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Main Hall to Main Street, June 2009

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Recommended Citation

University of Montana–Missoula. Office of University Relations, "Main Hall to Main Street, June 2009" (2009). *Main Hall to Main Street, 2005-2010*. 151.

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Crown of the Continent Initiative takes flight

Directly north of The University of Montana lie the scenic peaks, glaciated valleys and postcard-perfect scenery that constitute the Crown of the Continent ecosystem – what some call “The Backbone of the World.”

The landscape also serves as a living laboratory for climate change, a stage for urban-wildland interface issues and a tapestry of history.

That’s why Rick Graetz and Jerry Fetz, co-directors of UM’s new Crown of the Continent Initiative, want you to know about it.

Through the initiative and the recent launch of a biannual electronic magazine, Graetz and Fetz hope to highlight the issues driving decisions and research in the Crown of the Continent. They are working to broaden the standard perception many vacationers and locals have of the ecosystem, which encompasses nearly 13 million acres in Montana and Canada.

“There are so many exciting things happening [in the Crown], so much research that the public needs to know about,” said Graetz, a faculty member in UM’s Department of Geography and founder of Montana Magazine.

“People can go look at the mountains and Glacier National Park, and they can now look at it with a different eye,” he said. “They can see what’s happened then and what’s happening now.”

The initiative, which allows for involvement at the organizational and individual level, began in December 2007 as an effort to provide an educational catalyst for collaboration between UM and Glacier National Park. It now has grown to include groups beyond the park, notably the Nature Conservancy, the Glacier Institute, Flathead Valley Community College, the University of Calgary and more.

The level of involvement in the initiative reflects the scope of the Crown, which spans the Continental Divide from the Elk River headwaters and Crowsnest Pass in Canada to Rogers Pass and the Blackfoot River drainage in Montana.

The e-magazine compiles an inventory



St. Mary Lake, Glacier National Park. Photo by Rick Graetz

View the spring 2009 issue of the new Crown of the Continent e-magazine at <http://www.umt.edu/urelations/crown.html>.



of past and present research in the Crown, translating “science speak” into “public speak,” Graetz said.

With special sections for time-lapse photography documenting climate change in Glacier National Park, historical accounts, and recent and past images of the region, the e-magazine seeks to illustrate the ecosystem’s importance.

“Failure to understand and protect this valuable ecological landscape will result in devastating consequences downstream,” said UM President George Dennison, who stressed the significance of the initiative. “Hopefully we have learned from what has occurred elsewhere in the world, notably in China, when we fail to act as good stewards.”

Dennison also called for a broad base of support for the project.

“Those most versed in the causes and consequences of climate change remind us that the work we must do requires the

engagement of humanists, social scientists, policy experts, journalists, public servants, and, most importantly, average citizens,” he said.

Fetz is the former dean of the UM College of Arts and Sciences and Davidson Honors College – posts he took after serving as a professor of German and the humanities at the University. His direction illustrates the University-wide nature of the initiative.

“There is hardly an academic discipline that doesn’t or can’t have a legitimate interest in this region,” he said. “It is especially exciting for me when I see people from many walks of life talking to one another, knowledgeably and passionately, and from many perspectives and experiences, about this unique and fascinating place in or near which we live.”

Graetz agreed that the landscape is not the only critical feature of the Crown. “It’s probably the greatest concentration of land where people of all political persuasions have come together to promote conservation and work for it,” he said.

To view the e-magazine, go to <http://www.umt.edu/urelations/crown.html>. To receive a hard copy of the magazine or additional information about UM’s Crown of the Continent Initiative, e-mail umcrown@umontana.edu.

UM signs agreement with Ethiopian university

UM moved one step further in promoting research and study opportunities with other nations last month when President George Dennison signed an agreement with Addis Ababa University in Ethiopia.

The partnership with one of Africa's top universities will establish much-anticipated avenues for faculty research and exchanges, student exchanges, and joint conferences and publications.

"It has been our dream to have a major institutional partnership with a prominent African university and a new opening with a very important African country with a long history and rich culture," Associate Provost for International Programs Mehrdad Kia said. "Ethiopia presents all of those opportunities."

Tsige Gebremariam Woldemariam, the vice president for Graduate Studies and Research at Addis Ababa University,

and Dennison signed the agreement during a weeklong visit of the Ethiopian administrators.

Joining Woldemariam were Yacob Arsano Atito, dean of the College of Social Sciences; Afework Bekele Simegn, dean of the Faculty of Science; and Damen Haile Mariam Gebre Kiros, associate dean for Graduate Studies and Research in the Faculty of Medicine. They gave a public presentation about Ethiopia and their university on May 12. Woldemariam also attended UM's Commencement ceremonies with Dennison on May 16.

The agreement creates a unique connection in East Africa for UM, which has nearly 90 partnerships and agreements in various parts of the world.

Addis Ababa University was established in Ethiopia's capital in 1950 and is one of the largest higher education institutions in East Africa.

UM and Addis Ababa University have similar research and instructional agendas. Several disciplines were involved in forming the agreement, including International Development Studies, the Intercultural Youth and Family Development Program, the Wildlife Biology Program, the Department of Biomedical and Pharmaceutical Sciences, the School of Public and Community Health Sciences, and the College of Forestry and Conservation.

Kia sees the partnership as a continuation of the work of the College of Forestry and Conservation in South Africa and adjacent regions and predicts a future for campuswide, multidisciplinary collaboration under the agreement.

For more information, call Jeanne Loftus of UM International Programs at 406-243-6865 or e-mail jeanne.loftus@umontana.edu.

Academic Planner Application Wins Award

A Web-based application that helps UM students map out the courses needed during their academic careers has garnered a prestigious award for its campus designers. The Academic Planner application won a 2009 Hugi Excellence Award in the Business Processes and Systems category of a competition run by the NorthWest Academic Computing Consortium. The award was presented during a June 10 NWACC summit at Salishan Resort near Lincoln City, Ore. The application was written by UM's Information Technology department in close association with the Registrar's Office. The creators are IT programmers Jon Adams, Tom Fite and Tim Irmen, as well as former UM Registrar Dave Micus.



Dining Services Receives National Honor

UM's Dining Services has received the 2009 Loyal E. Horton Gold Award for Casa Nina, its new authentic Mexican restaurant located in the University Center Food Court. UM's entry, which is in book form, took the award in the category of retail sales – single, stand-alone concept outlet in the large school division. UM Dining Services Marketing Director Jerry O'Malley worked on the entry for more than a year.

It will be displayed this summer during the National Association of College and University Food Services national conference. A representative from UM's Dining Services will receive a gold plaque at the Dining Awards Luncheon on July 11 in Milwaukee. At the luncheon, the gold award winners from each category will compete for the grand prize.

UM Convenes National Summit On Childhood PTSD

School teachers from around the country came to UM earlier this month for a summit focusing on new ways to confront childhood post-traumatic stress disorder. UM's National Native Children's Trauma Center brought together more than 60 trauma professionals for the two-day summit June 1-2 to share their experiences using a new childhood trauma intervention technique called Cognitive Behavioral Intervention for Trauma in Schools. The technique is a therapeutic method being developed nationwide for addressing childhood trauma. It has been shown to improve symptoms of depression and PTSD among kids. In Montana, UM researchers at the National Native Children's Trauma Center are adapting the method for the state's American Indian communities.

Suicide Prevention Walk Seeks Volunteers, Sponsors—The Montana Chapter of the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention will host a community walk on Saturday, Sept. 12, on the UM Oval to help prevent suicide and end the stigma that surrounds depression and other mental illnesses. The Montana AFSP Chapter is seeking participants, volunteers and local business sponsors for the Out of the Darkness Community Walk. Participants may register as individuals or teams for the 3.25-mile walk by going to <http://www.outofthedarkness.org>. Donations to benefit the local AFSP chapter and national organization also can be made on the Web site. For more information on the walk, call Kira Fernandez at 858-603-5782 or Leslie Mace at 406-546-0509, or e-mail kirafernandez@ymail.com or lesliemace@ymail.com.



The University of
Montana

Main Hall to Main Street is published by University Relations at The University of Montana. Send questions or suggestions to Jennifer Sauer, editor, 323 Brantly Hall, Missoula, MT 59812, or call 406-243-4878. Jacob Baynham, Brianne Burrowes, Brenda Day, Rita Munzenrider and Cary Shimek are contributing editors and writers. Todd Goodrich is the primary photographer. The newsletter is online at <http://www.umt.edu/urelations/mainhall>.