April 2020 news releases

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UM Offers ‘Dance Up Close’ Artist Statements Online

April 30, 2020

MISSOULA – Although the COVID-19 pandemic derailed the “Dance Up Close” production at the University of Montana, the School of Theatre and Dance will offer an online opening night for the event today, Thursday, April 30.

Instead of a live performance, join the Dance Program online
UM Offers ‘Dance Up Close’ Artist Statements Online - UM News - University Of Montana

to view artist statements and celebrate virtual dance during this time of social distancing. Snapshots of dances intended to be completed and performed this week are online at https://thenextmoveum.wixsite.com/thenextmove.

“This virtual celebration of ‘Dance Up Close’ allows viewers yet another close-up view of the artistic voice of UM dance students,” dance Professor Michele Antonioli said.

The online site offers brief introductions of multiple student choreographers and their artistic dreams, goals and visions for the production, which would have been the final event of the school's current season.

Produced by dance Professors Antonioli and Karen Kaufmann, “Dance Up Close” would have included four performances for the public.

A highlight of the UM school’s season, this annual showcase provides audiences with a chance to see new, original work of emerging and established dance artists in an intimate setting and gives developing designers the opportunity to collaborate with those dancers.

This year’s event was to feature 16 new and diverse works choreographed by dance majors and Master of Fine Arts acting candidate Elijah Fisher.

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Contact: Michele Antonioli, professor, UM School of Theatre and Dance, 406-214-9766, michele.antonioli@umontana.edu.
UM Offers ‘Dance Up Close’ Artist Statements Online - UM News - University Of Montana
UM Graduate Student Earns Major NSF Fellowship

April 30, 2020

MISSOULA – Claire Rawlings Gilder, a geosciences graduate student at the University of Montana, has been awarded a prestigious Graduate Research Fellowship from the National Science Foundation.

As the oldest graduate fellowship of its kind, the program has a long history of selecting...
recipients who go on to achieve high levels of success in their future academic and professional careers. Past recipients include numerous Nobel Prize winners, U.S. Secretary of Energy Steven Chu, Google founder Sergey Brin and “Freakonomics” co-author Steven Levitt.

Fellows benefit from a three-year annual stipend of $34,000, as well as a $12,000 cost-of-education allowance for tuition and fees, and opportunities for international research and professional development. They also gain freedom to direct their own research.

Rawlings Gilder is one of only two Montana students to earn the honor this year and one of only three geomorphology students nationally out of the 2,076 awards given. The program draws about 12,000 applications annually.

“It’s a nice validation of me as a scientist – that other scientists think I have the ability to make a contribution to the community,” she said. “I’m pretty excited. This is the kind of thing that stays on a CV forever. It’s great that the NSF make a point to support first-year graduate students.”

Rawlings Gilder studies fluvial geomorphology, specifically the feedbacks and relationships between the surface features of a river, the groundwater system interacting with it and the vegetation surrounding it. By studying how changes to any of these parts affect the system as a whole, she hopes to improve river management and restoration practices through better prediction of river response to change.

In addition to her research, Rawlings Gilder also is part of the UM BRIDGES program, a NSF graduate training program at the University. This program trains future leaders to connect policy and science to support our food, energy and water systems through interdisciplinary collaboration and improved science communication skills. She said the program brings biophysical and social scientists together to better tackle complex problems and then translate that science more effectively to meaningful policy.

Rawlings Gilder also recently was awarded a Glacier National Park Conservancy-Jerry O’Neal Research Fellowship. She has a project site near Glacier National Park on the Middle Fork of the Flathead River.
“It’s a good representative river for that area, with established data and research access,” she said. “My work at that site will be presented to the public and park management to specifically inform policy decisions as climate change and increased use impact the river systems in the park.”

Since 1952, NSF has funded over 50,000 Graduate Research Fellowships out of more than 500,000 applicants. Currently, 42 Fellows have gone on to become Nobel laureates, and more than 450 have become members of the National Academy of Sciences. In addition, the Graduate Research Fellowship Program has a high rate of doctorate degree completion, with more than 70% of students completing their doctorates within 11 years. For more information visit https://www.nsfgrfp.org/general_resources/about.

Contact: Claire Rawlings Gilder, UM geoscience graduate student, 406-243-2073, claire.gilder@umontana.edu.

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Contact: Claire Rawlings Gilder, UM geoscience graduate student, 406-243-2073, claire.gilder@umontana.edu.
MISSOULA – The University Faculty Association at the University of Montana has launched a new fund to aid students struggling with emergency expenses.

The faculty union created the fund to help students struggling with expenses that could force them to not complete spring semester or drop out of college entirely.
“Professors often hear about students struggling with a lost job or broken-down car or eviction, and having heard so many of these stories from our students, we knew we needed to act,” UFA President Megan Stark said.

Stark said the faculty association applied for and received a grant from the Philadelphia-based nonprofit Believe in Students to create the UFA Faculty and Students Together (FAST) Fund.

The FAST Fund creates a source of money that students who are facing immediate financial needs can easily apply to and quickly receive money. The UFA, Montana Federation of Public Employees and UM President’s Office all have matched the initial $5,000 grant.

The fund will help students cover costs like food, rent, medical expenses and utilities, as well as expenses that facilitate remote instruction.

“There are so many issues that affect how a student can perform in school that have nothing to do with academics or working hard,” said Professor Daisy Rooks, who helped establish the FAST Fund. “Our students are struggling with very real-world issues, and this fund aims to help those students so they can succeed at UM.”

The UFA website provides more information for students, an application for the funds, and information for current and former faculty members to contribute to this fund. Please visit http://montanafaculty.org/emergency-student-fund for more information.

The broader community is invited to contribute to a separate Emergency Student Support Fund at https://bit.ly/2UUpbaR.

Applications for the FAST Fund will be reviewed as they are received by a panel of retired faculty members, and UFA members plan to disperse the funds quickly to students in need.

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Contact: Daisy Rooks, University Faculty Association representative, daisy.rooks@mso.umt.edu.
Faculty Association Launches Emergency Fund for UM Students - UM News - University Of Montana

Report: Impacts of Covid-19 on State Economy Will be Large, Possibly Short-Lived

April 28, 2020

MISSOULA – Montanans will face a “broad-based recession of greater magnitude than what was experienced in 2008-09” in 2020, according to an analysis of the state economy released today by the Bureau of Business and Economic Research at the University of Montana.

The BBER report details the swift contraction expected in the economy due to the COVID-19 pandemic, ending a nine-year period of job growth in the state.

Since comprehensive data on state and local economic activity are slow to arrive, BBER conducted this preliminary analysis to help local governments, businesses and households understand the economic challenges they will face in the coming months. The analysis also seeks to provide an understanding of what the rapid changes in national and global economic events mean for the specific pieces of the Montana economy.
Principal findings of the analysis are:

- The Montana economy will see a loss of more than 50,000 jobs over the 2020 calendar year, which is more than what was originally forecast.
- Personal income in 2020 will be $3.9 billion lower in Montana than was originally projected – a 7.3% shortfall.
- Nearly every major industry in Montana will have lower employment in 2020, with job losses greater in the northwest region.
- Stronger economic growth, beginning at the end of this year and continuing into 2022, could return overall economic activity to levels close to what was projected before the COVID-19 pandemic, which is back within the range of medium-term growth.

“The strong bounce back in the national and state economies is perhaps the most problematic part of this forecast,” BBER Director Patrick Barkey said. “Pandemics of this scale are outside the experience of most economic models, so this projection is made with less confidence.”

BBER will revisit and possibly revise its analysis as more information on the fast-moving situation becomes available.

Established in 1948, BBER is the main research unit of UM’s College of Business. The bureau’s researchers engage in a wide range of applied research projects that address different aspects of the state economy, including survey research, economic analysis, health care research, forecasting, wood products research and energy research. For more information visit bber.umt.edu or call 406-243-5113.

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Contact: Patrick Barkey, director, UM Bureau of Business and Economic Research, 406-243-2723, patrick.barkey@business.umt.edu; Christina Voyles, BBER marketing director, 406-243-2714, christina.voyles@mso.umt.edu.
MISSOULA – The University of Montana celebrated National Student Employment Week virtually in April and announced UM’s Student Employee of the Year.

Ashley Ostheimer Hilliard of Florence was named the top UM student employee. She is a Master in Public Health student and
Ashley Hilliard works for UM’s Center for Children, Families and Workforce Development as a research assistant. Her parents are Bill and Kelly Ostheimer of Florence.

Hilliard was recommended for the honor by Carly Holman and Kim Spurzem, who are research analysts in the center. They praised Hilliard’s work ethic, drive and ability to face challenges.

“Ashley is committed to serving children and families in Montana and knows that the projects she works on go into the hands of state or local organizations to better support families,” they wrote. They agree that Hilliard’s deep passion for her work supporting Montana families is inspiring and that she became a core member of the center’s team.

UM’s Experiential Learning and Career Success office will award a $500 scholarship to Hilliard and celebrated her accomplishment with a video and social media posts. The office also announced Hilliard was named the Montana Student Employee of the Year by the Western Association of Student Employment Administrators.

“We are so proud of the accomplishments of all of our student employees,” said ELCS Interim Director Andrea Vernon. “Students meet critical employment needs of many organizations in the community and on campus and do some amazing work. Ashley is a wonderful example of the tremendous impact student employees make in our community.”

For more information about National Student Employment Week or the UM Student Employee of the Year award, visit https://www.umt.edu/experiential-learning-career-success/default.php or email Katie Wilkins, ELCS program and events coordinator, at katherine.wilkins@mso.umt.edu.

Contact: Katie Wilkins, UM Experiential Learning and Career Success, program and event coordinator, katherine.wilkins@mso.umt.edu.
UM Researchers Urge Governments to Address Transboundary Mining Pollution

April 27, 2020

FLATHEAD LAKE – An international group of science and policy experts have published a joint commentary in the journal Science, urging U.S. and Canadian leadership to immediately address damages and risks caused by Canadian mine pollution flowing downstream into U.S. states.
Led by University of Montana researchers, the group highlighted the threat and impacts of Canadian mines on shared rivers, fisheries and communities, calling on the two governments to align large-scale mine assessments with defensible science.

“Our paper highlights key shortcomings with mine evaluation and permitting processes in transboundary rivers,” said Erin Sexton, a researcher at UM’s Flathead Lake Biological Station and the paper’s lead author. “We concluded that Canada, the United States and Indigenous governments must collaboratively engage on joint environmental assessment of proposed, existing and legacy mines in our shared rivers.”

Some of the most culturally and ecologically significant rivers flowing from Canada into the United States are impaired or threatened by a modern-day mining boom, where mines in British Columbia threaten downstream regions in Montana, Idaho, Washington and Alaska.
The letter raises significant concerns about deficiencies in Canada’s environmental assessment and regulation of large-scale industrial mines in transboundary watersheds. These concerns include the underestimated risk of mine failures and contamination, the reliance on untested mitigation technologies and the lack of independent science in mining assessment and permitting procedures.

“We hope this commentary elevates the discussion of mining in transboundary rivers and improves the science of evaluating their impacts,” said Chris Sergeant, a co-author and fellow FLBS researcher.

The authors conclude that the persistent problem of mine contamination flowing across the international boundary violates the Canada-U.S. Boundary Waters Treaty of 1909, which states that “waters flowing across the boundary shall not be polluted on either side to the injury of health and property of the other.”

The transboundary Kootenai River in northwest Montana is emblematic of this problem, where contamination is steadily increasing as active mines in British Columbia continue to deliver mine pollution into Lake Koocanusa and the Kootenai River in Montana and Idaho. Contaminants in U.S. fish now exceed thresholds for protection due to upstream Canadian mining.

“Water flows downhill, and so can pollution. Honoring the Boundary Waters Treaty would serve to improve the health of our shared rivers,” said co-author Jonathan Moore of Simon Fraser University in British Columbia.

“There is a lot at risk with these big mines in our transboundary rivers,” Sexton said. “Our countries need to act now on joint science-based review of the mines for the long-term stewardship of our shared waters and communities.”

Other FLBS-affiliated authors on the commentary are Chris Frissell, Ric Hauer, Rachel Malison and Diane Whited. The complete letter can be found on the Science journal’s website at https://science.sciencemag.org/content/368/6489/376.2.

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**Contact:** Erin Sexton, senior scientist, Flathead Lake Biological Station, 406-250-8518, erin.sexton@umontana.edu; Chris Sergeant, FLBS research scientist, 907-500-4540, christopher.sergeant@umontana.edu; Ian Withrow, FBLS media/information specialist, ian.withrow@flbs.umt.edu.
UM Associate Professor Wins American Council of Learned Societies Fellowship

April 24, 2020

MISSOULA – The American Council of Learned Societies has named Rosalyn LaPier, a University of Montana associate professor...
and environmental researcher, a 2020 Fellow in its program on religion, journalism and international affairs.

LaPier is the first UM faculty member in 17 years to earn a fellowship from this prestigious organization.

The program connects scholars in the humanities and social sciences with journalists and media outlets to deepen public understanding of the roles religion plays in the most pressing issues faced by societies around the world – from migration and immigration, to politics and economic policy, to the environment.

LaPier, an award-winning Indigenous writer, ethnobotanist and environmental activist, was just one of seven recipients to receive this year’s fellowship. Recipients receive a $63,000 award to implement their projects, as well as media training and an invitation to a symposium to meet with leading journalists to discuss key issues in religion and international affairs.

LaPier’s multifaceted study is titled “Protest as Pilgrimage.”

“My work will focus on Indigenous women in environmental activism and the transformation of places of protest into places of religious pilgrimage for Indigenous peoples,” LaPier said. “I want to look at how these places become sanctified and where people go to pray.”

A member of the Blackfeet Tribe of Montana and Métis, LaPier has written extensively about Indigenous knowledge and environmental activism in Indigenous communities, including several articles about the Standing Rock protests of the Dakota Access Pipeline in North Dakota.

LaPier said most of the articles and books she’s written have a decidedly academic bent, and she’s excited about the chance to hone her abilities to reach a broader audience.

“To be able to give general audiences a deeper understanding of the roles of women in global Indigenous environmental activism would lead, I hope, to a greater appreciation for our history and culture,” she said. “That would be rewarding and, to me, a huge success.”
Contact: Rosalyn LaPier, Environmental Studies associate professor, 406-243-6787, rosalyn.lapier@mso.umt.edu.
UM Researchers Work on COVID-19 Vaccine

April 23, 2020

MISSOULA – Researchers in the Center for Translational Medicine at the University of Montana have been awarded $2.5 million in funding from the National Institutes of Health to identify and advance a COVID-19 vaccine candidate.

The principal investigator on the two-
year award is Dr. Jay Evans, the center director and a research professor in UM’s Division of Biological Sciences.

“When the call came from NIH in February to shift focus and develop a vaccine against SARS-CoV-2, we quickly adjusted lower priority vaccine projects to focus our efforts on this urgent need,” Evans said. “Our dedicated team of experienced researchers stepped up in the face of school closures, stay-at-home orders and social distancing to rapidly advance this vaccine and continue working on other essential research projects of critical importance to our community and the nation.”

The NIH award resulted from the combined efforts of Evans with Drs. David Burkhart and Hélène Bazin-Lee from the Department of Biomedical and Pharmaceutical Sciences; Dr. Kendal Ryter from the Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry; and Dr. Steve Sprang from the Division of Biological Sciences. The UM team partnered with Drs. Florian Krammer and Adolfo García-Sastre from the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai in New York City to assist with the rapid advancement of a COVID-19 vaccine.

UM has a world-class vaccine discovery and development team actively working on new or improved vaccines for influenza virus, tuberculosis, pertussis (whooping cough), Pseudomonas aeruginosa, Lyme disease, E. coli and opioid addiction.

This vaccine research team has expanded from 15 people in January 2016, when the group joined UM from GSK, to over 40 employees now, including students, staff and faculty. There are plans for further growth in 2020 and beyond with this funding and other new projects expected this year.

Dr. Stephanie Lathrop, a UM immunologist and COVID-19 project leader, has been instrumental in designing studies and coordinating staff schedules in the middle of a pandemic.

“It’s not every day you can be involved in an essential vaccine project with global health implications,” Lathrop said. “It has been amazing to see the UM community rally behind us in support of our efforts.”
The research team has implemented alternative work schedules, social distancing, additional personal-protective-equipment requirements and telecommuting to ensure the safety of employees and their families while balancing the need for critical research to continue.

“Zoom and Skype are our new best friends, keeping us all healthy and connected in real-time,” Evans said. “We have learned new ways of working and interacting – some of which will also be helpful after the restrictions are lifted.”

The UM team has spent more than 20 years working to improve vaccines through the use of adjuvants – components added to vaccines to improve the immune response – and novel delivery systems to ensure vaccines are safely and efficiently delivered to the right cells. These technologies now are being used for the COVID-19 project to rapidly advance a safe and effective vaccine toward human clinical trials.

“Our team has already started testing a wide array of vaccine adjuvants with the COVID-19 antigens from our collaborators at Mount Sinai to quickly find the best vaccine that will protect against the virus,” said Burkhart, a researcher and associate director of the Center for Translational Medicine. “We will use this data to obtain funding to advance it to human clinical trials as soon as possible, while running the tests needed to ensure the vaccine is safe for human use.”

“This award demonstrates the amazing team the University has assembled to advance vaccine development for both COVID-19 and future viruses that will lead to the next pandemic,” said Scott Whittenburg, UM vice president for research and creative scholarship. “UM is now a recognized leader in the response to pandemics and other health emergencies through the Center for Translational Medicine, Center for Public Health Research, Center for Biomolecular Structure and Dynamics and numerous faculty across campus.”

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**Contact:** Scott L. Whittenburg, UM vice president for research and creative scholarship, vpr@umontana.edu.
UM Student Wins Prestigious Cartography Award

April 20, 2020

MISSOULA – University of Montana graduate student Zach Goodwin has won the prestigious Arthur B. Robinson Cartography Award for Best Printed Map for his rendering of the Bitterroot River watershed.

The highly competitive competition for this award, held by the Cartography and Geographic Information Society, is open to all mapmakers in the U.S. and
Canada. Goodwin’s map will become part of the permanent collection of the U.S. Library of Congress, be presented at several conferences and be given to educators as an example of excellent map design. He also will receive a monetary award and a copy of Map Publisher software.

Goodwin, an environmental studies master’s student from Watkinsville, Georgia, is also working toward a certificate in geographic information systems science and technologies. He made the map for Advanced Cartographic Design, a UM geography class taught by Kevin McManigal.

“Arthur B. Robinson is the father of American cartography,” McManigal said. “The mapping award in his name is judged against the best programs in the country. There is no higher honor for a student cartographer.”

Goodwin said he is humbled and honored to receive the award, noting it was only possible thanks to a group effort.

“The map could not have been what it is without suggestions from Kevin and other students from his Advanced Cartographic Design course,” Goodwin said.

A full version of the winning map is online.

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Contact: Kevin McManigal, UM GIS science and technologies program coordinator, 406-243-6691, kevin.mcmanigal@mso.umt.edu.
UM Study Finds Diverse Diet as Effective as Sports Supplements for Female Athletes

April 17, 2020

MISSOULA – The edge. Every athlete, from the professional to the weekend warrior, strives to obtain that ever-elusive element that leads to victory – sometimes sparing no expense to get there.

A lighter bike, a better
A recently released study from the University of Montana, however, has discovered that common “edge,” sports nutrition products, are no more effective at promoting recovery in female athletes as regular, carbohydrate-rich, often less-expensive potato-based foods.

“Athletes are vulnerable to strategic marketing. We are easily swayed,” said UM Research Professor Brent Ruby, a veteran endurance athlete who knows all too well the allure of sports powders and gels.

As director of UM’s Montana Center for Work Physiology and Exercise Metabolism, Ruby and his team have done extensive work in the field of athletic performance and examining the role that post-exercise carbohydrate nutrition plays in the replenishing of spent muscle mass. The center’s 2015 study that showed a McDonald’s Happy Meal is just as effective for exercise recovery as commercial nutrition products garnered national attention.

The difference in the latest study is the inclusion and focus on female recreational athletes.

“There’s been a great deal of research into what sets the stage for muscle recovery after exercise,” Ruby said. “But women have been poorly represented in these studies. It is common to only study men and then make broad recommendations, which is wrong.”

With funding from the Alliance for Potato Research & Education, Ruby’s team established and employed a study similar to the McDonald’s research, this time looking at muscle recovery between male and female recreational athletes using potato products and sports supplements.

Eight men and eight women participated in the study, which involved 90 minutes of intense cycling followed by rest, recovery and refueling and a 20-kilometer time trial. After a lot of sweat was spent, blood drawn and muscles biopsied, the results showed that muscles in both men and women replenish carbohydrate stores similarly – and just as well with regular foods as with sports supplements.
Ruby hopes these new results – published in the European Journal of Applied Physiology – will help female athletes, as well as male, make better-informed choices about their refueling programs. This article is online at https://rdcu.be/b3zkg.

“Endurance athletes love to talk about how hard they train and how special their diet is,” Ruby said. “But we need to take a deep breath. It doesn’t have to be complicated. As long as you are getting adequate carbohydrates, your diet can be as diverse as you want it to be.”

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**Contact:** Brent Ruby, research professor, UM School of Integrative Physiology and Athletic Training, 406-243-2117, brent.ruby@mso.umt.edu.
MISSOULA – Tori Bigelow, a University of Montana Master of Public Administration and Policy student from Missoula, has been awarded a prestigious Fulbright Scholarship to conduct research in Greece during the 2020-21 academic year.

The Fulbright U.S. Student Program offers
opportunities for students and young professionals to undertake international graduate study, advanced research, university teaching and primary and secondary school teaching worldwide.

“The scholarship award will fund my research proposal, ‘From Initiatives to Policy: Equitable and Inclusive Access to Higher Education in Greece,’” Bigelow said.

Through the Fulbright grant, Bigelow will collect evidence on the barriers to access higher educational opportunities experienced by rural high school students in Greece. She then will share the analysis of her findings with Greek educators and policymakers.

The study will provide practical data to Greek officials seeking to improve access to higher educational opportunities in remote rural areas of the country, allowing for important strides toward equitable and inclusive opportunities for all students.

“Tori Bigelow is one of the MPA Program’s best and brightest,” said Dr. Sara Rinfret, director of the Master of Public Administration program. “Her upcoming Fulbright in Greece is a true testament to her tireless work to use research to advance the role of women and minorities in the workplace.”

“I have been inspired by the work done by (UM) to provide outreach and support to rural students,” said Bigelow, “and I hope my research can provide some influence to move Greece in that direction as well.”

“Our department is incredibly proud of Tori and her willingness to always promote a public service ethic,” Rinfret said.

For more information about the Fulbright Program, visit https://us.fulbrightonline.org/. For more on UM’s Master of Public Administration and Policy program, visit https://www.umt.edu/law/mpa/.

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Contact: Sara Rinfret, director of the UM Master of Public Administration Program, sara.rinfret@umontana.edu.
Broadcast Curriculum Continues on MontanaPBS

April 15, 2020

BOZEMAN – As classes remain suspended across Montana to mitigate the spread of COVID-19, MontanaPBS and the Montana Office of Public Instruction will continue to support home learning for students by delivering a new weekday television schedule of educational programs aligned to state standards along with free digital learning resources accessible from home.

“I appreciate the MontanaPBS Learn at Home options for my students because I know my students are getting access to high-quality learning materials when they watch one of the PBS programs,” said 4th Grade Teacher, Amanda Rapstad. “The [Learn at Home Programming PDFs] are color-coded by grade level and subject which makes it even easier to assign appropriate materials for your class.”

This new initiative began March 30 and will continue as long as the statewide stay-at home order and school closures remaining in place. MontanaPBS provides corresponding free digital content for at-home learning and support for teachers navigating this new learning landscape. We encourage those who have utilized the resources from our Learn at Home initiative, to kindly provide us with feedback based on your experience via our online survey.
The Learn at Home curriculum-based programming schedule has preempted many of the regularly scheduled daytime programs, which has led to discrepancies with some online and on-screen guide listings as well as the MontanaPBS April Viewer’s Guide. The new 6:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. weekday schedule includes specific blocks of time for pre-K through 8th-grade levels and covers subjects, including English, history, language arts, social studies, science and math. MontanaPBS’ regular primetime schedule is not affected by this change.

MontanaPBS recognizes that major changes to our broadcast program schedule can be disruptive for some viewers, but during this unprecedented crisis we are committed to fully supporting our students, families and educators across Montana. A revised program schedule can be found online at montanapbs.org/schedule.

For more about MontanaPBS Learn at Home resources, visit:

www.montanapbs.org/learnathome.

Educators looking for support implementing distance learning using the Learn at Home programming schedule can contact the MontanaPBS Education staff listed below.

**KUSM-TV**
Montana State University
Visual Communications Building 183
Bozeman, MT 59717
406-994-3437

**KUFM-TV**
University of Montana
Broadcast Media Center
32 Campus Drive
Missoula, MT 59812
406-243-4101

montanapbs.org

MontanaPBS is available to families via free, over-the-air broadcast, in the state’s larger cities, on translators in smaller communities, as well as on cable TV, Dish, Direct TV and the recently launched live streaming service, YouTube TV.

To watch MontanaPBS in your community, visit our Broadcast Area page.

**About Montana’s Largest Classroom – MontanaPBS**

MontanaPBS connects the residents of this state to each other, to their country and their world through the use of broadcast television, the internet and community outreach projects. We are an electronic town square that encourages the sharing of ideas, opinions and information. MontanaPBS chooses programs based on community impact and engages in services that echo the independent spirit and neighborly concern that is the hallmark of our
state.

Contact:

Nikki Vradenburg
Director of Education
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Deanna Mydland
Early Learning Specialist
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Contact: Nikki Vradenburg, Montana PBS director of education, nikki@montanapbs.org.
UM Hires New College of Humanities and Sciences Dean

April 10, 2020

MISSOULA – After a national search, the University of Montana has hired Dr. Larry Hufford to become the next dean of the College of Humanities and Sciences.

Hufford is the Herbert L. Eastlick Distinguished Professor at Washington State University, where he directs the Marion Ownbey Herbarium and the Conner Museum of Natural History. He will start his new duties at UM on July 1.

“I see considerable strengths in the College of Humanities and Sciences, and I am excited at the prospect as I look ahead,” Hufford said. “The UM faculty in humanities and sciences are incredibly talented and committed, and I look forward to my work with them. There is tremendous potential for innovations to heighten student experiences and success.”
Hufford will replace Interim Dean Jenny McNulty, who has led the college since fall 2018, when former Dean Christopher Comer stepped down to rejoin the faculty.

“I want to thank Jenny McNulty for her outstanding service over two years as interim dean,” UM Provost Jon Harbor said. “I also want to commend Tim Nichols, our Davidson Honors College dean, who chaired the search, and the other members of the search committee for their thoughtful work and recommendations.”

Originally from Iowa, Hufford has lived in the West during most of his adult life. He earned his doctorate in botany from the University of California, Berkeley, in 1986. After postdoctoral research experiences at the University of Zurich and the University of Arizona, he joined the faculty of the University of Minnesota-Duluth in 1989 and then moved to WSU in 1993.

Hufford has held various academic leadership positions at WSU, including seven years as director of the School of Biological Sciences (2010-17). He also was interim director of the School of the Environment (2016-17) and interim dean of the College of Arts and Sciences (2018).

As an academic leader, he has broad experience in program innovation, student success and faculty development. Hufford helped lead 2011-12 planning for the development of a new WSU College of Arts and Sciences. In 2015, Hufford was the recipient of both the Outstanding Chair/Director Award and the Excellence in Institutional Service Award from the WSU College of Arts and Sciences.

As an evolutionary biologist, his research has focused on plant diversity in the American West. Hufford is an avid reader with wide-ranging interests in the arts, humanities and sciences.

“Dr. Hufford presented a compelling vision for the future of the humanities and sciences at UM throughout the interview process,” Harbor said. “Please join me in congratulating him on this appointment and in welcoming him to UM this summer.”
Contact: Jon Harbor, UM executive vice president and provost, 406-243-4689, jon.harbor@umontana.edu.
UM Launches Initiative to Aid Businesses Affected by COVID-19

April 09, 2020

MISSOULA – Businesses impacted by COVID-19 now have a single point of entry to assistance and expertise, thanks to the University of Montana’s new Business Emergency Assistance and Recovery (B.E.A.R.) Powered by UM initiative.

In recent weeks, UM has actively supported businesses in Missoula and across the state in navigating the impacts of COVID-19 through its Accelerate Montana portfolio of economic development programs.

The Missoula Small Business Development Center, hosted at UM, helps businesses prepare for applying for loans...
UM Launches Initiative to Aid Businesses Affected by COVID-19 - UM News - University Of Montana

via the Small Business Administration or the new CARES Act. The Blackstone LaunchPad and Accelerate Montana Rural Innovation Initiative provide coaching sessions to entrepreneurs, as well as host live interviews and webinars with business owners, lawyers and other experts to share insights and expertise.

UM sectors such as Accelerate Montana, Missoula College and the College of Business also are active with the Missoula County Economic Recovery Taskforce led by the Missoula Economic Partnership. Late last week, Grant Kier, the CEO of MEP, asked UM to quickly and efficiently connect businesses to the relevant advice and expertise needed to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Many small business owners in Missoula County do not have a dedicated team to help them navigate the resources established by the CARES Act," Kier said. "We're asking BEAR Powered by UM to help businesses ensure they receive the guidance they need."

UM President Seth Bodnar welcomed the opportunity for UM to use its expertise and resources to serve the business community.

"This is another tremendous example of fast, effective collaboration between UM and the city and county, all in the service of supporting the economic health of our community," he said.

"Providing timely advice and referring businesses to other relevant programs and resources is something our Accelerate Montana programs do as a matter of course, but at this time of acute need, we are excited to play an expanded role," said Paul Gladen, executive director of Accelerate Montana.

The BEAR Powered by UM program enables businesses to submit a simple form indicating where they need assistance. UM then will identify individuals, programs or organizations that are best placed to assist or guide the business. It may be a member of the Accelerate Montana team or an attorney who specializes in a certain topic, said Brigitta Miranda-Freer, director for the Montana World Trade Center and the Montana Technology Enterprise Center, both Accelerate Montana programs.

"Many of our programs operate across the state, so BEAR Powered by UM is not restricted to businesses in Missoula County," Miranda-Freer said. "We also will draw upon the many collaborative relationships we have with other economic development and business support programs statewide."

Accelerate Montana programs also employ several UM students who are gaining tremendous experiential learning from their participation at this unprecedented time.

Learn more about the BEAR Powered by UM Program on the Accelerate Montana website.

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Contact: Paul Gladen, director, Blackstone LaunchPad at UM and Accelerate Montana, 406-396-3534, paul.gladen@umontana.edu.
UM Launches Initiative to Aid Businesses Affected by COVID-19 - UM News - University Of Montana
Donations to Emergency Fund Help UM Students During COVID-19 Pandemic

April 08, 2020

MISSOULA – Many University of Montana students, in Missoula and around the country, are facing unexpected financial hardship due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Students who cannot afford essential needs such as making rent payments, purchasing necessary prescriptions or ordering course materials can now apply for short-term assistance from the new UM Emergency Student Support Fund.
Donations to Emergency Fund Help UM Students During COVID-19 Pandemic - UM News - University Of Montana

Resources offered through the fund are made available by generous donations from UM family, friends and alumni. To learn more and give, visit www.supportum.org/emergencyfund. Gifts of any size make a difference in helping students as they confront the great hurdles of this pandemic while working to excel in their coursework and learning experiences.

"While COVID-19 is having a sweeping effect on our nation and world, the financial vulnerability of our students during this these uncertain times is of particular concern," said Brian Reed, UM associate vice provost for student success. "Our hope is that this fund can provide a needed boost that will allow our students to focus on their studies rather than their finances."

Resources made available through the fund are intended to provide financial assistance to current UM students only. Student applications can be submitted on the Student Affairs website at www.umt.edu/student-affairs. The Emergency Student Support Fund Committee, led by the director of the Financial Aid Office and vice provost for student success, will consider each request. Funds will help cover costs such as:

- Technology and connectivity needs related to distance learning
- Books and other instructional expenses
- Tuition and instructional fees
- Housing, rent and utilities
- Food and groceries
- Transportation
- Medical and dental bills
- Childcare
- Other emergency or unforeseen circumstances

The UM community has pulled together to persevere during the COVID-19 pandemic. Faculty, staff and campus partners have made extraordinary efforts to deliver on UM’s promise of a world-class education while safeguarding student health, including moving thousands of course sections to fully remote instruction. While this time has been challenging and disruptive for UM students, they are making the most of their remote instruction and adapted services provided by UM faculty and staff.

The Emergency Student Support Fund is another way UM and the broader Grizzly community is helping students through the pandemic.

"Many students have found themselves out of a job, home or both as a result of challenges caused by COVID-19," said Associated Students of UM President Abbigail Belcher. "It is critical that UM students can continue their education free from additional financial hardship caused by this disaster. Any support for UM students is appreciated."

The UM Foundation continues to receive and distribute charitable gifts to benefit the University and its students during the COVID-19 pandemic. (For details visit www.supportum.org/coronavirus.) To give to the Emergency Student Support Fund, visit www.supportum.org/emergencyfund.

Gifts to the UM Emergency Student Support Fund are part of Campaign Montana, a comprehensive, seven-year
fundraising campaign that is inspiring more than $400 million in philanthropic giving to UM through 2020. Donors will help achieve UM’s vision of a university that puts student success at the forefront, driving excellence and innovation in teaching, research and learning. The campaign is managed by the UM Foundation. Visit www.campaignmontana.org to learn more.

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**Contact:** Elizabeth Willy, director of communications, UM Foundation, 406-243-5320, elizabeth.willy@supportum.org; Brian Reed, UM associate vice provost for student success, 406-243-5225, brian.reed@mso.umt.edu.
MISSOULA – Nearly 94% of Montana’s travel-related businesses said they have been impacted by COVID-19, and 83% of Montana residents and visitors to the state are concerned about their personal health.

This is according to surveys conducted March 11-27 by the Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research at the University of Montana.

The ITRR business survey found that cancellations happened to 83% of participating businesses during the last two weeks of March. April cancellations hit 84% of these businesses,
with accommodations and outfitter-guides receiving the highest number.

Spring is the time for bookings. Whether it is a hotel reservation, a guided trip or a campground, respondents to the survey report travelers are holding back for the near future.

In the last half of March, when COVID-19 was spreading across the country, of the businesses that said they had received future bookings, 63% reported zero bookings made for April. Sixty-one percent had zero bookings made for May, 49% had zero bookings made for June, and 21% said they had zero bookings made for July and beyond.

“The good news in this data is that at least the zero-booking numbers are going down as time goes forward,” ITRR Director Norma Nickerson said. “It appears travelers aren’t giving up just yet. Some are still booking for the summer.”

However, in the last two weeks of March, another sign of the concerned traveler is showing up in decreased inquiries to businesses in Montana. Ninety-one percent of the accommodation sector reported their inquiries were down, followed by 87% of outfitters and guides.

“But basically, by the middle of March, the phones just stopped ringing,” said one survey respondent.

Other data show that 66% of tourism-related businesses have temporarily reduced their workforce, and 57% have temporarily closed some or part of their business.

Respondents were asked if they would permanently close their business due to COVID-19. Seventy-nine percent disagreed with that statement, 18% neither agreed nor disagreed, and 3% reported that they would close. That included eight hotels, five outfitter-guides, eight tourism service businesses and two tourism support service businesses.
“It's a wait-and-see game for many,” Nickerson said.

One accommodation business owner wrote: “Ninety-nine percent of our guests come from locations requiring them to fly to Missoula or another airport and then drive out to our location. Much of our season is May through October. At this time all of our guests (except the ones in April) have chosen to wait and see how things unfold in the airline and travel industry.”

Another respondent, referring to the federal government assistance to small businesses, wrote, “All fly-fishing guides have been extremely hard hit by this crisis. As independent contractors, being able to apply for unemployment funds will literally change lives.”

Tourism service businesses such as restaurants, bars, distilleries and specialty retail shops have had to change their operations by offering take-out or delivery services, or have closed altogether. As one respondent in this category wrote, “This has hurt our business and our way of life for our own family, as well as our employees. Not sure how we will dig our way out with not having our doors open to survive.”

Finally, tourism support services, such as those that might not directly work with visitors (including chambers of commerce, convention and visitor bureaus, advertising firms and insurance companies) or feel their business is more residents than visitors, are feeling the pinch as well.

“I own a tiny one chair salon in Big Sky and have now been closed for 1.5 weeks going on three more,” a respondent wrote. “This is a very scary and trying time for small business owners.”

Businesses that many don’t think relate to tourism or travel are also concerned. “My schedule was booked for keynote speaking and workshop engagements across the state between April and October,” wrote a respondent. “All but one canceled or postponed, and the one shifted to an online/webinar format. Out-of-state companies had been reaching out about having retreats for remote employees in Montana, but none have booked and inquiries have completely stopped.”

There were 919 respondents to this survey, representing businesses in all but six Montana counties. Those six counties represent only 1.3% of Montana’s population. Twenty-six percent of respondents represented accommodations (236 respondents), 24% represented the outfitter/guide business (216 respondents), 26% represented tourism service businesses (239 respondents), and 25% represented tourism support services (228 respondents).

The ITRR traveler survey, conducted in a two-week interval of March 11-14 and March 25-27, shows changes in sentiment.

Fifty-eight percent of respondents representing Montana residents and previous visitors indicated they initially were at least somewhat concerned about their own health. That number jumped to 83% in the second survey.

Meanwhile, 71% initially indicated concern for the health of their community, and later 92% expressed such. Concern by these respondents is not limited to health. In early March, 42% of travelers and 36% of Montanans expressed extreme concern over the economy. Then at the end of March, those extremely concerned levels rose to
68% and 61% respectively.

“Concerns about both one’s own health, broad mandates to stay at home and the future health of the economy are likely to impact travel decisions,” said ITRR Associate Director Jeremy Sage. “To measure the current sentiment and changes to booked and planned travel, ITRR asked respondents to indicate changes to their upcoming plans.”

Before reports of the outbreak in the U.S., two-thirds of both Montanans and non-Montana residents surveyed had already booked trips – including flights, hotels or special events more than 50 miles from home.

In the first round of surveys, only 3% of booked trips to Montana were being canceled. This has risen starkly in two and a half weeks, where later 37% of booked trips that were scheduled in the spring and summer have been canceled and another 36% are actively being considered to be canceled.

“As high as these values are, they do paint a better picture than the rest of the U.S.,” Sage said. “To all other domestic locations, 54% of booked trips are getting canceled by this group, and another 32% are considering cancelation.”

In an effort to track the growing impacts of the coronavirus, ITRR will continue surveying Montanans, previous Montana visitors and Montana travel-related businesses about their perceptions of the virus outbreak and how it has impacted their travel plans.


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UM News

UM Regents Professor Produces Hand Sanitizer for First Responders

April 03, 2020

MISSOULA – Under normal circumstances, University of Montana Regents Professor Richard Bridges spends his days researching potentially life-saving projects in neuroscience, in specific how and why brain cells die in diseases like Alzheimer’s and ALS.

With the arrival of Covid-19, he’s working in another endeavor that, while not as heady as spinal cord neurotransmissions, can be just as lifesaving. For the past week, the Cornell-trained biochemist has been elbow deep in isopropyl alcohol and vegetable glycerin, mixing gallons of hand sanitizer for fire, police and medical personnel around Missoula.

“These days, hand sanitizer is worth its weight in toilet paper,” said Bridges, summarizing the feelings of consumers.
across the country.

Bridges works in UM’s Division of Biological Sciences and teaches in the neuroscience and pharmacy programs. He recently became a hand sanitizer brew master after his wife, Dr. Carol Bridges, said one of her firefighter patients was concerned about the shrinking supply of hand sanitizer for first responders. After a field trip to a Missoula fire house and conversations with firefighter Chris Kovatch, a member of the Western Montana Incident Management Team, Bridges realized he might be able to help and said he just started “winging it.”

There was plenty of information on the CDC website for making properly potent hand sanitizer, he said, but finding the raw materials was a challenge. Alcohol, glycerin and plastic bottles are now as scarce as hand wipes. It is also important to use the CDC-recommended strengths the different alcohols (70% for isopropyl or 60% for ethanol). For help, Bridges turned to several UM colleagues including Scott Wittenburg, vice president for Research and Creative Scholarship, and Chief of Staff Kelly Webster to secure enough ingredients to make the first 25 gallons.

Bridges used his pickup truck to haul 100 gallons of alcohol from a local chemical company back to campus and devised a packaging method while waiting for the plastic bottles to arrive.

“Kovatch rigged up five, five-gallon pails with pumps so first responders and medical personnel could refill their exiting bottles,” Bridges explained.

He relied on Kovatch to distribute the initial batch to first response agencies and Missoula’s two hospitals, while he and volunteer students turned to filling 1,000 plastic bottles with sanitizer.

“It’s definitely a backyard operation,” he said.

Despite his deep background in chemistry and holding the most distinguished professor rank in the Montana University System, Bridges said learning to make hand sanitizer has been a bit of a learning curve. He’s found that a hand drill and paint mixer help cut through the thick glycerin and he wears a face mask to protect himself from the fumes emitted by the isopropyl alcohol.
He plans to keep making the virus killer as long as there are supplies and a need. Ecology Professor Erick Greene loaned him some essential oils from a soap making class, and Bridges said he might add that to a batch to make the sanitizer smell a little better.

Bridges said his Ph.D. never prepared him for this project, but it’s been a gratifying experience to work with others on campus to fill this important niche.

“It’s been really nice for all of us to use UM’s expertise to help and support the community as a whole,” said Bridges.

It might save a life, as well.

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**Contact:** Richard Bridges, UM Regents Professor of Pharmacology and Toxicology, 406-243-4972, richard.bridges@umontana.edu.
MISSOULA – As the worldwide coronavirus pandemic continues, the Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education has canceled all in-person spring commencement ceremonies in the Montana University System.

Following this directive, the University of Montana will not host its traditional in-person graduation ceremonies scheduled for Saturday, May 9.

“We as a University share in the disappointment of our graduates and their families,” UM President Seth Bodnar said. “Commencement is a special day to celebrate the culmination of academic and personal achievements and is a hallowed occasion on our campus, marked by our students, faculty and staff.”

Bodnar said UM is developing options to help graduates and their families “celebrate now and later in Grizzly style.” Graduates will be surveyed for their input and ideas about how to make up for missing this treasured rite of passage. Some proposed plans are:

- commemorating May 9 with a video highlighting students and the people, places and programs that UM
inviting spring graduates and their families back to campus in September or October for an in-person Commencement.

- bringing Commencement to graduates by hosting ceremonies in population centers like Seattle, Portland and Spokane, as well as smaller towns such as Havre and Browning. These smaller ceremonies would take place in late summer or early fall.

“We appreciate the University giving students an opportunity to provide feedback for how we can try making up for the loss of Commencement,” said Abbigail Belcher, president of the Associated Students of UM and herself a graduating senior. “We are in a time of disruption, and I think what we come up with might be especially memorable and meaningful for our class.”

Students who already rented graduation regalia will receive full refunds. Diplomas will be mailed to the address on each student’s graduation application. UM will communicate extensively with its graduating students to ensure their needs are met in regards to Commencement.

Graduating students also may be invited to participate in smaller, more intimate Commencement ceremonies – possibly online – hosted by individual academic units.

“Again, we understand this is not the way any of us wanted to mark such a momentous occasion,” Bodnar said. “However we will ensure our graduates are honored in ways that represent the Grizzly spirit.”

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Contact: Paula Short, UM Strategic Communications spokesperson, 406-243-4023, paula.short@umontana.edu.
Griz Chat with Former National Geographic Editor Chris Johns

April 02, 2020

MISSOULA – Chris Johns, renowned former editor of National Geographic, is teaching at the University of Montana this spring as the School of Journalism’s T. Anthony Pollner Distinguished Professor.

Johns began his National Geographic career in 1995 as a
photographer, holding a variety of positions at the magazine before becoming editor. Under Johns' leadership, the magazine won 23 National Magazine Awards, and in 2008, the organization named him Magazine Editor of the Year.

Johns teaches a course in conservation journalism and advises the Montana Kaimin at UM. Johns shared with UM News the value of good teachers and the impact of good photography.

**UM News: What were the earliest indications that you would become a photographer?**

**Johns:** I took my first journalism class when I was a pre-vet major at Oregon State University. An inspirational journalism professor, Ron Lovell, introduced me to a new world of career possibilities and changed the direction of my life. Ron’s class was followed by a photojournalism course with another excellent teacher, Fred Zwahlen. With Ron and Fred as mentors, I found a home in OSU’s Department of Journalism and developed a passion for photography.

**UM News: How did you catch the eye of National Geographic?**

**Johns:** My relationship with National Geographic began following my first year of graduate school at the University of Minnesota’s School of Journalism. I received a photojournalism internship at the Topeka Capital-Journal. Another mentor, Rich Clarkson, director of photography at the Kansas newspaper, sent me to the University of Missouri Photo Workshop. There I met National Geographic’s director of photography, Bob Gilka, and Bill Garrett, who soon became editor in chief of National Geographic magazine. Four years later, when I was named National Newspaper Photographer of the Year, I proposed my first National Geographic story to Bob and Bill. They approved my idea and sent me west to be embedded for four months as a photographer with the Rogue River Roughriders, a 20-member U.S. Forest Service Hot Shot forest firefighting crew.

**UM News: How did the magazine change during your time as editor?**
Johns: I became editor in chief during an exciting time in journalism. With the rise of digital photography and the internet, we had the opportunity to use a suite of storytelling tools to reach people in new and innovative ways. We embraced change by using photography, video, audio and interactive graphics and mapping to tell meaningful stories in unforgettable ways. This resulted in an award winning website, a popular Instagram account and a successful National Geographic magazine app that complemented our print product.

UM News: In what ways can a single photograph bring about change?

Johns: One of the most influential photographs ever made was the “Blue Marble” image of Earth taken on December 7, 1972, from the Apollo 17 spacecraft. That iconic photograph made us see our beautiful planet from a new perspective and inspired the environmental movement.

A photograph can also show horror and bring change. In 1972 Nick Ut’s heartbreaking shot of nine-year-old Kim Phuc badly burned, running naked down a road following a South Vietnamese napalm attack, had a profound impact on how the public felt about the war in Vietnam.

More often, however, it is a series of photographs taken by a photographer over time that bring the most significant change. For example, Lewis W. Hine’s horrifying photographs of child labor brought change to child labor laws in the United States. An example of photography’s power to celebrate nature and bring change is Carleton Watkins’s photographs of the Yosemite Valley. They helped convince President Lincoln to protect Yosemite for future generations.

UM News: Your daughter, Louise Johns, is an established photographer and a graduate student in UM’s School of Journalism. How is the business of photography different for her than it was for you?

Johns: Newspapers and magazines were financially healthy when I began my career in journalism. There were many opportunities to become a staff member at a publication and gain experience, but today there are fewer opportunities in traditional publishing because consumers have many more options as to where and how they become informed. While the newspaper and magazine path I pursued has become more challenging, there are new and emerging paths journalists can take in today’s media landscape. This has resulted in innovative digital platforms journalists are using to help us understand a complex world and make well informed decisions. What that means for young journalists is that it is more important than ever to develop their own personal voice and vision. Refining your voice and striving for excellence is not new. The great masters of photography have done it for more than 150 years.

UM News: In an age where modern platforms enable everyone to consider themselves a “photographer,” how can a journalism degree set students apart?

Johns: Today taking a photograph is easier than it has ever been, but that does not mean just anyone can create a powerful body of work that informs and emotionally touches people. To consistently make meaningful photographs takes relentless curiosity and hunger to constantly improve. A renowned journalism school, such as the University of Montana, provides the structure, guidance and inspiration to develop the skills photographers need to succeed.

UM News: What lessons do you hope to impart upon your students?
Johns: I want students to appreciate the richness and sense of purpose a career in journalism can give your life, but that comes with a great deal of responsibility. Those of us in journalism need to seek the truth with fact based, nonpartisan reporting that builds trust. To do that well requires skill, integrity, curiosity, courage and an unwavering commitment to excellence.

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Contact: Chris Johns, Pollner Professor, UM School of Journalism, chris.johns@mso.umt.edu.
MISSOULA – Some health-program students at Missoula College of the University of Montana are joining the battle against the coronavirus pandemic even before they graduate.

MC health programs include nursing, respiratory care, medical assisting, surgical technology
and radiology technology. Dan Funsch, interim associate dean and chair of the Department of Health Professions, said all programs have rearranged schedules for classes and clinicals to move students into the area workforce as rapidly as possible. All classes and labs also have been moved online.

"Many of our students have jumped into the workforce even before graduation," Funsch said. "We are doing whatever we can to facilitate this process. COVID-19 has created an acute need to immediately bolster our frontline health care professionals."

He said the college’s health programs have suspended student clinical rotations at this time to conserve valuable personal protective equipment for area health care professionals already in the workforce. The college also wanted to avoid exposing students to unnecessary risks.

Additionally, MC’s Respiratory Care Program maintains four ventilators for training, and those were made available to area hospitals. The Surgical Technology Program also has donated nearly 1,000 masks, gloves and gowns to area health facilities.

Echo Hermsmeyer, a graduating radiologic technologist from Joliet, recently was hired for a full-time position at Clark Fork Valley Hospital in Plains.

“Leaving Missoula College early has been bittersweet,” Hermsmeyer said. “But it has allowed us to contribute to the hospitals and help people in this time of need. We need to focus on something more important than school right now – human lives.”

Linda Barnes, the MC Nursing Program director, said the Montana Board of Nursing has joined forces with the Montana University System to reinforce the state’s supply of nurses. The board has proposed modifying its rules to hasten the graduation and placement of nursing students.
Barnes said at an emergency meeting of the Montana Board of Nursing on March 24 the board proposed a temporary permit and amending rules to allow more simulations in lieu of clinical rotations.

“These measures were designed to expedite the supply of nurses entering the workforce,” she said.

The board also proposed extending temporary licenses to six months instead of the standard three months. Barnes said the new graduates seeking temporary licenses must be employed and have their new supervisors sign the applications. The new licenses allow them to work half a year before taking the national nursing certification exam.

“The board proposes that in extenuating circumstances the amount of simulation that replaces clinical experiences will be up to the individual programs,” Barnes said. “In other words, nursing programs would be allowed to go over 50% in simulation if they feel we are meeting student outcomes.”

MC Dean Tom Gallagher said radiology tech students who will graduate in May already are working in area hospitals throughout western Montana via limited licenses until they can take their national certification exams. Medical assisting students also are completing their final internships, and many will immediately join the workforce.

“We are moving things faster than normal," Gallagher said, “but this is an unusual time.”

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