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NEWS RELEASE

Nov. 23, 2009

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UM PRESIDENT JOINS TRUST TO ADVANCE VALUE OF LIBERAL EDUCATION

MISSOULA —

University of Montana President George M. Dennison has joined the new Presidents' Trust of the Association of American Colleges and Universities.

Dennison and a group of 81 other college and university leaders from around the country formed the trust to make the strongest case for liberal education and its value in today's world. The Presidents' Trust will function as a leadership group within the Association of American Colleges and Universities national initiative, which is titled Liberal Education and America's Promise (LEAP): Excellence for Everyone as a Nation Goes to College.

"Most of the criticism of higher education today, whether by members of academe, the business world or the broader community, argues straightforwardly that we fail to develop the competencies young people will need in the 21st century," Dennison said. "While we all know and respect the need to assure that our students graduate with a good grasp of the knowledge in their chosen fields, the evidence clearly indicates that we must help them develop the skills and insights a liberal education provides."

The LEAP President's Trust advocates for a 21st-century vision of liberal education that combines the best of that philosophy of education's traditional focus on broad knowledge, analytic reasoning and rigorous contextual study with newer approaches to help students integrate and apply their learning in new settings. The trust believes that a liberal education

empowers individuals with core knowledge and transferable skills and prepares graduates both for socially valued work and for civic leadership within their society.

Members of the Presidents' Trust represent all sectors of higher education and have committed to advocate for the vision, values and practices that connect liberal education with the individual and societal needs of the 21st century. They also will provide leadership for advancing reforms in the practice of liberal education both on campus and with other groups and organizations.

“As the nation sets new goals for increasing college attainment, we need to focus like a laser beam on the kinds of learning that build both economic vitality and civic commitment,” said Association of American Colleges and Universities President Carol Geary Schneider. “Members of the trust, including President Dennison, have committed to help redirect the national dialogue to address these critical issues.

“In this new global century, President Dennison’s leadership will help ensure that all college students in all majors receive the kind of excellent education they deserve – one that provides them with the broad knowledge, sophisticated intellectual and practical skills, a well-developed sense of personal and social responsibility, and the capacity to apply learning to new problems.”

A full list of Presidents' Trust members is online at <http://www.aacu.org/leap>.

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