Montanan, Fall 2023

University of Montana--Missoula

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UM welcomed the Class of 2027 in August on the UM Oval in a class picture that embodies what we do best: placing student success at the center of all we do.

ON THE COVER: Amidst an enchanting snow globe setting unique to the University of Montana's Washington-Grizzly Stadium, the snowy field bore witness to a 57-0 victory against Cal Poly in November. The memorable moment captures what we know endures in the heart of every Grizzly: that when we unite for a greater collective cause, a university experience can feel a bit like magic. We're harnessing this kind of energy and focus as UM emerges into a generation of growth and renewal. Go Griz!
DEAR GRIZZLIES,

Much has changed since 1897, when Main Hall’s cornerstone was laid. Upon its completion, this flagship building became home to seven classrooms, an assembly room, the library, a museum and the gymnasium. This was the beginning of our University.

Now, more than a century later, I am excited to share that our campus is in the midst of the largest infrastructure renewal in its history. Through a combination of private philanthropy, financial support from the Montana Legislature and an issuance of bonds at record-low interest rates, we have invested over $145 million since 2020 to improve our on-campus infrastructure for the benefit of future generations.

This work includes renovating existing buildings that will continue to spark the memories of alumni, as well as constructing new student-facing facilities that will ensure future generations of Grizzlies will have access to high-quality and vibrant learning spaces.

We have made strategic investments that support our University’s mission — including building a combined heat and power plant that will see the largest reduction of greenhouse gas emissions ever achieved on our campus and saving over $1 million annually in energy costs. We also constructed a new home for the famed 130-year-old Montana Museum of Art and Culture, ensuring that a large portion of this impactful collection can finally be on display.

As the stewards of UM, we must always work to benefit those who will come after us. To paraphrase a Greek proverb, we are at our best when we plant trees under whose shade we may never sit. Our future Grizzlies will benefit from the seeds we are planting today. In this issue of the Montanan, you will learn about the infrastructure projects that are completed, underway and cresting the horizon.

In the years ahead, these new and upgraded facilities will represent UM’s “return to growth” era, just as the laying of Main Hall’s cornerstone, the construction of the University Center or the completion of the Payne Family Native American Center came to represent different chapters of our University’s more than century-long story.

The future is bright at UM, as we celebrate our unique history and prepare for what is ahead.

After reading through the 40th volume of this award-winning publication, I hope you will make plans to return to campus to celebrate the familiar places that mean so much to our history and explore the new landmarks that will help to define our future.

UP WITH MONTANA,
Wild Sustenance: Innovative Course Introduces UM Students to Hunting

UM’S Largest Infrastructure Refresh in Campus History

UM Students Revive Foresters’ Ball
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ALL THESE STORIES AND MORE AT NEWS.UMT.EDU
umontana A Grizzly's best friend! Some have long legs and some do not. Either way, they summit the M Trail. Here's to the dogs of UM 🐶.

umontana If you’re a Grizzly, you best know how to catch fish. Even in the winter. The UM and MSU chapters of the Backcountry Hunters and Anglers hosted the inaugural Brawl of the Wild On Ice last weekend on Canyon Ferry. Swipe to see who won 🎣.

umontana Spotted on campus: Mario racing students on the oval.
A day dedicated to the Grizzly who does it best 🐻 Happy #NationalMascotDay!

Long before Monte, there was Otto, Teddy and even a few live bear cubs! While his look has changed over the years, his energy and dedication towards each student’s experience has remained strong 😊

What was your first experience or favorite memory with Monte??

We love watching our University of Montana rodeo team show off their grit and determination in our beautiful hometown 🔥
By the NUMBERS

1,400 military-affiliated students attend UM

$126M in research expenditures

124 years since Flathead Lake Biological Station opened in 1899

54 years of the Kyiyo Pow Wow
$513,281 raised from 896 gifts during UM’s Big Give, breaking previous giving day record

6,438 tickets sold for UM School of Theatre and Dance’s five mainstage season shows

6 National Science Foundation honorees

2,200 intact specimens residing in the Philip L. Wright Zoological Museum

$5.1M secured to boost rural Montana health care
CLOCKING IN

LOVE

UM alumnus Andrew Pitsch is one of those big-hearted romantic guys, so when it came time to ask his girlfriend to marry him, he wanted it to be extra special. This is what he came up with: Pitsch purchased an engraved Centennial Circle Brick near the Grizzly Bear statue on the UM Oval. The inscription reads: LINDSEY TRENARY WILL YOU MARRY ME? It worked; she said yes!

ESPORTS

UM is proud to have the largest esports program in the state. The Grizzly Esports team has become a leader across Montana in the world of competitive video games, competing in League of Legends, Overwatch, Rocket League and other games. Last spring, UM expanded the sport through the inaugural Montana High School Championship Series for 15 high school teams.

TRAILHEAD ART

A team of undergraduate UM research students designed attention-grabbing signs for public parks in an effort to better share important messages. The students focused on two messages: keeping dogs on leash at certain trailheads and stopping the spread of invasive plants.

Bells for...
What will lunch taste like in 2100?

Students teamed up with UM Dining for a group cooking class, Soil-to-Soil: Food and Climate. Ingredients in the class included bison, prickly pear and lentils. The course combines two areas of expertise at UM: climate solutions and food systems and sustainable agriculture.

FOOD

UM launched the Grizzly Promise initiative to tear down financial barriers and make college more affordable for Montana students whose families have incomes of less than $50,000 annually. The initiative is funded through a combination of scholarships, grants, waivers and other financial aid packaged specifically for Montana students who attend UM.

PROMISES

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs opened a new video telehealth site at UM designed to help student and faculty member veterans receive convenient VA care. The telehealth site is one of two in Montana and is housed on the Missoula campus in the Military and Veterans Services Office.

VETERAN SUPPORT

UM’s Phyllis J. Washington College of Education was recognized for national excellence. The college received accreditation for its educator preparation programs in teaching and education leadership from the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation. UM offers 29 teaching programs, ranging from early childhood education to middle and high school programs.

EXCELLENCE

Jack Person, who graduated in May from UM’s Entertainment Management program, left a legacy on campus by reviving the student-led label, Switchback Records. The music label hosted the Weary Travelers Music Festival, a spring event that had five hours of live, local music and food trucks on UM’s Oval.

MUSIC

The number of minority students entering UM’s Alexander Blewett III School of Law increased from 11% to 20% in the past three years.

Why? The law school worked to attract minority students through recruiting events and visiting historically black colleges and universities.

DIVERSITY

Five public health master’s students at UM are working on projects that tackle some of the largest health issues facing the state and region. Their projects look at access to food in Indigenous communities, how to mitigate mosquitoes, public health worker salaries, the effect of wildfire smoke on western Montana residents and protecting people during an opioid overdose.

PUBLIC HEALTH

UM researchers conducted a study to understand Montanans’ perspectives about Grizzly bears and their management. The researchers found Montanans support having grizzly bears in the state — especially on remote public lands — and generally have positive attitudes toward the animals. However, Montanans were less likely to support grizzly presence closer to agricultural or residential areas.

BEARS
Last October, just as the semester was bustling and campus filled with new and returning students, UM landed quietly atop a national list. The report came from Washington Monthly, a magazine of U.S. politics and government based in Washington, D.C., which also ranks four-year American colleges and universities, an alternative to U.S. News & World Report's college rankings.

UM President Bodnar says the ranking reflects UM's deep commitment to civic service, a value embedded in UM's institutional mission. “This ranking confirms what is in the very fabric of a UM education: that our students and alumni understand the value of giving back,” he says.

Since its earliest days, UM has reflected a deep commitment to public service and developed academic, career and co-curricular programs that infuse a UM education with volunteer and civic opportunities.

Washington Monthly ranks universities based on their contribution to the public good in three broad categories: social mobility, research and promoting public service.

In the “service” category, UM ranked above many of the nation's prestigious private and public institutions, including George Washington University, the University of Notre Dame, Duke University, Georgetown University, Johns Hopkins University and many more.

Additionally, UM students are actively involved in UM’s Peace Corps Prep Program, Military and Veterans Services and dedicated programs in service and volunteerism.

The ranking determined the service score by measuring each college's performance across a range of measures, including AmeriCorps and Peace Corps service, military service and federal work-study grant funding spent on community service projects.

The ranking methodology also included data related to student voter registration; voter activity; the number of degrees awarded in health, education and social work; and a college's rate of producing leaders in socially valuable fields.

UM students work in and study diverse areas that mirror Montana's greatest public needs. These include youth-in-crisis, public education, food insecurity, addiction studies, mental health counseling, natural resource nonprofit work, racial equity, legal services and much, much more.

For many students, their first interaction as a Grizzly includes an experience within the community. UM’s New Student Orientation includes the Big Sky Experience, where students work alongside community partners such as the Missoula Food Bank and Community Center and nonprofits such as Free Cycles Missoula and Backcountry Hunters and Anglers.

“The point of the Big Sky Experience is to showcase to new students that a UM education is part of the community,” says Devin Carpenter, director of New Student Success. “The takeaway for students when they’re learning about service opportunities, is an awakening and understanding of what we do here and why it matters. It feels like a unique tradition and one that is long held.”

Bodnar says the ranking cements UM's legacy as an institution that promotes service.

“A life of impact, alongside an understanding that we have a greater calling to something bigger than ourselves, is truly the gift of education.” SETH BODNAR

“The kind of work our students are drawn to and the careers they choose are deeply informed by UM's ethos of service,” Bodnar says. •
Melody Irvine paints the M with a group of freshman classmates as part of the field work portion of the Big Sky Experience.

“A life of impact, alongside an understanding that we have a greater calling to something bigger than ourselves, is truly the gift of education.” Seth Bodnar
UM student Mattie Budine scans the horizon for wildlife at the Theodore Roosevelt Memorial Ranch.

SCAN THE QR CODE TO WATCH A VIDEO ABOUT UM’S WILD SUSTENANCE CLASS
As a salmon pink sunrise bathed the nearby Rocky Mountain range, a group of UM students gathered, bundled against the chill, with their instructors and two eager pointing dogs for an introduction to upland bird hunting.

When the sun rose and their lesson began, they learned about gauges, chokes and how to read cover before setting out to hunt sharp-tailed grouse. Most of the students had never hunted before.

Although they carried no guns and no birds were harvested on the two-hour foray, the students came away with a better understanding of what draws people to hunting.

That is not so much the quarry, but the comradery formed with fellow hunters, the dogs and nature itself.

“It’s pretty amazing out here,” says biology major Jack Hanson, while stepping strategically through the low-lying brush that carpets the course rangeland.

Hanson and fellow students spent the fall weekend at the 6,500-acre Theodore Roosevelt Memorial Ranch in Dupuyer as part of their studies for what is a singularly unique UM course: Wild Sustenance.

The course is open to students from any major, with the only requirement being that participants are novice hunters.

“Almost all of us who are hunters learned from relatives and friends,” says course instructor Joshua Millspaugh, UM’s Boone and Crockett Professor of Wildlife Conservation.

“There is such an impediment to those who didn’t have that opportunity. The students that are here say, ‘I’ve always been interested in learning more, but I don’t know where to start.’

“And we give them that introduction,” he adds. “But what we’d ultimately like to create here is a knowledgeable citizenry that understands the role of hunting in society and in conservation.”

Hanson, a New Hampshire native, transferred to UM last year and decided to dive deeper into a sport that in 2021 attracted more than 15 million Americans and generated more than $800 million in revenue nationally.

“There’s a bunch of different reasons why I want to learn how to hunt,” he says. “There’s ethical and environmental reasons and I guess spiritual reasons, too. I just want to be more connected to the land and more connected to my source of food.”

During their stay at the ranch, owned by the Boone and Crockett Club, students learned about grizzly bears and how to avoid them, the basics of cooking wild game, firearm safety and archery, how to properly dress a white-tailed deer and why lead-free ammunition is better for wildlife, the environment and consumers.

Madison Crane enrolled in Wild Sustenance having no issues with firing a rifle.

“It’s what I do after,” she says. “Having the skills to properly care for an animal after I take the shot, whether it be tracking it or processing it.”

Crane, who grew up in New England in a family that didn’t hunt, said her exposure to the world of hunting came while working for a number of wildlife agencies over the years.

“I feel I’ve finally been in Montana for enough years,” she says, “where I can feel comfortable on the landscape and feel like I’m ready to take that next step.”

Crane, one of five women in the class of 11, says finding mentors and fellow hunters is key for her to achieve a comfort level with a sport still dominated by men.

“I am hoping to get out with some of the people who are actually here,” she says. “And, I’ve

Major funding for the Wild Sustenance program is provided by the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation.
got enough friends that also go hunting that I know I can trust and who are ethical hunters.”

The subject of ethical hunting, in fact, is central to the weekend activities and the campus classroom instruction that accompanies it. So, too, is respect for the animals that are harvested – a respect that includes using every part of the animal possible and the proper disposal of the parts that aren’t.

“**We lead with ethics, because we feel strongly that is where hunting should start.**”  
**JOSHUA MILSPAUGH**

Throughout the course, students are strongly encouraged to express their views on hunting no matter where they land on the subject.

“It’s important we put everything on the table when we are talking about this,” says course instructor Libby Metcalf, the Joel Meier Distinguished Professor of Wildland Management at UM and senior associate dean in the W.A. Franke College of Forestry and Conservation.

“We’ve had students at the end of the course say ‘Hunting isn’t for me.’ And that’s OK.”

As a graduate student in UM’s Parks, Tourism and Recreation Management program, Peter Whitney understands the valuable role hunting organizations have played in the conservation of game species. But as a longtime vegetarian, he struggles with the idea of hunting.

“The idea of eating meat brings up a lot of things to me that challenge my values. It feels selfish, like something I don’t necessarily need to connect with the environment more broadly,” Whitney says. “I enrolled in the class because I wanted to color the picture with a bit more nuance and think about my own values and explore the gray area in between.”

All three students say they learned as much about themselves from the class as they did about harvesting game and that their comfort level with the logistics of hunting had grown considerably. Even if they never step onto a field again, they add, their understanding of the role of hunting in society has been set.

“We try to be very clear up front that this class is more about how the student comes out on the other side,” Millspaugh says. “They may not ever hunt, but they will have a much better appreciation and touch point for what it is and the roles it serves.” •
Top: After completing a rigorous hunter safety gun course, UM student Madison Crane practices shooting a rifle at the target range. Bottom left: UM students take turns learning to properly process a deer. Bottom right: Libby Metcalf, associate dean in the W.A. Franke College of Forestry and Conservation, teaches the Wild Sustenance course.
Douglas Emlen, a UM Regents Professor, got quite the surprise in May while teaching his Genetics and Evolution class to 200 students in Urey Lecture Hall.

Dr. Emlen, a noted researcher and author, was talking about cancer – not the most uplifting subject – when he was interrupted. His colleague Rich Bridges, another distinguished UM Regents Professor, appeared and marched boldly to the front of the class, handing Emlen a cell phone.

The esteemed scientist on the line (David Hillis of the University of Texas at Austin) informed Emlen he had been selected for induction into the National Academy of Sciences. Emlen became only the second person ever chosen for the honor from UM and only the fifth from Montana.

A stunned Emlen forgot to shut off his microphone, so the entire class of students, which included his daughter, learned the news at the same moment as him. They broke into several rounds of applause and cheers.

“I’m still having a hard time processing it,” Emlen said that day. “It’s an incredible honor, and I can’t help feeling there are so many others who are more worthy. I love that the National Academy is a real champion for science and I’m excited to become a part of that.”

The NAS is a private, nonprofit institution that was first established under a congressional charter signed by President Abraham Lincoln in 1863. It recognizes achievements in science by election to membership, and provides science, engineering and health policy advice to the federal government and other organizations.

UM’s other NAS member is Jim Elser, director of UM’s Flathead Lake Biological Station, who was elected to the prestigious group in 2019.

“This is an incredible honor for Doug and well deserved,” says Scott Whittenburg, UM vice president for research and creative scholarship.

“Membership in the National Academy for many disciplines is only surpassed by a Nobel Prize.”

The son of a scientist, Emlen earned his doctorate from Princeton University in 1994 and was a postdoctoral researcher at Duke University before joining the UM faculty in 1994.

Emlen’s research focused on why certain animal species get into evolutionary arms races that result in massive weaponry, like the (relatively) huge horns of many beetles, the antlers of elk or the claws of fiddler crabs.

With one of his first study species, dung beetles, Emlen learned that weaponry like bigger horns usually provide the most access to females, as big-horned males guard tunnels to their mates. Bigger horns usually win beetle battles. However, evolving massive horns eats up resources, and some smaller, faster males of the same species will forgo this cost altogether to reach females via side tunnels and pass on their genes. So bigger is usually better, but evolution makes exceptions.

In 2020, Emlen was named a Regents Professor, the highest professor rank in the Montana University System. In 2016, he became the first researcher from any Montana institution to be elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. He was named the Montana Professor of the Year in 2015 from the Carnegie Foundation and Council for Advancement and Support of Education.


Additionally, a national organization recently ranked UM’s ecology and evolution programs that Emlen works with among the top 25 programs globally, above such universities as Arizona State, Yale, Harvard and Princeton.
Researcher Doug Emlen became only the fifth Montana ever elected to the National Academy of Sciences.
UM student Tessa Jarden first developed a love for the outdoors while exploring the salt marshes and creeks of her hometown in southeast North Carolina. During her 2017 field season with a Montana Conservation Corps wildlands restoration crew, that love transformed into a calling.

Now, six years after blazing her trail to a career in public service, Jarden has earned a prestigious Udall Scholarship.

“We live in a huge country with lots of forests and landscapes that need our care,” Jarden said in May after being notified of the award. “I want to be in a position to help provide that care.”

Jarden is one of 55 students across the country to be selected as a 2023 Udall Scholar, considered among the most prestigious undergraduate awards in the fields of natural resource conservation. She is the latest UM student to receive the award, reaffirming UM’s status as one of the nation’s top producers of Udall Scholars since the award’s founding in 1992.

Jarden’s journey to earning a Udall Scholarship was not a traditional one.

She spent the summer of 2017, her first in Montana, sleeping in a child-sized secondhand tent she purchased for $35 – confessing she had to contort sideways to fit inside.

She returned for another season with the Montana Conservation Corps in 2019, this time as a member of their Women’s Fire Crew.

In 2020, after her first season fighting wildland fire as an engine crew member in Mesa Verde National Park, she decided to take the next step in her academic journey.

“I moved to Missoula and enrolled at UM so I could pursue a more scientifically informed career in conservation,” Jarden says. “I wanted to dig deeper into the underlying principles and learn more about the various species and ecosystems that I love working with so much.”

Since arriving at UM, Jarden has excelled in the classroom as a student in the W.A. Franke College of Forestry and Conservation, pursuing a major in ecosystem science and restoration with minors in wildlife biology and climate change studies.

In the summer months between academic commitments, she continued to fight fire as a member of Missoula Helitack, a U.S. Forest Service helicopter crew. This past summer, she conducted research on forest responses to fire and drought as a Montana Space Grant Consortium intern in UM’s Sala Lab, in addition to spending two weeks in the Yukon Flats of Alaska conducting fire ecology field research with the Higuera Lab.

Jarden chose to enroll at UM for three specific reasons: Missoula’s unique access to the outdoors, the opportunity to learn by doing in the forestry college and the community of acceptance UM offers to students who seek a nontraditional path toward graduation.

After her time at UM concludes next spring, Jarden’s goal is to launch a career in research ecology to address the unprecedented challenges facing conservation and restoration. She wants to provide the information necessary to ensure the future health and resilience of ecosystems across our public lands.

“As we enter an uncertain new era of ecological crisis and climate change, our nation’s land management agencies will need balanced, data-driven guidance as they develop policies to meet unprecedented challenges in conservation and restoration,” Jarden says. “In my careers as a research ecologist, I intend to make that guidance my life’s work.”
Tessa Jarden is a 2023 recipient of the prestigious Udall Scholarship.
In 2020, UM launched a series of building renovations and new construction projects. Combined they represent the largest infrastructure improvement investment in campus history.

From renovated residence halls to upgraded classrooms to a new dining hall, students will benefit from the over $145 million that has been put to work to enhance the student experience at UM—all paid for with a combination of private philanthropy, funds from the Montana Legislature and bond proceeds.

The fall of 2023 will deliver the culmination of many of these projects, but others remain on the horizon.

When complete, these new structures will represent UM’s “return to growth” era, serving new generations of Grizzlies for a century to come.
DINING HALL: For years, UM served world-class food in a facility that was anything but. Now, a new state-of-the-art dining hall is expected to be completed in 2024 at the base of the Oval facing Mount Sentinel. In addition to serving more than 3,000 meals per day, this new 44,000-square-foot dining hall will provide students with a place to gather, study and socialize.

Funding source: Bond proceeds
COMBINED HEAT & POWER PLANT: Once complete, the new combined heat and power plant represents the largest reduction in greenhouse-gas emissions ever realized on the flagship campus. The new plant will save UM between $1.4 million to $1.7 million per year, thus paying for itself in under a decade.

Funding source: Bond proceeds
KNOWLES HALL: Originally built in 1962, Knowles Hall has served as home to thousands of students in the past 60 years. With new finishes, fixtures and furniture, Knowles will be the premier living space for incoming students. Among the major changes to the building include expanded lounges, new study spaces and a one-of-a-kind community kitchen.

Funding source: Bond proceeds
MMAC: The Montana Museum of Art and Culture was founded nearly 130 years ago, but it never had a home of its own. Opening in September 2023, the new MMAC facility will provide the public with access to a large portion of the museum’s historic collection — much of which has been in storage for decades.

Funding source: Private philanthropy
**BUBBLE:** The 110,000-square-foot Grizzly Indoor Practice Facility will be covered with an inflatable roof that will be the first of its kind in the Big Sky Conference. In addition to serving student-athletes of every sport, the Grizzly Indoor Practice Facility will provide recreational opportunities to all UM students and members of the Missoula community.

**Funding source:** Private philanthropy
Dylan Ferreira, a member of UM’s men’s hockey team, smiles while visiting with students from Woodman School.
Griz Hockey player Mason Perich never felt nervous before a game until his first action last year in front of over 1,200 roaring fans in Missoula’s Glacier Ice Rink.

Perich grew up playing hockey in Windsor, Colorado, and played Division 1 hockey for the University of Colorado in Boulder, but he never saw an electric atmosphere like playing for UM.

“We never really got big turnouts in Boulder, but here it’s the thing to do,” Perich says. “I never experienced anything like that. It’s just awesome.”

Griz Hockey, an officially recognized club sport at UM, finished its second season last winter after a seven-year absence. The beefed-up team captured Missoula’s love of hockey and Griz sports. Home games pack the Glacier Ice Rink with a rowdy student section and fans who cram into standing-room-only spots to watch the action. The return of Griz Hockey also renewed a rivalry with Montana State’s club hockey team.

“The way Griz Hockey has touched the community is one of the coolest things I’ve seen,” says UM alumnus Tucker Sargent, the hockey team’s general manager, who also coaches UM’s club lacrosse team.

Sargent believes the team’s growth is partly due to its outreach with Missoula and surrounding communities. The team traveled to Philipsburg last year to visit locals and play on the city’s outdoor ice rink. To kick off spring semester 2023, UM students and community members were invited to skate with the hockey team on the UM Oval’s ice rink.

“You have to be out in front of people to let them know who you are,” Sargent says.

In January, Sargent gathered his team for a 20-mile bus ride to Woodman School, a K-8 school off Highway 12 west of Lolo. The team was greeted by 50 students eager to show the players an outdoor ice rink in front of their historic school. Woodman’s middle school students built the rink over the past three years, proudly hanging a Griz Hockey flag above the rink along with an American flag and Montana state flag. The Griz Hockey players scrimmaged in front of the students and then invited them on the ice to teach them how to pass and shoot a puck.

Sargent marvels at the progress of his team since its return. The history of hockey at UM started in the 1970s with some college friends who called themselves the Flying Mules. In more recent years, the club was student-led but eventually dissolved. That’s when Sargent stepped in and worked to bring back Griz Hockey. He partnered with co-coaches Mike Anderson, former assistant coach of the Missoula Junior Bruins, and Will Grossman, manager of the local Hockey Wolf store.

With the help of a few others, the local men were able to recruit players — both locally and out-of-state — and built a team that sells out the Glacier Ice Rink and competes in the American College Hockey Association.

“The goal is to make it an institution where it’s a community event that people look forward to,” Sargent says. “I think we can grow this to be bigger and better every year.”
UM Adjunct Professor John Wicks doesn’t particularly stand out in his Missoula stomping grounds. But six months ago, Wicks was closing a whirlwind chapter of his life that took him to grand stages throughout the country.

A self-described “former jazz snob,” Wicks hustled to climb the music industry until he found success as a founding member of indie pop band Fitz and the Tantrums (think “Out of My League” and “HandClap”). His life shifted into an even higher gear, touring and recording music with the platinum-recording band.

The COVID-19 pandemic was the first time Wicks hit the brakes in three decades. The pause let him go back to school and earn the music degree he never finished. He spent more time in Missoula with his wife, Jenna Wicks – a Missoula native with whom he owns Drum Coffee – and their twin daughters.

Wicks amiably parted from Fitz and the Tantrums last year. Having put down deep roots in the Garden City, he now will become a larger part of its growth by shaping Missoula and the University’s futures through their developing music scene.

“No one is looking at this school to be the next big thing, which is why it should be.”

Wicks began teaching private drum set lessons at UM last fall. Spring semester, he rolled out a History of Hip Hop lecture course. Both are part of a larger plan for the School of Music, but Wicks hopes the connective tissue is the practical takeaways students leave with.

“My focus is giving students the skills that they need,” Wicks says. “That’s where I feel my real-world experience for the last 30 years is beneficial, because I know what’s happening in the music industry and how to make a living.”

“There’s a definite advantage to being someone who got their education on the street,” he added.

That unique advantage is why UM was eager to bring Wicks to campus.

While the school hosts many talented professors, Wicks’ success with popular music filled an expertise gap. Addressing it moved the school a step closer to its ambitions, says School of Music Director Jennifer Cavanaugh.

“It’s refreshing to have someone who is passionate about teaching that came to the University on a different path,” Cavanaugh says.

“I think it’s going to ignite our entire program.”

Those ambitions include a budding Popular and Commercial Music advising track within the Bachelor of Music in Composition degree, aimed at expanding opportunities for UM students after they graduate.

Still in development, the School of Music recently received curricular approval for a program expansion that will be led by Professor Bryan Curt Kostors, head of composition. The new track will make the University a home for students who otherwise may not have felt they had a place. An electric violinist who finds passion playing new music will have as much a place as a traditional player inspired by the classical canon. It also will equip students with the artistic and entrepreneurial skills necessary to succeed in popular and commercial music.

“We have a responsibility to think about where these students are going and how they might contribute to society,” Cavanaugh says. “We saw how this could expand with John's decades of experience in the professional world.”

Sophomore jazz studies student Simon Hickey sought out Wicks’ mentorship. A Missoula local, Hickey wasn’t keen to attend...
Former Fitz and the Tantrums drummer John Wicks is now an adjunct professor of drum set at UM, where he also teaches a History of Hip Hop lecture course.
Teaching students at UM has reinvigorated Wicks’ own passion for his craft, he says.
UM until he heard Wicks would teach. Having played drums for six years, attending a college with a strong drum set instructor and jazz program was important.

The drum lessons pushed Hickey to challenge himself as a musician. They also instilled wisdom from Wicks’ personal story, providing insight into how the music business functions and what pathways are most viable. Hickey learned Wicks’ philosophy that artists shouldn’t judge popular music as “less than” traditionally highbrow genres.

Wicks also spoke frankly about how artists must be wary and advocate for themselves to avoid being taken advantage of, touching on issues of industry corruption that Hickey otherwise would’ve been blind to.

“It’s helpful to have someone educating me who’s been successful in the music industry,” Hickey says. “If you want to talk about music, he’ll be honest with you.”

Wicks recently connected Hickey with an audition for Rain, a popular Beatles tribute band. Playing the role of mentor and potentially changing a young artist’s life is central to why he wanted to teach.

Wicks hopes his classroom is a space where students feel safe to push their limits and make mistakes. Teaching also reinvigorated his own passion, which he’s funneled into creative projects like the band Deaf Charlie with Pearl Jam bassist Jeff Ament.

“I have so much fricken’ fun with my students,” Wicks says. “I can teach a full day of private lessons, and all I want to do when I get home is go practice.”
Over 100 students moved onto the UM campus last summer to spend part of their vacation building computers, learning about color wavelengths and studying river ecology while floating the Clark Fork. They lived like college freshmen – eating at the Food Zoo and going to class – but none were older than a high school junior.

The students were part of the Montana American Indians in Math and Science (MT AIMS) summer camp, which brings together students from Native communities in Montana and beyond to forge friendships, gain STEM skills and build pathways to college.

The first student cohort from 2019 are now juniors pondering life after high school. Many are considering college – an indicator to MT AIMS Associate Director Stephan Chase that the program works.

“I don’t think they’d be considering that so much if they didn’t have a program like this,” says Chase, a member of the Diné (Navajo Nation). “This program has the potential to change the lives of kids from Native communities. I see that looking at the juniors we have now and hearing how they talk about going to school. I think that’s a big step.”

Native Americans fall behind other non-white student groups in higher education and account for the lowest graduation rates, according to the U.S. Department of Education.

“In general, if you look at the number of Native students that exist at most college campuses, it’s less than 1%,” says Aaron Thomas, a UM chemistry professor and director of MT AIMS and the University’s Indigenous Research and STEM Education program.

“When we talk about STEM, it’s much, much lower,” added Thomas, also a Diné tribal member. MT AIMS intends to change those statistics with free STEM education. The hope is that students who are interested in college will feel empowered to go.

“It’s really fun to experience, because you get a view of what college might be like,” says Aaliyah Tucker, an eighth grader at St. Ignatius Public Schools. “My grades have gotten better.”

Good grades are a prerequisite for returning to camp. Chase works year round to help students meet the minimum grade requirement of a C-average, making trips every month to schools throughout Montana.

Students with at least C-average grades receive a stipend of two $20. Chase encourages those with lower grades to raise them and discusses strategies like turning in partially done assignments, boosting scores with upcoming coursework or tutoring.

“I’ll totally bust it out these last two weeks,” JuDaya Azure-Matt, an eighth grader at Ronan Middle School, promised Chase during an end-of-the-year grade check.

Azure-Matt was eager to attend camp again, describing it as a freeing experience that pushed her to succeed.
Stephan Chase, Montana American Indians in Math and Science associate director, departs Ronan High School after meeting with MT AIMS students for their last grade check of the academic year.
“They didn’t give us lots of limitations that normal kids would have. They trusted us,” Azure-Matt says. “That really gave me some faith in myself.”

Besides typical camp activities like playing basketball and hiking the campus M Trail, students learn to do things like build a computer. If students pass Algebra 1 with a C or better, they get to keep the computer.

“It’s nice to show students these role models so they say, ‘Okay, they made it, and I can make it as well.” — AARON THOMAS

Lessons also synthesize Western science with Indigenous ways of knowing, like teaching math through traditional games.

“We’re trying to link STEM activities and slowly incorporate traditional and Native ways of knowing to show that practices handed down for millennia are actual science practices,” Chase says.

Showing Indigenous students how science always has been embedded in their communities builds confidence that they, too, have a place in STEM. The intention is similar in recruiting Native college-level counselors for camp.

“It’s nice to show students these role models so they say, ‘Okay, they made it, and I can make it as well.” — Thomas says.

The long-term vision of MT AIMS is to help students along that pathway all the way to graduate school. In the meantime, Chase hopes students will graduate high school, then college, and use their degrees to give back to their communities. Or at least return to camp as a counselor and become a role model themselves.”
JuDaya Azure-Matt, an eighth grader at Ronan Middle School, reviews her grades with Chase.
Forestry students and volunteers spent a week in late January transforming UM’s Schreiber Gym into a century-old logging town for the 104th Foresters’ Ball.

The work started with the students installing pieces of wood flooring across the empty gymnasium. Then came the chainsaws and freshly cut logs, which were used to support false fronts of a saloon, chapel, jail and other buildings. In the midst of the commotion, UM forestry student Jaiden Stansberry took a moment to appreciate the transformation and return of the revered campus tradition.

Stansberry, a junior who grew up in Yosemite National Park, had no idea what to expect because the Foresters’ Ball was canceled the past two years due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Only the senior class remembered having the 103rd ball in February 2020.

“Most of us haven’t gone to one before so it’s just this idea of a ball,” Stansberry says. “But now to actually put it together, it’s been super exciting to see it come into place.”

Mason Banks, a senior forestry student and organizer or “chief push” of the Foresters’ Ball committee, says he felt a sense of responsibility to bring back the ball.

“If it wasn’t for all the hard work this year, the tradition could have died, he says. The Foresters’ Ball dates back to 1915 and has only been canceled for two years during World War II and the two years for the pandemic.

“I don’t think there’s any other school that has this kind of tradition,” Banks says. “We really do owe it to those who came before us to put it on right and have this celebration.”

The Foresters’ Ball also is a fundraiser for students in the W.A. Franke College of Forestry and Conservation. Money raised goes toward scholarships for forestry students.

“As a freshman, I helped out and I was awarded a scholarship that helped me stay at the University,” Banks says.

“The goal for each individual ball is to reward those who helped build it.”

The Foresters’ Ball is hosted by forestry students, but it is meant for the general public and entire UM community. Leading up to this year’s ball, UM alumni from all majors reached out to student organizers about how much the event means to them. Some shared stories about meeting their future spouses at the ball or now having their own children attend.

Sonny Capece, a UM alumnus who graduated in 2019 with a political science degree, says he will never forget the first time he walked into the ball as a freshman. He had just moved to Montana from Tallahassee, Florida.

“I went and fell in love with the whole thing,” Capece says. “It was probably the most unique event in a university setting I had ever encountered.”

To create the 104th ball, Stansberry and other students relied on black-and-white photos and historic notes written decades ago. Now that the ball has returned, they hope to write their own chapter.

“To be able to make a tradition happen that has happened for 100 years is something spectacular,” Stansberry says. “I’m excited to see how people change it over the next few years and what they do to make it bigger and better.”
Top: UM forestry students spent a week transforming UM’s Schreiber Gym into a century-old logging town.
Bottom: Attendees wore their best flannel shirts and danced, got faked married and divorced and spent time in the wooden jail.
Last winter, Professor Eric Zimmer, a visiting scholar of the American West in UM’s Department of History, was looking for a chunky project that students in his spring U.S. Environmental History Class could tackle. The Montana Natural History Center meanwhile had been sitting on a collection of around 75,000 slides donated by the estate of nature enthusiast and photographer Dr. Herman William “Bill” Gabriel, which the MNHC, despite a strong desire, didn’t have the staff to catalog.

“I reached out to the center,” Zimmer recalls, “and told them about this class and just asked if there was something we could do to help them out and support their mission.”

“It was perfect,” MNHC Collections Manager Alyssa Cornell says of Zimmer’s timing. “When I brought up the Gabriel collection Eric’s eyes lit up. We both got very excited.”

Zimmer and Cornell knew from a natural history perspective there would be gems photographed by Gabriel, an alumnus of UM’s
Students enrolled in UM’s spring U.S. Environmental History Class helped the Montana Natural History Center categorize some 75,000 slides donated by the estate of nature enthusiast and photographer Dr. Herman William “Bill” Gabriel.
Top: First-year UM law student and sixth-generation rancher Erin Brush’s decision to pursue a law degree is deeply rooted in her love of agriculture and her drive to protect the land her family has been on for 150 years. (Credit: E. Brush Photography)

Left: Erin Brush shows her prized sheep at the county fair.
First-year UM law student and sixth-generation rancher Erin Brush grew up at the base of the Tobacco Root mountain range in Norris, Montana. Her decision to pursue a law degree is rooted in her love of agriculture and her drive to protect the land her family has been on for 150 years.

“Our own family was once taken advantage of by a company,” Brush says. “We didn’t have the funds or time to protect ourselves. I wanted to put myself in the position to help people in similar situations.”

Brush started out in 4-H, eventually becoming a state officer in high school.

“I lived and breathed 4-H,” Brush says about America’s largest youth development organization. “I tried out almost every program they offered. My favorite project was, by far, photography.”

Taking photos became a powerful way for Brush to show others her family’s way of life. She turned the skill into a small business to help support herself while in college.

Brush double-majored in agribusiness management and photography from Montana State University in Bozeman. She also picked up a minor in business administration.

She excelled within the programs and was very active on campus, serving as president of the Collegiate Stockgrowers, chair of College of Ag Ambassadors and president of Alpha Zeta, an honors club for the College of Agriculture.

“My grandpa and mother were both Alpha Zeta members as well,” Brush says. “Three generations of us went through MSU’s College of Ag.”

At a Young Ag Leaders conference in Bozeman, Brush listened to a speech by UM law graduate and Montana Attorney General Austin Knudsen. One of the points he made was that the state needed more lawyers in the agriculture space.

This resonated with Brush, and she saw a law degree as a way that could help out on the ranch.

“Farmers and ranchers are the salt of the earth,” says Brush, whose family owns the oldest ranch in Montana that still raises livestock. “There is somewhat of a disconnect between them and the legal community and how laws can actually affect their lives.

“My older brothers run the ranch, and there isn’t enough money in it to support multiple families,” she added. “I had to find a way that I could still help out but also earn my own living.”

Brush said that going to law school in Missoula made perfect sense.

“I can drive home on weekends to help out if needed,” she says. “I want to stay in Montana and advocate for the rural lifestyle. In-state tuition didn’t hurt either.

“I think there was a part of me that always wanted to be a lawyer,” she added. “My parents would agree based on my ability to argue with them from a young age.”

The workload in law school is tremendous, a challenge Brush is well prepared for. She credits her ability to learn things quickly and her overall work ethic to growing up on the ranch. Brush says rural students bring different perspectives and her background is an asset in the classroom.

The law school offers classes in agricultural law, water rights and other subject matters important to protecting the rights of farmers and ranchers.

As for the future, Brush plans to finish law school and then see where her education takes her. What she does know, is that she is in this for the right reasons.

“Money isn’t necessarily the main focus,” she says. “It’s about helping people get access to justice, what’s fair.”

Brush’s photography depicting her family’s way of life is available at https://www.ebrushphotography.com/.
Christie Farmer, from Browning, found a pathway to service through education. Photo by April Espinoza.
At seven years sober and 44 years old, Christie Farmer stands firmly planted and confident as a recent UM graduate – despite a life of telling herself that education would never be an option.

“I wanted something better for myself,” Farmer says. “And I remember walking through the doors of Blackfeet Community College thinking, ‘I’m a felon, I don’t belong here.’ But I kept walking. Never in a million years did I think I would get to where I am now.”

From Browning, Farmer was most recently a student in UM’s School of Social Work, housed in the College of Health. For the past two years as a student at Blackfeet Community College, she completed UM classes through the University’s 2+2 Bachelor of Social Work program. The 2+2 program caters to students who completed or are enrolled in an associate’s degree program at partnering colleges across Montana. Students can take classes remotely through UM and ultimately earn a bachelor’s degree – without having to leave their home community.

As a remote UM student, Farmer dove deep into subjects that were up close and personal. Among them: opioid awareness, addiction counseling and recovery programs, and policies that support a vulnerable and rural population.

“There’s a level of education that this community needs, especially in those positions where you’re dealing with huge public health issues and problems,” Farmer says.

“...we can begin to address issues at a systems level.”  CHRISTIE FARMER

At BCC, Farmer’s passion for addiction education began with an internship with the Rocky Mountain Tribal Leaders Council, which led to a grant internship on drug prevention and opioid awareness in the Browning community. The project, “Blackfeet Opioid Prevention Project through Public Health Workforce Expansion in Indian Country,” was aimed at community education on opioid addiction. And for Farmer, the best way to communicate the dangers of addiction was through public art. The canvas in this case was Browning’s Glenn Heavy Runner Pool, where many local kids hang out on hot summer days. Farmer worked with local artist Jesse Des Rosier to paint a mural on the pool’s main wall.

Her work continued after being asked to participate in drafting the Montana Substance Use Disorder Task Force Strategic Plan with the Department of Health and Human Services, and in 2020 Farmer received Montana’s Student Volunteer Award from former Montana Gov. Steve Bullock.

For Farmer, navigating through drug addiction is real. Having served time in prison for selling, she knows what it takes to recover. She says “being on the other side of it” allows her a deeper appreciation and understanding of what people truly need to get clean and make a life.

“I didn’t have anyone I could relate to when I was getting sober,” she says. “I remember being in a really dark place and wishing the person at the other end could really understand. I want to be that person now.”

In Montana, the opioid overdose death rate for Indigenous people was twice that of white people from 2019 to 2021, according to the Department of Public Health and Human Services. In most of the state’s reservation communities, treatment centers are available, but the wait for one can be long and the centers are often far away and struggle with staffing. Farmer says her new bachelor’s degree in social work will allow her a springboard to deepen her work in addiction treatment and education.

“I want to get a wider bird’s-eye view of drug addiction and recovery in Montana, not just here in Browning,” she says. “There are barriers to success when it comes to all of the agencies and courts and the actual population that’s being served. This is the work I am called to do.”
One magical moment can change the trajectory of a life. Take what happened to Seely Garrett. As a high school student in Helena, Garrett assisted with a dance program for people of all abilities. She helped with a production called “Nutcracker on the Rocks,” and one of the performers was a 9-year-old girl struggling with worsening muscular dystrophy.

“There came a moment where she goes across the stage, and she is supposed to present her right arm and then her left arm,” Garrett says. “And the performance gave her this adrenaline, and she rode her little wheelchair out there, and there came the biggest arm movement we had seen from her in a year.”

Garrett’s voice hitched a little from the memory. “For those of us in the know – who had worked with her – we were all on stage tearing up,” she says. “It felt very special to witness this person who might not always have the chance to perform in things like that. We saw her actually getting stronger through her dance. It was powerful to see.”

Such inspiration fueled Garrett to become one of the first UM students to take a new concentration in Pre-Dance Therapy. The offering launched fall semester with five students in the first cohort. The architects of the new concentration are two dance faculty members, Professor Heidi Jones Eggert and Assistant Professor Brooklyn Draper.

“People need to understand that dance is a healer,” Eggert says. “We have folks who come in and have physical limitations and maybe don’t communicate verbally as easily as the rest of us. But you get the music going and the juices flowing, and suddenly they make eye contact when they wouldn’t make eye contact before. Something just ignites in them.”

For the past dozen years, Eggert has taught New Visions Dance, a UM therapeutic program that offers dance and creative movement classes to adults with varying developmental, cognitive and physical abilities. The innovative class has existed at UM for the past quarter century.

All UM dance therapy students are required to co-teach New Visions Dance – as Garrett does on Mondays during spring semester – as well as assist with UM Children’s Dance Classes.

Draper says it was dance students helping with programs like New Visions Dance who consistently pushed for the new Pre-Dance Therapy concentration and potential careers as dance movement therapists. Some of those students, who earned a Bachelor of Arts in dance from UM, went on to graduate school in dance therapy. Draper and Eggert used the guidance and feedback from these recent alumni to help design the new concentration.

“Just a few institutions across the country are doing anything like this at the undergraduate level,” Draper says. “It’s just very few, but it’s going to grow. The awareness is expanding.”

The Pre-Dance Therapy concentration offers all the prerequisites needed to qualify for a graduate program in dance/movement therapy. The interdisciplinary concentration combines dance and psychology curriculums.

“We encourage them to take diverse offerings,” Draper says.

Though the concentration readies students for future study in graduate school, it also immediately prepares them for community work using dance therapy after their undergraduate studies.

“It preps students beautifully to take these classes into community centers and old folks’ homes or schools,” Eggert says. “It trains them with this mindset that movement can bring us together as a community.”

Garrett said dance therapy is a unique discipline to study.

“Most universities don’t have it, and I have it right here in my home state,” Garrett says. “I think of how special that is.” •
Seely Garrett, one of the first students in the new dance-therapy concentration, helps lead a class in a creative dance.
DEAR GRIZZLIES,

The University of Montana is a wonderful place to learn and work. I love this time of year as we welcome students back to campus and launch into another season of college athletics. Thank you for all your support for Grizzly Athletics!

The core mission of Intercollegiate athletics is to graduate student-athletes and assist the young people competing as Grizzlies to develop leadership skills and win conference championships. Intercollegiate athletics accomplishes this mission in a variety of ways. This whole process becomes one of the more significant connection points for the community and alumni to the University.

One of the primary methods of accomplishing this mission is to invest in the facilities that serve student-athletes. As fans of the Grizzlies, we spend most of our time in the arenas or stadiums cheering on the student-athletes in competition. Washington-Grizzly Stadium, Dalhberg Arena and our other athletic venues are beautiful and make the game day atmosphere at Grizzly Athletic events the best in the country! However, the student-athletes spend the vast majority of their time studying, practicing, training and recuperating.

Over the past decade, the athletic department has made a strategic decision to invest in the facilities that serve our student-athletes. With the incredible generosity of so many, the department has invested more than $40 million in our University’s athletic facility infrastructure, with the vast majority of that investment going to facilities that directly impact and improve the day-to-day life of Grizzly student-athletes. Plus, the $40 million investment has all come from private sources, with no funding coming from the state or the University.

Some of these facilities are very visible, such as the Washington-Grizzly Champions Center, the south campus softball facility, or the Eric and Blair Sprunk Student-Athlete Academic Center. Some of these facilities are less visible, such as the Coyle Recovery Room, the south campus soccer field resurface project or the Rhinehart Athletic Training Center remodel.

One new addition is the indoor practice facility under construction on the north end of campus. The 110,000-square-foot facility will be covered with an inflatable roof that will be the first of its kind in the Big Sky Conference. In total, the facility will include a regulation-size synthetic football field, four 150-yard sprint lanes for track athletes, two long-jump pits, two pole vault bars and a hammer, javelin, discus and shot-put area for field athletes. The facility also will house winter practices for Grizzly soccer and softball teams.

The construction of this $10.2 million addition is under the direction of Dick Anderson Construction and made possible by generous donations from the UM Quarterback Club and many others, along with a $3 million investment by Kyle and Kevin Washington.

The Grizzly Indoor Practice Facility will not only serve every student-athlete in the athletic department, it will also be a hub of activity for campus recreation and the Missoula community. We anticipate the facility being used around the clock by local youth sports organizations and UM students, and it will be a source of rental revenue to cover the costs associated with operation.

What’s next? A relocation of the Hackney Equipment Center to make room for the Lady Griz Basketball Center. We continue to fundraise for this project to make equipment distribution, storage and laundry more efficient and provide a much-needed upgrade for the Lady Griz.

I am proud of the accomplishments of Grizzly student-athletes. These outstanding young men and women continue to perform at an extremely high level both inside and outside the classroom. We continue to focus on success in competition, academically and in the community. Thank you for showing your Griz pride. It does not go unnoticed!

GO GRIZ!

Kent Haslam
Director of Athletics
Aaron Fontes hurdles Antonio Burse of the Indiana State Sycamores last season. Photo by Tommy Martino.
Top: Head coach Allison Lawrence celebrates with the team after a Grizzly volleyball match against Montana State University. Bottom left: Grizzly sprinter Jaydon Green celebrates after a race. Bottom right: Laolu Oke looks to pull down a rebound in the first half of a game against Northern Arizona. Photos by Tommy Martino.
Top left: Eli Gillman celebrates after scoring against Eastern Washington. Top right: Gina Marxen shoots the ball during the first quarter against the Gonzaga Bulldogs. Bottom: Jaxie Kluweich celebrates after making a play at second base while playing against Sacramento State. Photos by Ryan Brennacke.
Grizzlies of all ages celebrated Homecoming last year with pride and tradition.
Homecoming truly is a special time of year – a time when alumni, students, staff, faculty and community members all come together to celebrate their UM pride by participating in the Hello Walk, Homecoming Griz on Tap, Distinguished Alumni Award Ceremony, Yell Night Pep Rally, Alumni Tailgate and much more!

Visit umt.edu/homecoming for a schedule of events.
Each Homecoming, the UM Alumni Association honors outstanding alumni with Distinguished Alumni Awards. University alumni and friends are invited to nominate, on an individual basis, a graduate or former student for this award. Recipients are individuals who have distinguished themselves in a particular field and who have brought honor to the University, the state or the nation. The UM Alumni Association Board of Directors Awards Committee focuses on career achievement, professional honors, professional membership/directorship, community service, and UM or UMAA recognition or service in selecting recipients.

**SUSAN B. ADAMS**
Ph.D., Organismal Biology & Ecology, 1999

**PAUL CARPINO**
B.S., Social Work, 1954

**ARNOLD “SMOKE” ELSER**
B.A., Education, 1964

**MICHAEL M. MUNSON**
M.Ed., Education Curriculum & Instruction, 2008
B.A., Education, 2004

**STEVE NELSON**
B.A., Economics, 1970

**LAWRENCE PETTIT**
B.A., History, 1959

Visit grizalum.org/recognition to read more about this year’s distinguished alumni.
LAUREN ASTRUP
BOTHELL, WA
B.S., Health & Human Performance, 2015
DPT (Physical Therapy), 2018

JUILA CUMMINGS
VANCOUVER, WA
B.A. Journalism, 2012
Minors in Political Science & Southwest Central Asian Studies

CALEB CHESTNUT
DALLAS, TX
B.A. Music, 2020

ROSIE CERQUONE
SPOKANE, WA
B.A. Music, 2020

NEW LIFETIME MEMBERS

Bradley ’06 and Monica Cederberg ’06
Seth Carmichael, Whitefish
Daniel and Marjorie Doyle, Missoula
Andre Gillan ’20, Ardmore, AL
John Harrington ’22, Missoula

Jarod Johnson ’03, Bozeman
David Ley, Missoula
Timothy Lorenzo ’22, Anaheim, CA
Dennis ’73 and Joan McLuskie ’73, Billings
Nicolas Ream ’20, Columbia Falls

Susan Strachan ’08, Bremerton, WA
Lora Sullivan ’12, Spring, TX
Ronald ’02 and Vicki Thuesen ’02, Missoula
Bradley ’83 and Valerie Veis ’83, Missoula
Leon ’65 and Hazel Washut, Vero Beach, FL
UM alums are leading the way in tackling some of humanity’s most pressing challenges, leaving an indelible mark and making a significant impact on a local and global scale. Impressively, they are doing so immediately upon graduation, and we are beyond proud to recognize them in our new 25 Under 25 program.

**JOIN THE GRIZ CAREER NETWORK**

Griz Career Network connects Grizzlies, both students and alumni, to a vast network with endless career advice, experiences and opportunities to share.

*Join the most helpful job network at umt.peoplegrove.com.*
Despite not growing up in a military family, the decision to pursue a career in the Army came naturally to Paige Jennings, a brigadier general and a second-generation UM alumna.

Growing up in Missoula, the Big Sky High School grad was introduced to the military path by a local ROTC instructor she met while spending time at the Missoula Trap and Skeet Club with her father.

“I went into high school and started thinking maybe I want to pursue going to the academy,” she says.

Jennings received an appointment to the United States Military Academy West Point and earned a spot at Princeton for ROTC, but ultimately decided to stay closer to home. She spent her two years in the ROTC program at Gonzaga University before transferring to UM, after marrying her husband, Larry.

Initially, her ROTC program had her studying biology, but that wasn’t the case for long.

“I did one semester, and I said, ‘Oh, this is not for me,’” jokes Jennings.

She pivoted to business and accounting, a subject her mom had taught at Florence High School for years. The coursework was much more in Jennings’s wheelhouse.

“I loved the business school,” she says. “That’s how I ended up going into finance in the Army.”

Jennings finished up her degree in UM’s College of Business as an ROTC member. A favorite memory is manning the cannon on the field at Griz games.

After graduation, Jennings and her husband moved to South Carolina, where she completed Army Officer Basic Training at the U.S. Army Soldier Support Institute in the Finance School. Then it was on to Fort Campbell, Kentucky.

“From there we went to the next duty station and the next duty station, and I kept serving,” says Jennings.

Her primary work may be in finance, but Jennings was still in the Army. She had to confront her fear of heights when she was sent to air assault school and then again at airborne school. Learning to jump out of a plane was also an event that she could bond over with her former smokejumper dad.

The more she progressed in her military career, the more Jennings felt like it was a perfect fit.

“Some people do it because they have a family lineage. I didn’t have that,” she says. “For me, it was getting in there and loving what I did. I loved the camaraderie and the feeling of teamwork. I appreciated the level of responsibility you’re given.”

Jennings certainly carries a lot of responsibilities in her role. She assumed command of the U.S. Army Financial Management Command in 2021. The Army operates with a multibillion budget, and every dollar must be accounted for.

“I love wearing the uniform. I love serving.”

PAIGE JENNINGS

As a brigadier general, she’s also responsible for an organization composed of soldiers and federal civilian employees, whose ability to work as a team will ensure success for the Army. For Jennings, that’s been one of the most rewarding aspects of her career. Growing up as the daughter of two lifelong educators, she saw firsthand the difference you can make when you care.

“Whether it’s helping a soldier or civilian employee get promoted or helping with a personal issue,” she says, “I truly appreciate being able to help people and watch them grow.”

Jennings is also happy to be an ambassador to anyone who may be interested in learning more about a military career. Entering her 29th year of service, she knows her career isn’t the norm, but she believes there is something for everyone, no matter how long you stay.

“The experience, the leadership opportunities and what is given to you, you don’t get that everywhere,” she says.

Though her career has involved moving all
around the country, Jennings and her husband have never lost their connection to Montana. And their daughter Amanda carried on the Griz tradition.

“She really walked away with that personal connection,” Jennings says of her daughter’s initial visit to UM. “Growing up in Missoula, both my husband and I attended UM, but that initial visit with the Davidson Honors College and Dr. Mark Pershouse really was unbelievable. Our daughter has spent her life visiting all our family in Montana, but after her first two weeks at school, she said she was never leaving. It’s small enough that you have that personal connection, but big enough that you can really do something. I want more kids to have that experience here at UM.”

Amanda graduated from UM in 2021 and is now working on her M.D. through the WWAMI program. Jennings and her husband are looking forward to retiring in the new few years and moving back to western Montana and hope that their two children, Amanda and Laurence, will settle there in Griz country as well. •
You could say that Ashley Barber was almost predestined to work in the film industry. The UM alumnus was named after a character in his mother's favorite movie, "Gone with the Wind." He recalls frequent family trips to theaters to see new releases or watching the classics on TV.

"I remember watching movies and then going to the piano and trying to play the film score," says Barber.

Growing up in the Bozeman-Belgrade area, Barber dreamed of becoming a film composer. His love of music drew him to UM, where he was accepted into the School of Music as a pianist. "For the first few years, I was solidly a music student," Barber says of his time at UM.

He also studied composition and joined the Grizzly Marching Band. A standout memory from that time is a showcase for one of his composition classes. Music students performed
pieces written by their classmates.

“It was one of the most incredible experiences to conduct a piece I had written in front of an audience,” recalls Barber.

Things changed when Barber headed to Los Angeles for an internship with a music production company. A temporary full-time position opened up, and Barber got the job. He spent nine months as an associate producer and fell in love with the work.

“I realized how incredible producing is and how incredible the business side of the entertainment industry is,” he says.

Barber decided to pursue a career in film production. When he got back to UM, he switched his major to film studies and earned a certificate in entertainment management. After graduating in 2012, he worked in Montana for a few months to save up money. In the spring of 2013, he packed up a U-Haul and set out for LA once again.

“I basically started from the bottom of the ladder and worked my way up to where I am now,” he says.

An industry contact from his internship days referred him to his first job as an assistant for TV mogul Michael King. From there, he moved on to be an assistant for Paula Abdul while she was working as a judge on “So You Think You Can Dance.” Being an assistant meant long hours and a bevy of tasks they don’t teach in film studies classes.

“It was completely different from anything I’d ever done,” Barber says. “When you’re an assistant to anyone in LA, you’re corralling their life. It’s a huge responsibility.”

Despite the learning curve, Barber made the most of his time as an assistant, creating connections and learning new skills. The goal was to move into production, and after a few years he accepted a position at an indie production company. The smaller size of the company allowed Barber to wear more hats and learn as much as possible.

Barber spent two years in that role before moving into freelance. He enjoyed the work, but the unstable nature was less than ideal.

“The thing about freelance is it's a scary world,” he says. “It's feast or famine.”

So Barber jumped at the offer when a friend mentioned that the producer of a Nickelodeon show was looking for an assistant. That job opened him up to another side of the entertainment industry – animation.

“I was working with amazing storyboard artists and animators and directors,” he says.

The show Barber worked on came to an end after a few seasons, leading him to Illumination Studios, where he works now. He started there as an executive assistant to Illumination's CEO, which allowed him to get a holistic view of the studio's operations. That benefits him in his current role as a production and development associate.

“It kind of float and work in all the departments, so I'm able to have a small hand in everything from preproduction all the way through to postproduction and delivery,” says Barber.

It's a fulfilling feeling for Barber to be able to use everything he's learned over nearly a decade in the industry, as well as the experience he gained as a UM student. He also feels lucky to have had such impactful people guiding him along the way.

“A high point of my career has been being able to work under such amazing mentors and creatives,” he says.

And for all he's accomplished so far, Barber still has big plans for the future.

“The endgame is to be a producer or an executive producer on a motion picture down the road,” he says.

The desire to dream big and follow your passion has proved to be a good path for Barber, though hard work certainly played a part. The entertainment industry isn't known for being a straight line to success. Barber thinks the challenges are worth the reward.

“It's tough, but don't let that stop you from having dreams,” he says.
DAN P. PLUTE 1967
Dan lives in Nadadouro, Portugal. Dan and Nina moved to Portugal in October 2019 after spending over 35 years in the San Francisco area.

JOHN C. JENS 1972
John was honored in a retirement ceremony at the Army Geospatial Center in late January 2022 for more than 47 years of combined military and civilian service to the US Army and The Corps of Engineers. He was assigned as a geologist to the Army Geospatial Center for the last 27 years as an instructor and as a remote sensing and GIS expert on special mapping projects.

PETE WILKE 1979
Pete retired after 31 years as a pilot at Delta Air Lines. He finished his career as a Captain on the Boeing 737-800 and 737-900. He is also qualified on the Boeing 757 and 767. He and his partner, Lisa Piccolotti, live in Tucson.

RICHARD ROBBINS 1979
In May 2021, Richard retired from Minnesota State Mankato after 37 years of teaching literature and creative writing. He recently moved back west to Oregon. His seventh book of poems, “The Oratory of All Souls,” was published in February by Lynx Home Press.

BRIAN LANNAN 1982
Brian is the director of major project controls at Quanta Infrastructure Solutions Group, a recognized leader in Engineering, Procurement & Construction (EPC), Design-Build, and Construction Management at Risk (CMAR) services for electrical infrastructure, wastewater and specialty projects.

SHAWN PEREZ 1983
Shawn was named DECA Advisor of the Year for the state of Washington. DECA is a high school business and marketing club. Shawn has taught business and marketing at Heritage High School in Vancouver for 17 years. She is currently a National Board-certified teacher and a career and college specialist.

STEVE ROTH 1996
Steve was recently promoted to serve as the associate provost and dean of the Graduate School at the University of Maryland in College Park.

PAMELA WRIGHT 1987
After a long career in historical research and archives, Pamela is currently the Chief Innovation Officer at the National Archives and Records Administration in Maryland. She has overseen the digitization of the archives vast store of documents, photographs and artifacts. She has helped make millions of records accessible and facilitated creative projects like History Hub, an online historical research community.

“There was no planning it, I would have never guessed it. It just ended up in a great place.” Pamela said.

Pamela was recognized for her successes at NARA with a Distinguished Executive Presidential Rank Award, which highlights extraordinary accomplishments among federal employees.

NICK GULIG 2007
Nick was recently recognized by his home state of Wisconsin to serve as its next poet laureate. The title is in addition to his role as an associate professor of languages and literature at the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater.

The role has put him in touch with a wider community of Wisconsinites working to spotlight the arts and education. Nick hopes to bring that work to the forefront in his time as poet laureate.

“I can bring that visibility to all these individuals and all these groups that have been doing this work in the shadows and behind the scenes,” he said.

CHAD FISHER 1997
Chad, who has served as the National Park Service’s acting chief for the Division of Fire and Aviation since August 2022 announced his retirement at the end of February. Between March 2021 and August
2022, Chad served as branch chief for NPS Wildland Fire, where he led the team responsible for operations, science and ecology, and planning and budgeting for the Service’s wildland fire management program.

BRANDI LYNN (LAUBACH) WILKINSON 1999
After a 30-year career in radio and television broadcasting and teaching in higher education, UM J-school alum Brandi Lynn (Laubach) Wilkinson began a new career in the nonprofit sector. In February she accepted a position as the new executive director of the Northeast Health Services Charitable Foundation in Wolf Point and Poplar.

ANDREW CAMPBELL 2002
Andrew is based at the Indianapolis office of law firm Faegre Drinker. He has been appointed a deputy practice group leader of the firm’s product liability and mass torts practice. Campbell guides healthcare clients, including pharmaceutical and medical device manufacturers, through litigation and pre-litigation risk management.

LUELLA BRIEN 2006
Luella, a member of the Apsáalooke tribe, is working as a local journalist in Montana. After several years in the industry, she founded her own media company, Four Points Press Media. She was also recently featured in the Showtime docuseries, “Murder in Big Horn,” which details the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Persons crisis in Montana.

KRISTEN JOHNSON 1998
Kristen is planning to retire this fall after 21 years at Pikes Peak State College in Colorado Springs. She started as a biology adjunct, faculty and associate dean and served as dean of Natural and Physical Sciences for the past seven years. She is relocating to western Montana for retirement and looking forward to giving back to Montana communities.

GRETCHE SCHWARTZ 1997
Gretchen is currently teaching composition classes at Columbus State Community College in Ohio.

KRISTEN JOHNSON 1998
Christen is planning to retire this fall after 21 years at Pikes Peak State College in Colorado Springs. She started as a biology adjunct, faculty and associate dean and served as dean of Natural and Physical Sciences for the past seven years. She is relocating to western Montana for retirement and looking forward to giving back to Montana communities.

MADISON SMALL 2016
Maddie, a fifth-generation Missoula business owner, opened Range Physical Therapy & Wellness in 2022. The clinic offers individualized massage therapy and physical therapy services. Maddie graduated with her Bachelor’s of Science degree in health and human performance, exercise science from UM in 2016 and earned her doctorate in physical therapy from Slippery Rock University of Pennsylvania in 2019. She is passionate about expanding the health and wellness of the community she grew up in.

ASIA CALUORI 2018
In addition to working full-time in the software industry, Asia is the co-owner of Pearl Boba Tea in Missoula. She was the recipient of the Small Business Administration’s Young Entrepreneurs of the Year award for Montana for 2023.

Asia says there is still potential to grow the business, but for now, she hopes Missoulians will continue to gather and enjoy their boba tea.

CAM HUMPHREY 2021
Cam successfully completed all the necessary exams and has been promoted to financial advisor at Pintler Wealth Management in Missoula.

Submit your class notes at bit.ly/um-classnotes
We extend sympathy to the following families of the alumni and those within our UM community.

1940s
Harry Allen Durham ’42, Longview, Wash. Pauline Kathleen Otte Robinson ’43, Billings
Helen Merle “Orie” Christiansen Sweeney ’50, Salem, Ore. & Butte

1950s
John James “Jack” Burke, Jr. ’50, J.D. ’52, Butte Leslie C. Campbell ’50, Billings
Martha Ellen Brown Davis ’50, M.Ed. ’50, Missoula
Melvin Ray “Mel” Bennett ’50, Missoula

IN MEMORIAM
Cordell Johnson ’56, Billings
William Henry “Bill” Harger ’56, San Diego, Calif.
James Douglas Tutwiler ’56, Helena
Barbara Berg Lester ’55, Helena
Max Albert Makich ’55, Glasgow
Margaret Milanella Mullen ’55, Bozeman
Hoover Ogata ’55, Seminole, Fla.
David Leonard “Dave” Owen ’55, Kalispell William “Ben” Barber ’55, Missoula
Mary Delia Gennara Stuart ’55, M.A. ’56, Butte
Robert Roy Tromley ’55, Missoula
James Douglas Tutwiler ’55, Helena
Paul Eugene Caine ’56, San Diego, Calif.
William Henry “Bill” Harger ’56, Coeur d’alene, Idaho
Juanita Hancock Huffman ’56, Billings
Nancy C. “Nancy” Sherman ’56, Missoula

Robert Donald “Don” Nicholas ’56, Missoula
John Daniel “Jack” Case ’56, Missoula
Nancy Ellen Taylor MacDonald ’56, Missoula
Dorothy Marie Craig Trent ’59, Oak Park Heights, Minn.

Thomas Francis “Tom” Dowling ’61, J.D. Helena
William Harvey “Bill” Guinsburg ’61, Boise, Idaho
Edwin William “Ed” Jewell ’61, J.D., Libby
Sonja Synova Bakke Johnson ’61, Columbia, Mo.
Constance “Connie” Cottrell ’62, Butte
Mary G. Moss ’62, Pleasant Hill, Calif.
Catherine Hennessy Stibel ’62, Missoula

Gary Gene Fish ’62, Paradise Valley
John Berthold “Pepper” Pitzer ’62, Denver, Colo.
Dale Glen Hallock ’62, Great Falls
Wayne L. Leslie ’62, Lincoln, Calif.
Gerald O. “Gerry” Livesey ’62, Harleysville, Penn.
Robert Scott “Bob” McKinnon ’62, Great Falls
John L. Olson ’62, Sidney
Donald L. “Don” Pefau ’62, Kingwood, Texas
Marjorie Louis Smith Reid ’62, Redding, Calif.
Richard N. “Bob” Lord ’62, M.A., Proctor
William C. “Bill” Bradt ’63, ’65 M.S., Stevensville
Wayne Roland Day ’63, U.M.
Ralph Leroy Fitzpatrick ’63, Hungry Horse
Orville Wayne Gradsack ’63, Fairfield
Robert Leroy “Mack” Westover ’63, Florence, Ore.
Cherie Ann Fey Anderson ’65, Missoula
Kenneth John “Ken” Erlandson ’65, Missoula

Clyde William Tucker ’61, Missoula

Thomas M. “Tom” Wolgamot ’63, Great Falls
Dr. Sheila Stearns was a champion of higher education throughout Montana. Photo by Tommy Martino.
The UM family lost a titan this year. Dr. Sheila Stearns – UM’s 18th president – passed away in May due to complications from lung cancer. When compiling a list of the most impactful and influential leaders in UM history, Stearns is near the top.

Before stepping up to lead her alma mater in 2016, Stearns served as Montana’s commissioner of higher education for nearly a decade – becoming the first woman to lead the Montana University System. During her time, she oversaw tremendous growth across all of the public universities and colleges in Montana. She also held leadership positions at Wayne State College in Nebraska, UM-Western and Montana State University-Billings over the course of her distinguished career.

But above all, Stearns was a proud Griz. She studied alongside famed UM history faculty members K. Ross Toole, John Van de Wettering and Melvin Wren.

She was an influential voice, shaping decisions in the late 1980s and early ’90s that propelled UM to heights it had never experienced before.

The Glendive native was a four-time UM graduate, with a bachelor’s in English and history, a master’s in history, a doctorate in educational administration and supervision, and a 2018 honorary doctorate in education.

During her years as UM vice president for University Relations, Stearns played pivotal roles in UM’s first capital campaign, as well as bolstering the UM Alumni Association. She regularly advocated for increased funding for UM from the Montana Legislature and helped promote the value of the University to every corner of Montana. After spending years away from Missoula in other high-level leadership roles, she chose to return to UM in 2016 as president – in a time of challenge for the institution.

During her 14 months as president, she helped address enrollment and budget challenges, established the Humanities Institute and Accelerate Montana, and oversaw the completion of the Liberal Arts Building renovation and the construction of the Washington-Grizzly Champions Center.

Whenever UM was in need, Stearns was there to lead. She was truly a Griz for Life.

During a 2006 interview, she explained why her passion ran so deep for her alma mater and why the success of UM is so important for the Treasure State:

"The destiny of the state of Montana is very linked to the destiny of its colleges and universities...

They, we, are life-changing, particularly for individuals where that matters, but also for whole communities and ultimately its being realized for the state as a whole. So that is my vision, through a place like the University of Montana — change lives as it changed mine. To give opportunities as it gave opportunity to me. And, therefore, to just change the face of the state for the next century."