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NEWS RELEASE

Dec. 8, 2006

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UM TO MAINTAIN CURRENT FORMAT OF WINTER SESSION

MISSOULA —

Winter session at The University of Montana is an intense, three-week academic period in which students can sneak in a course between the fall and spring semesters.

UM President George Dennison had considered changing winter session to “intersession” -- moving it from January to late April and early May -- starting in the 2007-08 academic year. In past years, he said, winter sessions were not well attended and didn’t make fiscal sense. However, a recent jump in winter session enrollment caused him to rethink his position.

Last year 1,104 students enrolled in winter session, and this year 1,692 students have already enrolled, raising the full-time equivalents (FTEs) from 98 to 159 -- a 60 percent increase. Dennison said he had not seen these data when he made the proposal for change. Winter session will run Jan. 2-19 in 2007.

“This 60 percent growth in one year is significant,” Dennison said, “and certainly appears to point in the right direction.” As a result, he decided to continue winter session for a few more years to determine if the growth will continue.

A new rule allowing students to count winter session courses as part of their spring

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semester total might account for part of the enrollment jump, Dennison said. At UM it costs the same to take 12 credits as 21. In years past, students taking at least 12 credits during spring semester still paid tuition for winter-session courses because the courses were offered on a self-support basis and received no state funding. That arrangement will change Jan. 1, 2007, as part of a larger project involving online courses as well.

With more students using the January session, Dennison isn't ready to give up on it yet. However, he will revisit the issue if winter session enrollment lags or there is a cut in state support.

Dennison's original proposal would allow spring semester to end in late April, allowing students more time in the summer to work. Students still could have enrolled in three-week courses in late April and early May.

The major benefit of the proposal would have increased UM's efficiency by having more students in the facilities during the high-energy-use period of January. The president indicated he will continue to monitor the situation and will not hesitate to make the change if enrollments falter.

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