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THREE UM STUDENTS HEAD TO DENMARK
FOR UN CLIMATE CHANGE CONFERENCE

MISSOULA, Mont. –

Three University of Montana students will be among the 10,000 or more people attending the United Nations Climate Change Conference Dec. 7-18 in Copenhagen, Denmark.

The three students from UM’s Environmental Studies Program are Melissa Hayes, a law and graduate student from Girard, Ohio; Yaicha Bookhout, a senior from Shorewood, Minn.; and Zachary Brown, a freshman from Bozeman, Mont.

The students have received credentials to join officials from more than 190 international governments, U.N. representatives, members of nongovernmental organizations and the media during negotiations to address climate change. The aim of the conference is to create a resolution that will guide efforts to halt global warming once the initial phase of the Kyoto Protocol expires in 2012. President Barack Obama announced Wednesday he will attend the conference.

“The whole world is waiting eagerly to see what the Obama administration will propose in these negotiations,” said Len Broberg, director of UM’s Environmental Studies Program.

“Copenhagen negotiations could set the course for the world’s response to climate change until 2050. The students will be present at a potential watershed moment in the world’s environmental history.”
Hayes and Bookhout were selected by the Environmental Studies Program to receive grants from the Wiancko Family Foundation that will fully fund their travel to Copenhagen. With the support of the program, Brown raised his own funds from UM’s Office of the Provost and the Orfalea Foundation.

“I’m interested in seeing how international negotiations are conducted and what measures different nations are taking to reduce their carbon levels,” Bookhout said. “I also want to bring back what I learn to the community and campus. I think it is very important to share this experience with other Montanans.”

The students will write about their experiences on blogs and Twitter, which can be accessed through the Environmental Studies Program Web site at http://www.cas.umt.edu/evst. They’ll also communicate with classes via live video conferencing and presentations after they return.

“We hope to keep The University and Montana up to date and engaged with the process in Copenhagen,” Brown said, “as these negotiations will have a profound impact not only on international politics, but also on the future of our planet.”

Hayes agreed, saying, “We are at a turning point – or a breaking point. What our world leaders decide to do in terms of climate change will impact the future of humanity on this planet, the ecosystems and the species.”

UM is leading the way with its Environmental Studies Program, established in 1969, and new Climate Change Studies Program, which offers the country’s only interdisciplinary undergraduate minor in climate change. Environmental studies at UM offers such areas of study as environmental science, law, writing and sustainability, as well as special projects like the
Program in Ecological Agriculture and Society (PEAS) Farm and UM FLAT, or Forum for Living with Appropriate Technology, a demonstration house for sustainable living.

UM President George M. Dennison signed the American College and University Presidents Climate Commitment in 2007, dedicating campus to reducing its carbon emissions to zero.

For more information, visit UM online at http://www.umt.edu.

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