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The University of
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NEWS RELEASE

Aug. 27, 2002

Contact: Barbara Hollmann, vice president for student affairs, 243-5225.

AFGHAN WOMAN ARRIVES IN MISSOULA TO STUDY AT UM MISSOULA--

A young woman from Afghanistan arrived in Missoula today to begin her studies at The University of Montana on a full scholarship.

Sousan Rahimi, 24, from Kabul, is among five young Afghan women who flew from Afghanistan to New York's John F. Kennedy International Airport on Saturday to pursue an American higher education. Accompanying Rahimi to Missoula was Paula Nirschel, wife of the president of Roger Williams University in Bristol, R.I.

Nirschel conceived a scholarship initiative to provide the gift of education to Afghan women returning to school for the first time since Taliban rule ended. In light of the degradation and isolation of women during the former regime, the Nirschels thought it fitting to offer full scholarships to Afghan women. Armed with an American education, the women will return home after graduating to share their knowledge and skills.

"Afghan women were banned from nearly all trades and professions and forbidden to attend school while the Taliban ruled the nation," Nirschel said.

After her husband, RWU President Roy J. Nirschel, made an appeal to American college and university presidents, UM was among four institutions to meet the challenge. The University will provide a full scholarship covering tuition, fees, room and board for the duration of Rahimi's studies here. The UM Bookstore has provided a scholarship to cover her books and supplies, and a UM Foundation account has been established for her personal expenses.

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Currently a freshman at Kabul University, Rahimi plans to study English literature at UM. Her father is an English translator for Afghanistan's Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

Besides UM and RWU, other institutions participating in the program's pilot are Notre Dame College in Ohio, the University of Hartford in Connecticut and the University of Southern Oregon.

"The University of Montana is honored to be participating in this scholarship program to assist young Afghan women in furthering their education," said UM Vice President for Student Affairs Barbara Hollmann, who arranged Rahimi's studies here. "We're excited to have an Afghan woman on campus sharing her experiences with us. We hope that more colleges and universities in the United States will join in the program."

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