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UM / News / UM School Psychology Doctoral Program Earns Reaccreditation



MISSOULA – The **School Psychology Doctoral Program** at the University of Montana has been

reaccredited by the American Psychological Association until 2031.

UM offers the only school psychology doctoral program in Montana and the surrounding region. It has been accredited since 2015. The closest accredited programs outside Montana are in Washington, Minnesota and Colorado to the south.

School psychologists, like clinical or counseling psychologists, are health service psychologists who provide expertise in mental health, learning and behavior to help youth succeed academically, socially and emotionally. School psychologists also work closely with teachers, parents and other key adult figures in a youth's life to support them in school, at home and in the community.

“The School Psychology Doctoral Program prepares future school psychologists to work with youth and families in a variety of settings, including schools, residential treatment and mental health centers, juvenile justice programs and hospitals – with an emphasis on serving rural and diverse communities,” said Dr. Jacqueline Brown, director of UM School Psychology Graduate Training Programs. “Students within the program receive multiple opportunities to teach, conduct research and obtain applied experience in school and clinical settings. We have been told by multiple employers that our students are well prepared and stand out among their colleagues.”

Status as an accredited program means doctoral students have met nationally rigorous and recognized APA standards for the provision of quality mental health care. Programs seeking APA accreditation undergo an extensive self-assessment and on-site review by the Committee on Accreditation.

Diana Diaków is a fifth-year UM school psychology student starting her pre-doctoral internship at the Children's Center in Salt Lake City. She said the doctoral-level school psychology training at UM sharpened her clinical and research lens, preparing her for work in schools and various healthcare settings in the U.S. and abroad.

“I was excited to acquire skills and knowledge to support the mental health and academic performance of diverse children, families and communities from a culturally responsive and strengths-based perspective,” Diaków said.

The School Psychology Doctoral Program has three full-time core faculty: Dr. Greg Machek, Dr. Anisa Goforth and Dr. Jacqueline Brown. The program is housed within the Department of

Psychology, which also offers the Clinical Psychology Doctoral Program that has been fully accredited since 1970.

Status as an accredited program means doctoral students have met nationally rigorous and recognized APA standards for the provision of quality mental health care. Programs seeking APA accreditation undergo an extensive self-assessment and on-site review by the Committee on Accreditation.

To learn more about UM's School Psychology Programs, visit <http://hs.umt.edu/psychology/graduates/default.php>. The APA Commission on Accreditation is recognized by both the secretary of the [U.S. Department of Education](#) and the [Council for Higher Education Accreditation](#), as the national accrediting authority for professional education and training in psychology. To learn more about APA accreditation, visit <https://accreditation.apa.org/>.

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UM / News / Public Radio Expands Montana News Coverage With Grant



UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA

PUBLIC RADIO EXPANDS MONTANA NEWS COVERAGE WITH GRANT

27 AUGUST 2021

Corin Cates-Carney, news director of Montana Public Radio

MISSOULA – Montana Public Radio has been awarded a \$300,000 grant from the Otto

Bremer Trust to expand news coverage across western and central Montana over the next two years. The grant will allow MTPR to add news reporters in **Butte** and **Great Falls**.

“We’re excited to better serve our listeners with more news stories from southwest Montana and the Golden Triangle,” MTPR News Director Corin Cates-Carney said. “Our news team will be able to do additional reporting on the environment, agriculture, Indigenous affairs and more.”

MTPR’s award-winning journalists present daily Montana news updates and stories on-air during “Morning Edition” from 7 to 9 a.m. and “All Things Considered” from 5 to 7 p.m. They also feature long-form and investigative reporting and analysis through programs and podcasts such as “Fireline,” “Shared State,” “Richest Hill,” “Subsurface,” “Capitol Talk” and “Campaign Beat.”

“We’re proud to have been selected by the Otto Bremer Trust for this grant,” said Anne Hosler, MTPR interim development director. “Expanded news coverage helps fulfill the MTPR mission of enriching the mind and spirit and inspiring a lifetime of learning.”

The Otto Bremer Trust is a bank holding company and a private charitable trust based in St. Paul, Minnesota, that works at the intersection of finance and philanthropy. Created in 1944 by Otto Bremer, it is today one of the nation’s largest philanthropic organizations and is committed to supporting a better quality of life for residents of Minnesota, Montana, North Dakota and Wisconsin. Visit <https://ottobremer.org> for more information.

Montana Public Radio is a public service of the University of Montana and broadcasts on 89.1 Missoula (KUFM); 91.5 Missoula, city (K218AI); 91.9 Hamilton (KUFN); 89.5 Polson (KPJH); 90.1 Kalispell, Whitefish and North Valley (KUKL); 90.5 Libby (KUFL); 91.7 Kalispell, city (K219BN); 101.3 Swan Lake (K267BJ); 91.3 Butte (KAPC); 91.7 Helena (KUHM); 90.9 and 91.7 Dillon (KDWG and K219DN); and 89.9 Great Falls (KGPR). Learn more at <http://mtpr.org>.

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UM / News / Welcome Back: Floating, Food, Music and Events to Greet UM Students



STUDENTS

WELCOME BACK: FLOATING, FOOD, MUSIC AND EVENTS TO GREET UM STUDENTS

23 AUGUST 2021

Many students moved into the residence halls at UM on Aug. 23. Classes begin Monday, Aug. 30.

MISSOULA – As Missoula and the University of Montana eagerly await the return of UM students, the University has prepared a series of events for them to connect with each other. Called Griz Welcome, the first two weeks of the semester are dedicated fully to the student experience at UM.

“Griz Welcome is the perfect time for students to meet their new classmates, as well as current students, and have some fun,” said Devin Carpenter, UM’s director of New Student Success. “It officially culminates with WelcomeFEAST on Sept. 10, a UM tradition and something the whole campus looks forward to each fall. We are expanding this event from the normal two hours to feature local music all afternoon for an extra special welcome to our UM Family.”

Carpenter and his Orientation team have worked diligently over the past year to create meaningful ways for the University to UM welcome students back to campus after a year with limited in-person events.

New this year is the Freshman Float, slated for Friday, Aug. 27. The float is intended to help incoming students celebrate the end of their first week on campus. Shuttles will leave from the Campus Rec parking lot every half-hour, and fellow UM students working as River Ambassadors will guide freshmen down the river. Lifejackets will be provided, and students can bring their own tubes or borrow from a limited supply. The float ends with a River Bowl party complete with food and fun.

“Our students are what make our campus so vibrant, so we worked hard to pair experiences and events that renew a common Grizzly spirit,” Carpenter said.

Other Griz Welcome highlights include Convocation, the Oval Silent Disco and Shakespeare in the Parks, as well as an eSports playoff and UM Outdoor Program rafting trip.

During Orientation, UM students also have access to **Big Sky Experiences** in the community, such as a doc filmmaking workshop, flyfishing lesson, ethnobotany trip and hike, creative museum tour and multiple service projects. A full fall Orientation schedule is online at <https://www.umt.edu/orientation/additional-information/schedules/>.

“We hope this is a nice way for students to hang out with their new friends and relax after an exciting week of Orientation programming and before classes start on Aug. 30,” Carpenter said.

The schedule of Griz Welcome events includes:

- **Monday, Aug. 23** – Missoula PaddleHeads vs. Great Falls Voyagers Community Outreach Night, Ogren Park at Allegiance Field, **7-10 p.m.**
- **Tuesday, Aug. 24** – eSports Extravaganza, the Oval, **7-10 p.m.**; Grocery Bingo, University Center 2nd Floor Commons, **8-9 p.m.**
- **Wednesday, Aug. 25** – Karaoke, Oval, **8-10 p.m.**
- **Thursday, Aug. 26** – Dinner at Downtown ToNight, Caras Park, **5:30-8:30 p.m.**; Silent Disco, Oval, **9-11 p.m.**
- **Friday, Aug. 27** – Freshman Float and River Bowl Party, Clark Fork River, **4-8 p.m.**
- **Saturday, Aug. 28** – Optional Rafting Trip, Outdoor Program, **8 a.m.-4 p.m.**
- **Sunday, Aug. 29** – Optional Rafting Trip, Outdoor Program, **8 a.m.-4 p.m.**; Last Day of River Shuttles, Adams Center Bus Stop, **noon-6 p.m.**
- **Monday, Aug. 30** – Academic Convocation, Oval, **7-9:30 p.m.**
- **Tuesday, Aug. 31** – Take A Break Tuesday, Oval, **noon-1 p.m.**
- **Friday, Sept. 3** – Support Services Open House, Lommasson Center, **noon-2 p.m.**
- **Tuesday, Sept. 7** – Take A Break Tuesday, Oval, **noon-1 p.m.**; A Midsummer Night's Dream – Shakespeare in the Parks, Oval, **6-9 p.m.**
- **Wednesday, Sept. 8** – Cymbeline – Montana Shakespeare in the Parks, Oval, **6-9 p.m.**
- **Friday, Sept. 10** – WelcomeFEAST, Oval, **11 a.m.-5 p.m.**
- **Tuesday, Sept. 14** – Branch Center Open House, Branch Center, **6-7 p.m.**

During the first week of school, the University also will host a COVID-19 walk-in vaccination clinic from noon to 2 p.m. on the Oval. The doses will be the first Pfizer dose, and patients should bring proof of insurance.

A full Griz Welcome schedule is online at <https://www.umt.edu/griz-welcome/schedule.php>.

###

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UM / News / UM Master of Accountancy Student Wins National Scholarship

COLLEGE OF BUSINESS

UM MASTER OF ACCOUNTANCY STUDENT WINS NATIONAL SCHOLARSHIP

19 AUGUST 2021

Betsy Rattler will start working on her Master of Accountancy degree this fall. She recently won a national scholarship for her studies, which started out in the two-year accounting program at UM's Missoula College.

MISSOULA – A student in the University of Montana’s Master of Accountancy program has won a national scholarship geared for outstanding graduates considering careers in auditing.

Betsy Rattler won a \$10,000 scholarship from the Public Company Accounting Oversight Board. She is one of 253 students from across the country to receive this recognition for the 2021-22 academic year.

“I was honored to be nominated for this scholarship, but to win it was amazing,” said Rattler, who currently works as a staff accountant for Allegiance Benefit Management Inc., a Missoula-based company that develops and administers employee benefit plans.

The PCAOB award is geared for students who have been historically underrepresented in the accounting profession.

Rattler worked as a pharmacy technician for a number of years when she decided to return to school to study accounting. She began in the two-year program offered at Missoula College while working as a state-funded accounting technology apprentice at Allegiance. She then went on to get a bachelor’s degree at UM in business administration and accounting, and then enrolled in the **UM MAcct** program.

“UM really puts you on a good path,” Rattler said. “Getting the master’s seemed like the next step to take especially if you want to test for the CPA.”

A top-20 nationally ranked program, UM MAcct graduates pass the CPA exam at rates above national averages, and 95% of students have jobs on graduation day.

Offered remotely, in person or a combination of both, the program accommodates the demands of working professionals. It is designed to help students develop a high level of technical knowledge, acquire in-demand data analytics skills, facilitate growth of peer and professional networks, and promote leadership capability for advancement in the accounting profession.

Rattler credits her instructor, Associate Professor Isho Tama-Sweet, for suggesting she consider applying for the PCAOB scholarship. Tama-Sweet said Rattler has the makings to be a successful auditor.

“Betsy is both inquisitive and diligent. She asks good questions, is seldom satisfied with the first response, and follows through on every loose end and detail,” said Tama-Sweet, chair of the Department of Management and Marketing in UM’s **College of Business**. “These traits served her well in the classroom, and they are essential to being a good auditor. I am very proud of what Betsy has accomplished so far.”

Rattler isn’t sure where her career will take her once she finishes her master’s degree in the next year. She likes auditing and considers it a good opportunity. She feigns any suggestion that she’s particularly good with numbers.

“Accounting does require numbers, for sure,” she said, “but it’s more about solving the puzzle, and I like that a lot.”

Since 2011, the PCAOB has administered a scholarship program for undergraduate and graduate accounting students enrolled in accredited U.S. colleges and universities. The **PCAOB Scholars Program** is mandated by the Sarbanes-Oxley Act and is funded through monetary penalties collected as part of PCAOB enforcement actions.

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UM / News / Community Invited to 'Paint Missoula Maroon'

UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA

COMMUNITY INVITED TO 'PAINT MISSOULA MAROON'

18 AUGUST 2021

UM invites the Missoula community to "Paint Missoula Maroon" to welcome University students to campus for the new academic year.

MISSOULA – Missoula's residential, commercial and business districts are invited to "Paint Missoula Maroon" to welcome University of Montana students to campus for the 2021-22 academic year and renew a sense of pride in the University of Montana.

Greg Sundberg, senior associate athletic director and executive director of the Grizzly Scholarship Association, spearheaded the "Paint Missoula Maroon" initiative to drive a visible momentum for UM, its students and its impact on Missoula's economic vitality. He also wanted to highlight the inextricable connection between UM and the Missoula community.

"This past year-and-a-half have been difficult for everyone," Sundberg said. "The goal of this initiative is to come together as a university town, show pride in our University colors and welcome students to one of the best universities in the nation – in a town that deeply supports its success. We thought the best way to do that is to renew UM pride by trying – as best we can – to paint Missoula maroon along with our business and community members."

University student and staff volunteers will distribute free Griz Kits to area business on Tuesday, Aug. 17. The kits are filled with UM stickers, yard signs, flags, window decals and for display.

"To celebrate Montana's flagship University and its contribution to the community, we are asking all neighbors and business supporters of UM to help Paint Missoula Maroon to create a welcoming and vibrant environment for students, families and visitors as they return to campus this fall," said Dave Kuntz, UM's strategic communications director.

Once community members are displaying Griz gear, they are encouraged to share photos on social media with the hashtag #PaintMissoulaMaroon.

On Monday, Aug. 23, UM students will move into residence halls. Monday, Aug. 30, is the first day of classes. Additionally, UM will host Homecoming Sept. 20-25, and the first home Grizzly football game will be held Sept. 11.

"There is so much to celebrate in our community and within our University," Sundberg said. "We know Grizzly pride runs deep in our town, and we're hoping this renewed effort brings forth that visible energy."

For more information on Paint Missoula Maroon email communications@mso.umt.edu or call Dave Kuntz at 406-243-5659.

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UM / News / UM Remembers African-American Studies Founder

COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES AND SCIENCES

UM REMEMBERS AFRICAN-AMERICAN STUDIES FOUNDER

10 AUGUST 2021

Ulysses S. Doss founded UM's African-American Studies Program in 1968.

MISSOULA – The University of Montana lost one of its formative figures over the weekend, Ulysses S. Doss, who founded UM's African-American Studies Department.

“When looking back across UM’s 128-year history, it is hard to think of anyone who had a

greater impact on this campus than Ulysses Doss,” UM President Seth Bodnar said. “He created an academic department from scratch and dedicated his professional life to empowering UM students. Ulysses’ contributions to our university will continue to benefit students and Montana for generations to come.”

During the tumultuous summer of 1968, Doss worked with students to create the African-American Studies Program at UM. During his time on campus, Doss was known for teaching in standing-room-only classes for both students and the Missoula community.

Doss’ hire was spurred by four UM students of African descent, Thamani Akbar, Dee Daniels, Herb White and Mace Gray. In 1967, they organized the first Black Student Union at UM – making it the third such program established in the country.

Dr. Tobin Miller Shearer, the current director of UM’s African-American Studies Program, remembers Doss as a fearless advocate for African-American youth and the program he founded more than five decades ago.

“Dr. Doss brought gravitas and wisdom into every room he entered,” Shearer said. “For generations of Montanans, he not only made the Black Freedom struggle relevant, immediate and real, but he offered them a way to engage that struggle with integrity and passion. Our program thrives today because of the foundation laid by Dr. Doss.”

Before his time as an instructor at UM, Doss was a minister in Chicago and worked closely with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. during the civil rights movement. He led UM’s African-American Studies program for 25 years before retiring in 1993.

The Doss Family has requested donations be made to the Ulysses S. Doss Scholarship Endowment in lieu of flowers or other memorial expressions of love for Doss. Contributions may be mailed to: The University of Montana Foundation, P.O. Box 7159, Missoula, MT 59807-7159. Friends also may give online at <https://supportum.org/give/>. Please be sure to designate that the gift is in memory of Ulysses S. Doss in the “comments field.”

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UM / News / Griz Chat: New UM Faculty Discusses Reproductive Justice

COLLEGE OF HEALTH

GRIZ CHAT: NEW UM FACULTY DISCUSSES REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE

09 AUGUST 2021

Jessica Liddell will join UM's School of Social Work as a new faculty member this fall. Her experience as a social worker and researcher addresses maternal and reproductive justice.

MISSOULA – This fall, University of Montana students can learn more about how the field of social work addresses women’s health care from new School of Social Work faculty member Jessica Liddell.

Liddell, originally from Logan, Utah, holds master’s degrees in social work and public health from Tulane University. For the past few years, she has worked with Indigenous women studying reproductive health along the Gulf Coast and recently earned her doctorate from Tulane.

“When it came time to look for a job, [UM] seemed like a great fit because of the opportunity to work with Indigenous tribes in the area and on rural health issues,” Liddell said. “The school seems to have a really strong commitment to social justice, which is something that’s important to me.”

With extensive experience working for nonprofits internationally, Liddell describes herself as an interdisciplinary scholar “with the heart of a social worker.” Her work centers on reproductive health care, especially among minority populations. She shared some of her insights with UM News.

UM News: What was something interesting you discovered through your research?

Liddell: Because the tribe I previously worked with is state recognized and not federally recognized, they don’t have access to a lot of resources, so that really puts them at a disadvantage.

A really important thing is the resilience. Social workers talk about and identify problems, but we also really want to make sure we honor the strengths of the people we work with. I interviewed women, and all of them have the most amazing stories about trying to pass down traditional knowledge. A lot are healers trying to pass that knowledge to their children.

Even though there are a lot of barriers, they step up and take care of each other – even people who aren’t immediate family. So it’s like, “Okay this person needs to go to a dialysis appointment. It’s 40 miles away. Who’s going to drive them?”

You mention reproductive justice a lot. Could you explain what it means?

Liddell: It's something I'm really passionate about. Reproductive justice is the right to have children, the right to not have children and the right to parent children in safe and healthy environments.

For a lot of women, especially minority women, their ability to have children is often suppressed. For example, there've been a lot of instances, especially for Indigenous women, where doctors will do sterilizations on them. They'll go in, they'll give birth, and then they wake up and can't have any more children. They'll have a hysterectomy that wasn't medically indicated, or they'll have long-term birth control implanted that has to be removed by doctors.

In the South, we have a lot of oil production, and its production is pretty toxic with a lot of chemicals. There's a place called Cancer Alley, where children are seeing [high] rates of asthma and cancer, and multiple populations are getting reproductive cancers. And less-privileged women end up having to raise children in these environments that are unsafe.

Right now there's a lot of concern because African-American women are dying during childbirth at rates that are insane, **like three, four or five times the rates of white women**, depending on where they are located, and with worse rates than we had 30 years ago.

I think a lot of it is providers not listening to women of color. For example, having eclampsia is something that kills a lot of women, which is issues with your blood pressure. It can get caught and treated relatively easily, but only if a provider is really paying attention to their patient when they're saying "I have a headache or I feel a little dizzy." Too often those signs get missed, and they end up hemorrhaging out or having a stroke.

What were other populations you worked with while abroad?

Liddell: I worked with orphan children in Bolivia and Nepal. I also worked an organization called 88bikes, which gets girls who have been sexually trafficked bikes so they would have more opportunities to go to school to attend job training.

In Ethiopia, I worked with mothers with HIV on ways to prevent transmission to children. And then I did a lot related to maternal health care in Ethiopia as well.

In New Orleans, I worked with HIV-positive patients and also with injection drug users.

Do you have a preference for the population you want to work with?

Liddell: I'm mostly now interested in maternal health care. I'll want to continue working on Indigenous women's health care concerns but I also think incarcerated women and women in immigration detention have a lot of maternal health care needs that aren't being met.

One reason I came to Montana is I'm passionate about rural health care needs. Montana is considered a maternal health care desert in that there are large portions of the state where it's really difficult to get high-quality maternal health care.

Why is this topic important to study in Montana? Why have a class on this for college students?

Liddell: There are so many Indigenous populations in Montana and in the West. I think it's something really important that students – even if they don't think they're going to necessarily work directly with Indigenous tribes or people – need to have knowledge on.

In general, social workers need to know more about reproductive justice, because even though it doesn't seem like social workers do public health, we actually do provide a large portion of reproductive health services through counseling and referrals.

Also, as humans, we will all know someone that gives birth. You will be impacted by your family with relatives, with people you work with.

I recently had a son. He's a year and a half old now, but only because I studied childbirth and I knew to say, "OK, I don't want an epidural until this point," or "I don't want this kind of thing done," was I able to advocate for myself. I wouldn't have known otherwise.

How do you think the pandemic has impacted reproductive health access?

Liddell: I think the pandemic has had good and negative impacts on maternal health. I think virtual health services like telemedicine is becoming a bit more mainstream now and can potentially be really beneficial.

In other ways, it's made it harder, especially for women who are in controlling or abusive relationships, because they don't see a provider face-to-face and get referred to services. It can be really hard too for isolation, postpartum depression, and the support you need when you give birth. I think that is missing right now for a lot of women and especially in the last year.

I'm hoping we can keep some of the good things, but then also go back to some of that in-person support.

As you arrive at UM, what are you most excited about?

Liddell: I'm excited to work with faculty who really care about social justice issues. That's one thing that brought me to the School of Social Work in Montana. The faculty really care about who they work with, and they care about the students.

I'm excited to work on my research projects and make new connections. There is actually a lot of cool work being done right now in Montana about rural maternal health issues.

Since I have been in the South working with state tribes, I'm excited to see the concerns of federally recognized tribes and tribes in the West.

I'm excited to teach students why research matters. I want to get them to see why it's cool, to be able to share my passion with new students. I really wanted a career in social work because of that commitment to working with people and being in a helping profession. I like students in social work because they go into it for the right reasons.

This fall, Liddell will teach Human Behavior in the Social Environment.

For those interested in Indigenous or Africa-American women's health, Liddell recommends reading "Reproductive Justice" by Barbara Gurr, "Killing the Black Body" by Dorothy Roberts and "Reproduction on the Reservation" by Brianna Theobald.

To learn more about UM's School of Social Work programs, visit <https://health.umt.edu/socialwork/>.

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UM / News / UM Summer Program Offers High School Students Early Taste of College



High school students from nine states participated in the inaugural Summer Exploration program in July. The program introduced them to UM, college life and Missoula.

MISSOULA – High school students from nine states traveled to the University of Montana campus this July for the inaugural **Summer Exploration** event, a program designed to give students an early introduction to college life.

Students earned one college credit and participated in one of two courses offered through the program, held July 24-31 and hosted by the **UM Summer Office**, **UM's School of Public and Community Health Sciences** and the **Wild Rockies Field Institute**.

Seven students stayed on campus for the week to take Introduction to Public Health, taught by UM's Dr. Tony Ward, Anna Kiley and other members of UM's School of Public and Community Health Sciences. Ten students also traveled to Glacier during the week to take Climate Change in Glacier National Park, taught by WRFI instructors Ashley Carruth and Stephanie Fisher.

Becka Simons, associate director of UM Summer, said participating students ranged in age from 15 to 17 and came from states as far away as Wisconsin, Texas and Illinois.

“Summer Exploration was presented as a holistic program where high school students could learn, explore and grow in beautiful indoor and outdoor classrooms,” Simons said. “We received extremely positive feedback from the students, who enjoyed meeting new people and getting a taste of the precollege experience.”

In addition to classes, students visited with UM President Seth Bodnar; participated in informational field trips, including to the Bison Range on the Flathead Indian Reservation and the Missoula City-County Health Department; participated in team-building activities; celebrated health workers; and explored the UM campus and beautiful city of Missoula.

UM Summer hopes to expand these precollege academic programs to encourage more high school students to meet new people, engage, learn and explore a precollege environment.

More information on the program is available at **Summer Exploration 2021** or by emailing Simons at becka.simons@mso.umt.edu.

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COLLEGE OF FORESTRY AND CONSERVATION

SCALING MOUNTAINS, FOLLOWING WILDLIFE: UM STUDENT FINDS HER MARK

03 AUGUST 2021

UM wildlife biology major Nicole Bealer has gone deep off the grid to conduct her undergraduate research. Here she uses radio telemetry to locate a collared cow elk in New Mexico.

MISSOULA – Students at the University of Montana pride themselves on going wherever and whenever necessary to pursue their passions and academic enrichment.

For wildlife biology major Nicole Bealer that has meant a summer scaling the craggy mountains of western Wyoming to study bighorn sheep, carrying all her provisions for the trip and sleeping in the same unforgiving environment as her subjects of study.

“Not a lot of side-by-sides in our lives,” Bealer said of the arduous climbs involved in her work that are decidedly not friendly to motorized vehicles.

This summer, Bealer studied bighorn sheep and their newborn lambs in Wyoming. This work included attaching GPS collars to monitor lamb survival. (All animals were handled for research purposes and were handled in compliance with appropriate permits and protocol.)

The Woodlands, Texas, native is no stranger to living and studying in the wild. Her budding resume of research includes tracking mountain lions and their kittens – “The cutest things, ever,” Bealer said – and **improving population monitoring techniques** of the elusive and arguably-not-so-adorable wolverine.

Her interest in wildlife biology started as a junior in high school when she had the opportunity to study mule deer and mountain lions in Colorado.

“I had no idea what I was getting into at the time,” she recalled, “but this was my moment of clarity. This is what I wanted to do. “



Bealer chose UM, calling it “one of the best places in the world to study wildlife” and has come to value the campus collective commitment to making a positive difference in the world.

“I love being part of a community that is going places and working to solve conservation problems and problems facing our natural resources,” she said.

In her work this summer, Bealer joined a team of researchers in the mountains outside Dubois, Wyoming, studying pneumonia in bighorn sheep and why some succumb to the disease while others can carry the pathogen and still survive. The work involved monitoring three herds, fitting them with radio collars and investigating those that died. The team also searched for newborn lambs, alerted by birth canal devices implanted earlier in the spring by other researchers.

“If they are born at 6 a.m., we are up at 6 a.m. to find the ewe and the baby so we can capture and collar it,” Bealer said. “It made for some exciting days with long hikes and elevation.”

During the second half of the summer, after lambing was complete, the team settled into studying subjects a lot easier to corral – vegetation eaten by bighorn sheep.

“We collected plants for lab analysis to see how they impact sheep survival rates,” Bealer explained.

Living with bighorn sheep atop the Continental Divide has been a great experience, Bealer said, but of all the animals she’s studied, mountain lions have so far been the most memorable.

During her winter work in Colorado, Nicole conducted mountain-lion captures to learn more about their ecology.

“They are an underappreciated species, and yet they play such an important role in the ecosystem,” she said.

Mark Hebblewhite, professor in UM’s wildlife biology program and Bealer’s adviser, said she has been a standout student and undergraduate researcher from



the moment she arrived on campus.

“Very rarely, perhaps less than five times, have I seen an undergraduate be able to bring together elements of her own research ideas, datasets spanning multiple research and management agencies, and secure funding to address their questions,” Hebblewhite said. “This speaks to the potential that all of us see in Nicole to become a top-level professional wildlife biologist.”

Ultimately, Bealer would like to go to graduate school and continue working in wildlife biology – preferably in the West, which she loves. She is particularly interested in predator-prey dynamics between wildlife.

“As a society we’ve had an interesting relationship with large predators and their threat to us,” she said. “But in more recent years we’ve come to better understand the important role they play in the ecosystem. “

Bealer’s studies are not limited to wildlife. Next spring, she hopes to travel to France to burnish her minor in French, a language her mother speaks as well. A member of the [Davidson Honors College](#), she also is working toward a minor in math.

“Nicole’s studies exemplify the value UM places on interdisciplinary studies and liberal arts,” said Kylla Benes, director of Scholarships and Fellowships at DHC. “These seemingly disparate studies will better position her for a job in a field that is increasingly collaborative and dependent on strong data analysis skills.

“They have provided Nicole with intense research experiences, earned her UM's nomination for the nationally competitive Goldwater Scholarship and are preparing her to undertake study

abroad in France later this year."

Recently, Bealer taped a thank-you video to scholarship donors to UM's wildlife program. She said having outside support energizes students to follow their passions.

"It creates that possibility where students who have an idea are encouraged to follow it and pursue it and actually try to bring those things to fruition," she said.

For Bealer, that passion this summer was a mountaintop experience with wildlife who inhabit the West that they, and she, call home.

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