after "Winnie The Pooh" and become a cheesy horror movie instead.



The "Peppa Pig" tour made its way to the University of Montana on Tuesday, Nov. 29. Children in the audience enjoyed the performance while our reviewer recalled pig-centered nightmares. NATE SANCHEZ | MONTANA KAIMIN

Internationally awarded author in UM faculty

ANNA HENNING

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Three years ago, Emily Ruskovich won the International Dublin Literary Award for her debut novel, "Idaho." The award goes to just one book written or translated into English. Now, she is guiding students at the University of Montana.

"I try to bring a lot of compassion of the difficulty of the writing process," Ruskovich said. "I want students to be taking risks and not be afraid of going in the wrong direction and making huge mistakes, because those mistakes are never mistakes."

Ruskovich draws from her recent experience of writing and publishing to support her students. "Idaho," a fictional psychological mystery told from multiple perspectives, was published on Jan. 3, 2017. It tells the story of a woman trying to understand events from eight years before, when her husband's ex-wife killed one of his daughters. Ruskovich said the novel is about processing grief, unlikely kinship and preserving memories.

The novel was put on a list of 144 books nominated for the 2019 International Dublin Literary Award. This award is presented annually by the Dublin City Council in Ireland.

When Ruskovich got the news she had won the award, she had to call her editor a second time just to make sure.

"It was so unbelievable to me that I believed that my ears had lied," Ruskovich said.

Following the success of her novel, Ruskovich was offered a tenure position at UM in February 2020. She said she was excited, but had to turn the opportunity down. Ruskovich was pregnant with her second daughter and didn't want to move during the pandemic.

UM allowed Ruskovich to defer her move by a year, so she started teaching in August 2021. Before coming to UM, Ruskovich taught at Boise State University, but she had her eyes on Missoula.

Ruskovich earned her B.A. in English with a creative writing emphasis from UM in 2007. She said that working with the faculty, especially program director Judy Blunt, was her dream. Ruskovich said UM

was her top choice of all schools in the country.

Her husband also made the switch from being a professor at Boise State University to teaching at UM. He is also a writer and teaches literature and composition. Ruskovich said their offices are next to each other, and they have some of the same students.

"A wonderful part of our partnership is being able to talk not only about our writing life with each other but also curriculum and classroom strategies," Ruskovich said.

With a focus on graduate students, Ruskovich spends her time teaching fiction workshops and special topics. She said her students are more like colleagues and she is honored to work with them.

Norma Barksdale is a first-year Master in Fine Arts candidate in creative writing at UM. The 30-year-old student from Oxford, Mississippi, was in Ruskovich's fiction workshop this semester.

"[She] has taken the time to really get to know all of the workshop students' writing styles and tendencies, and gives the most generous and helpful feedback," Barksdale said.

Barksdale said she is fascinated with the way Ruskovich explored memory in her novel. Barksdale has learned about respecting characters' voices from Ruskovich.

Grace Butler is also an M.F.A. candidate in the program. The 27-year-old student from Waterbury Center, Vermont, said the semester has gone very well with Ruskovich.

"Her kindness, honesty and fierce love of good writing inspire a kind of bravery in me and my own writing process," Butler said.

During her first year at UM, Ruskovich mainly focused on teaching. Now, she is working on a collection of short stories. It's under contract with Random House.

Between being a professor and a mom, Ruskovich said short stories are easier to complete with her schedule.

"I found my stride with shorter form," Ruskovich said. "I found my voice again and I have loved working on [short stories]."



Author Emily Ruskovich. CONTRIBUTED

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UM hurling team: no experience necessary

HOLLY MALKOWSKI

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The University of Montana hurling club has been around for 10 years, but not many people even know what the sport is.

“It’s such a unique sport with so much culture and history behind it,” said Fiona Doyle, the hurling team’s treasurer.

Hurling is a Gaelic game where players try to get a ball in a net with an ash wood stick called a hurley. The players must pass the ball with either their sticks or their hands in order to score. They can only take a few steps before they must get rid of the ball. The players don’t wear any pads, but must wear a helmet.

Doyle, 18, is a freshman at UM majoring in French. She moved around a lot when she was younger, but calls Portage, Michigan, home. One of her moves took her to Ireland for three years, where she played Gaelic soccer and dabbled in

hurling. When she came to UM and found out it had a hurling team, she immediately wanted to be part of it. She met up with the team and the players were excited that she already knew how to hurl and made her treasurer right away.

“Most people are too afraid to join because they’ve never heard of the sport, but in reality, most of us haven’t,” Doyle said. “It’s such a small community in America, but it keeps on growing every single day.”

The captain of the hurling team, Colton Tinnin, didn’t even know how to play before he started. He is a 21-year-old elementary education major from Kennewick, Washington. One of his friends, who he met at the Freshman Wilderness Experience, encouraged him to go to hurling practice. Tinnin has been part of the team since.

“Very rarely does anyone show up and know what they’re doing and what they’re

getting into, but that makes it a great sport to try out when you’re in college,” Tinnin said. “We’re so welcoming on our team because none of us really know what we’re doing either.”

Hurling is most popular in Ireland, but also has avid players in Australia, South Africa, Argentina and the UK. The UM hurling team currently has about 15 players.

Missoula also has the Thomas Meagher hurling club, started in 2015, for the community to play. That team was an outgrowth from Griz alumni who wanted to continue playing.

Hurling is not very popular in the United States, but interest is increasing. The Griz play teams like Boulder, Colorado and Butte nearby, along with some teams from the Midwest and the East Coast. The team is going to the national championships in Kentucky this spring.



CONTRIBUTED

Griz go down in second round of playoffs against Bison

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The University of Montana lost 49-26 on Dec. 3 against the Football Championship Subdivision powerhouse North Dakota State in a roller coaster game on the road in Fargo, North Dakota.

The game was defined by big Bison plays and lackluster defense by UM down the stretch.

UM’s defense held strong to start, but the story of the quarterback rush haunted the Grizzlies early. NDSU quarterback Cam Miller got the first score of the day off a rush to the left side to put NDSU up 7-0.

The next offensive drive for NDSU would be a monstrous run for Miller. The dominant downhill quarterback keeper would put the Bison up 14-0 early in the first quarter.

The first three scores of the game would come from quarterbacks as UM QB Lucas Johnson and receiver Aaron Fontes combined for multiple efficient pass plays before a quarterback keeper by Johnson to make the game 14-7.

Later in the first half, UM would take the hardest hit of the day as Johnson went down after a sack and fumbled the ball into the end zone. The Bison retrieved the ball and went up 21-10 while Johnson remained down with an injury.

Johnson didn’t return to the game and redshirt freshman Daniel Britt came in for relief.

Even with an injury to Montana’s QB1, the scoring kept up when UM cornerback Corbin Walker went

for a pick-six, bringing the game’s score to 21-20.

“When we got it to 21-20, I felt good. Really good,” UM head coach Bobby Hauck said in a statement after the game. “Then we gave up the two big runs and let it get back to a 15-point game. We fought out of that hole early but then we put ourselves right back into it.”

With a strong rushing attack, the Bison mustered four straight touchdowns in the second before the Grizzlies could score, all of which came on the ground.

As the fourth quarter started, it was NDSU’s Kobe Johnson who struck with a 73-yard run to make it 42-20.

After a late UM touchdown, the Griz offense walked off for the last time at the 1:05 mark and the football season ended in a 49-26 score.

NDSU continued its FCS dominance, improving to a 32-1 at-home record in the playoffs since joining Division I.

Griz football went 8-5 this season and is losing a large senior class, with key team members like Justin Ford, Johnson and Patrick O’Connell all leaving.

“I flat told them after the game that the only regret I have this season is I don’t get to coach you guys another game,” Hauck said.



Montana redshirt freshman quarterback Daniel Britt drops back to pass in UM’s season-ending loss to North Dakota State on Dec. 3. Britt came in to replace Griz starting quarterback Lucas Johnson, who went down with a leg injury.

HAYDEN AUSTIN | NDSU SPECTRUM

Lawrence reflects on volleyball's historic success

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Allison Lawrence is the first Montana volleyball coach since the legendary Dick Scott to win Big Sky Conference Coach of the Year, but her rise to one of the University's best seasons in decades wouldn't come without starting at the bottom.

Lawrence was named Coach of the Year during the team's stay in Ogden, Utah, during the Big Sky Conference volleyball tournament this fall.

Even though the team lost to Sacramento State in four sets, it would end what is one of University of Montana volleyball's most productive years in terms of stats and record.

"It was really meaningful," Lawrence said. "It was one of my favorite weeks, probably of like my career and in coaching for a lot of reasons. I think just namely with getting to be with a team that has such a wonderful personality, and they're kind of a joy to do really hard stuff with and to compete with."

Montana scored its first winning season since 2013 while notching the best win percentage since 1999. That combines with All-Big Sky Conference selections for hitter Paige Clark, first team, and setter Carly Anderson, second team.

Success hinged on former Oregon State standout and head coach, Lawrence.

As an assistant coach, Lawrence saw firsthand the early struggles of UM volleyball. She was part of teams that would earn 20 or more losses in back-to-back seasons.

After former UM volleyball head coach Brian Doyon resigned in 2017, the reins went to Lawrence, who had been in the Montana system for seven seasons by that point.

Lawrence was handed a team that had combined for six conference wins its previous two seasons, a team filled with recruits from previous coaches.

Her head coaching debut had expected road bumps: a new coach, a team that had to adjust to a new play style and the growing pains that come with losing out for so many seasons in the Big Sky. Lawrence and the Griz would end with an 8-21 record.

But improvements happened almost immediately the next season.

"I wasn't new to this place," Lawrence said. "And so I think that offered me a choice to really work to build belief and instill the values that I thought, in the end, would create the strongest team and the strongest program for the people that were there, rather than come in new, not know anyone, and clean house."

The Grizzlies improved to 10 wins, including a three-game win streak to start the con-



UM head volleyball coach Allison Lawrence stands in front of a recently decorated wall in her office with photos from previous volleyball seasons on Nov. 30. Lawrence has led Montana to its most wins since 1999. **ANDY MEPHAM | MONTANA KAIMIN**

"Having been an athlete, knowing how hard the hard moments are, I think, allows you as a coach to really embrace the triumphs of your players."

-Head volleyball coach Allison Lawrence

ference season. With a slight drop off in 2019 and a shortened 2020-21 season, the losing ways returned for a team adjusting to changing health restrictions.

But in 2021, there was a spark. Lawrence's young squad would wrangle in 11 wins and a Big Sky Conference tournament berth. The Griz played better on the road, found more success at home and were finally following the Lawrence identity.

Then 2022 happened. The accolades, the 17-12 record, the best in decades — it all came

together. Even with an early tournament exit, UM volleyball became the anomaly. A team that exceeded its preseason prediction became Lawrence's first positive win record as a head coach.

If you are a Griz volleyball fan, you will notice one thing that keeps this squad afloat — positivity. The moment you look to the bench, even when the scoring streaks are cold, there is dancing and smiles across the roster.

"Having been an athlete, knowing how hard the hard moments are, I think, allows you as a

coach to really embrace the triumphs of your players, but also the shortcomings and the moments where they fall short and they fail," Lawrence said.

Lawrence understands that every award, every celebration and every game is a team effort.

The defining moments of the 2022 season sit neatly in frames on Lawrence's office wall. Most of these are from the team's two victories against the in-state rival Montana State Bobcats. But she's looking ahead to the next season.

"The general sentiment is they're really excited to get back into the gym, which this time of year, we need a little break," Lawrence said. "So I think for them to be verbalizing that they cannot wait to get back to work, I think they feel the momentum that they've created."

UM volleyball season wrapped with a 3-1 loss in the conference tournament. Next fall, nearly every starter will return, including All-Big Sky First Team outside hitter Clark and All-Big Sky Conference Second Team setter Anderson.

Student work shines in return of Dance Underground

WORDS AND PHOTOS BY ASTON KINSELLA
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The return of Dance Underground that featured student-choreographed performances sold out shows for almost all performances over the weekend, according to the UM dance Instagram. This was the first performance of Dance Underground since the pandemic.

The three-day performance included UM student choreographed pieces in the School of Theatre and Dance and class performances from the dance classes open to all students on campus.

The eight pieces performed included “Chit Chat” by junior Elle Lundgren, “Axé” by junior Julia Duarte and “The Old One and La Mer” by senior Karter Bernhardt.

The performances ranged from traditional Irish dances to large group contemporary dances with up to 18 dancers on the stage at one time.

The performance included Zoe Paradine’s junior project “20 (or more) Questions.” The piece consisted of performers dancing to questions on a pre-recorded track. The questions were voiced by the performers. One asked, “Why do we consume media that makes us sad?” and the response was an outburst of scream-singing the lyrics to “All By Myself.” Another performer danced to nightmare hypotheticals during a spelling bee.

Junior Liana Dillon choreographed “Synthesis of Self” a high-energy, fast-tempo dance with an array of colored sashes tied to each dancer moving around the stage to Vampire Weekend’s “A-Punk.” A balance of traditional ballet and freeform contemporary choreography moved the dancers in an energetic way for the captivated crowd.

TOP LEFT: A large group of 18 dancers pulse in and out in unison, contracting themselves toward the center of the group and back out to the beat of the song.

MIDDLE LEFT: The performers in “20 (or more) Questions” lay atop one another in the dress rehearsal on Nov. 30.

BOTTOM LEFT: Hannah Dusek, left, and Mia Johns smile at each other linking arms during the performance of “Chit Chat” at the Dance Underground dress rehearsal.



TOP RIGHT: Isabela Sant’Anna-Skites holds a développé position as the performance of “Axé” comes to an end.

BOTTOM RIGHT: Isabela Sant’Anna-Skites walks to the left as Elle Lundgren leads the rest of the performers with arms extended in the dress rehearsal performance of “Axé” Nov. 30.