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The University of
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UNIVERSITY RELATIONS • MISSOULA, MT 59812 • 406-243-2522 • FAX: 406-243-4520

NEWS RELEASE

Nov. 29, 2001

Contact: UM Foundation and Office of Development, (406) 243-2593.

ENDOWMENT ESTABLISHED FOR UM FORENSICS PROGRAM

MISSOULA—

An endowment to support The University of Montana Forensics Program has been established as a memorial to UM alumna Paula Jean Jellison.

Started by her parents, Dean and Joan Jellison of Kalispell, the endowment will provide funding for UM's newly reactivated Forensics Team. Endowment proceeds will support the team and its coaches as they prepare for speech and debate meets and travel to competitions.

As a UM student Jellison didn't have the opportunity to participate in forensics because the University had dropped its program in 1981. She had enjoyed forensics as a Flathead County High School student, however, and believed the experience helped polish her writing skills and prompted her interest in campus and local politics – she served as vice president of the Associated Students of UM before graduating in 1985. Her forensics experience also gave Jellison confidence to pursue a career as director of community relations in the office of the King County Prosecutor in Seattle.

Jellison died of Hodgkin's disease in 2000. She was 38.

When UM resurrected the Forensics Program in 2000 as a joint endeavor of the Department of Communication Studies and the Davidson Honors College, Jellison's parents felt creating an endowment in memory of their daughter was a fitting tribute. They invite contributions to the fund as a memorial to Paula and encourage UM students to participate in the Forensics Team.

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UM speech and debate programs have a long tradition. As early as 1895, two years after UM was chartered, an oratorical contest was held as a closing exercise at the end of the school year. For many years the University was a powerhouse in forensics programs, capturing state and regional championships and even sponsoring exhibition debates with Oxford and London university teams. Reduced funding in the 1970s, coupled with increased costs for team travel, spelled the demise of UM forensics in 1981.

In only its second year back, the Forensics Team has placed in regional competitions, including taking second place at the large Western States Tournament.

Gifts to the Jellison Endowment for Forensics should be directed and made payable to The University of Montana Foundation, P.O. Box 7159, Missoula, MT 59807.

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