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Association gives journalism school high marks, \$10,000 award

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The University of
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NEWS RELEASE

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Contact: Carol Van Valkenburg, interim dean, (406) 243-4001.

ASSOCIATION GIVES JOURNALISM SCHOOL HIGH MARKS, \$10,000 AWARD

MISSOULA--

The School of Journalism at The University of Montana produces excellent graduates who are "soundly trained in the fundamentals of print journalism," according to a recent evaluation issued by the Pacific Northwest Newspaper Association.

The organization backed up its vote of confidence with a \$10,000 award to the journalism school.

Four representatives of PNNA were on campus in early March to evaluate the journalism school's program and success at turning out students well-prepared for newspaper jobs.

"The school's commitment almost exactly matches PNNA's philosophy," the report said, adding that UM "continues to be a model for journalism programs that meet or exceed PNNA expectations."

The journalism school will use the award money to upgrade computer labs, so that it can better train students in reporting, editing, design and photojournalism.

"We're delighted that PNNA has given the school such a strong evaluation," said Interim Dean Carol Van Valkenburg. "We think it confirms our belief that we're doing an

excellent job of educating young journalists. Our graduates are much in demand and that has a great deal to do with the extensive professional background of the faculty and their dedication to our students."

The report noted that classes at UM provide hands-on opportunities and make real-life demands.

"Teachers stress deadlines," it said. "And many of the teachers were described by the students as tough, but compassionate, great role-modeling for the real world where the best city editors exhibit both qualities."

PNNA also mentioned that the school has made significant progress in recruiting minorities through its creation of the Native American Journalist-in-Residence position, filled by Dennis McAuliffe, night foreign desk editor at the Washington Post.

The report singled out the "impressive effort" of the continuing Native News Honors Project, in which top students produce a 32-page newspaper supplement on Indian issues in Montana. The annual tab is distributed statewide through daily newspapers.

Areas of concern mentioned in the report included diminishing levels of state funding, the danger of faculty burnout due to a high student advisory load and increasingly inadequate facilities.

"Historic and beloved as it is, the school's building needs to be replaced so that broadcast and print classes can be held at one site," the report said. "Eventually a new building is needed. For now, the old building serves the school sufficiently -- and proudly."

UM is well ahead of the curve in some areas, including teaching design, photojournalism and computer-assisted reporting, the report said.

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PNNA contacted state newspaper professionals for their opinions of the school.

In a survey of seven Montana editors, the school received a B+ for overall effort, "a very solid showing. Overall, respondents thought the school was doing a solid job and was serving the state's newspapers well."

PNNA represents about 60 papers in the Pacific Northwest region, which comprises Montana, Idaho, Washington, Oregon, Alaska, Utah and British Columbia. Along with promoting the newspaper industry, it evaluates schools and provides financial support to those that uphold its high standards.

PNNA team members visiting UM were: Paul Emerson, editor of the Lewiston (Idaho) Tribune; Jim Strauss, editor of the Great Falls Tribune; Rebecca Nappi, interactive editor at the Spokesman-Review; and Andy Perdue, news editor at the Tri-City (Washington) Herald.

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