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Economic outlook seminar series tours Montana

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Recommended Citation

University of Montana–Missoula. Office of University Relations, "Economic outlook seminar series tours Montana" (2004). *University of Montana News Releases, 1928, 1956-present*. 18603.
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NEWS RELEASE

Jan. 26, 2004

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ECONOMIC OUTLOOK SEMINAR SERIES TOURS MONTANA

MISSOULA —

Understanding economics will help people make realistic and profitable business decisions, ultimately putting more money in their pockets, according to a researcher at Montana State University-Bozeman.

During the past decade, legislators and educators have recognized that U.S. citizens need to be economically literate to compete in the marketplace and become successful business leaders. In response, many states -- including Montana -- have begun to require economic education in the classroom, said Vince Smith, MSU professor of agricultural economics and economics.

"Individuals with a solid grasp of economic principles better understand the major forces that affect the quality of their lives," Smith said. "Economic literacy helps people forecast future market conditions, anticipate future cost changes, assess business consequences such as the Iraq war and make their business more efficient in today's cutthroat environment."

Smith will discuss Montana's efforts to establish economic standards throughout the school system at the 29th Economic Outlook Seminar series to be held in nine Montana cities starting the last week of January.

This year's theme is "Street Smart Economics: Know When to Hold 'Em and When to Fold 'Em." The series is sponsored by the Bureau of Business and Economic Research at The University of Montana-Missoula and First Interstate Bank.

As in years past, the seminars will highlight the latest economic trends and what they

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mean for Montana. In looking at the national economy, Paul Polzin, BBER director, notes most economists expect strong GDP growth, mild inflation and rising interest rates.

In Montana, overall economic performance was above the national average during the 2001-03 period, but this situation will probably change as the U.S. economy recovers, Polzin said. Montana's 2003 home prices also grew faster than the national average, providing one more indicator of Montana's relatively strong economy, he said.

Also at the seminars, experts will examine recent trends and outlooks for important Montana industries, including wood products, manufacturing, agriculture, health care, and travel and tourism.

The seminar series will begin in Helena on Tuesday, Jan. 27, at the Colonial Inn. Following is the schedule for the other cities:

- **Great Falls**, Jan. 28, Holiday Inn.
- **Missoula**, Jan. 30, Holiday Inn Parkside.
- **Billings**, Feb. 3, Northern Hotel.
- **Bozeman**, Feb. 4, Holiday Inn.
- **Butte**, Feb. 5, Ramada Inn Copper King.
- **Kalispell**, Feb. 10, WestCoast Kalispell Center Hotel.
- **Lewistown**, March 10, Yogo Inn.
- **Havre**, March 12, 15 West.

All seminars run from 8 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. A \$70 fee includes registration, a proceedings book, lunch and a complimentary one-year subscription to the Montana Business Quarterly. Continuing education credits are available for an additional \$20 processing fee. To register, call (406) 243-5113 or visit the Bureau's Web site at www.bber.umt.edu.

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