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American Indian graduate students win at national conference

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NEWS RELEASE

Nov. 8, 2006

Contact: UM graduate students Flo Gardipee, 406-721-7084, or Brian Hall, 406-542-2788.

**AMERICAN INDIAN GRADUATE STUDENTS
WIN AT NATIONAL CONFERENCE**

MISSOULA —

Two University of Montana graduate students were among the top performers at the national American Indian Science and Engineering Society conference, held Nov. 1-5 in Detroit.

Brian Hall, a Blackfeet doctoral student in pharmacology and pharmaceutical sciences, won the \$1,500 first-place award for Best Overall Graduate Poster Presentation. Florence Gardipee, a Cherokee doctoral student studying fish and wildlife biology, earned \$1,000 for placing among the top three Graduate Oral Presentations.

Hall's poster was titled "Human 5HT1A Receptor Loop 2 TM4: Structure-activity." He was advised by Keith Parker, an associate professor of pharmaceutical sciences. Pharmacy student Leah Madden assisted with experimental work.

Gardipee's presentation was titled "Investigating Fecal Parasites in the Greater Yellowstone Area Bison Populations." She was advised by biology Professor Fred Allendorf and Research Assistant Professor Gordan Luikart. Vanessa Ezenwa, a wildlife infectious disease ecologist, also provided guidance and the use of laboratory facilities.

Through its educational programs, AISES provides opportunities for American Indians and Native Alaskans to pursue studies in science, engineering and technology. Eleven students from UM's AISES chapter went to the national conference, attending workshops and

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networking with professional scientists in a wide range of disciplines. The students also visited representatives from government agencies, private corporations and academic institutions about employment, mentoring programs and summer internships.

Several UM students staffed a booth during the conference's career fair to recruit new students. Students provided information about the Graduate School Sloan Scholars Program, the American Indian Student Services Program, the Bridges to the Baccalaureate Program and general information about UM.

Shane Morigeau, the Salish and Kootenai student who is UM's AISES chapter president and Region 1 representative, organized fundraising and travel arrangements for the trip. Students held raffles and bake sales and hosted the University's first-ever "Griz Idol" competition -- modeled after the popular "American Idol" television program. Support for travel to the conference also came from several academic departments, Associated Students of UM, the Graduate School and the President's Office.

UM's AISES chapter will organize another "Griz Idol" fundraiser in the spring. UM also was elected to host the regional AISES conference in March 2007 and will submit grant proposals and raise funds to offset event costs.

Student chapters from Montana, Idaho, Wyoming, Oregon, Washington, Alaska and Canada will attend. The regional conference will focus on three main topics: science education and Indian education for all, genetics and cultural ethics, and mentoring and community outreach.

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