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UM / News / UM Bio Station Tracks River Health in Real Time



COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES AND SCIENCES

UM BIO STATION TRACKS RIVER HEALTH IN REAL TIME

31 MARCH 2022

FLATHEAD LAKE – Rivers and streams are akin to arteries and blood vessels in a human body, so monitoring the metabolic respiration and production rates of Earth’s freshwaters can help us understand the overall health of our planet.

Current and former researchers with the University of Montana’s **Flathead Lake Biological Station** were part of a scientific team that used modern environmental sensor technology to track stream vital signs in near real-time.

The new system they developed acts almost like a Fitbit for monitoring the nation's freshwater ecosystems. It allows researchers to better predict how freshwater vital signs might shift with land development, climate change, and other disturbances.

UM researchers Maite Arroita, Joanna Blaszcak, Alice Carter and Lauren Koenig, plus FLBS stream ecology Professor Bob Hall, were part of an effort led by Duke University Professor Emily Bernhardt. **Their pioneering work was published** recently in the prestigious Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences.

Waterway scientists monitor fluctuations in oxygen and carbon that occur in streams as gases are absorbed and released by organisms like microbes, algae, insects and fish as they go about their basic life functions.

In the past to study stream metabolism, scientists relied on snapshot data composed of measurements taken from a small number of streams over a few hours or days. Now, by using years of data combined with new computational and statistical methods, a research team created an approach to convert water quality and environmental data into estimates of photosynthesis and respiration for specific rivers and river types.

Coming from more than 10 academic and government institutions, the scientists analyzed at least one year's worth of data from over 220 rivers and streams across the United States. Environmental sensors recorded the dissolved oxygen and temperature every 15 minutes day and night. Study areas ranged from Arizona deserts and Puerto Rican rainforests to Midwest farmland.

Researchers compiled and uploaded the data to a **web portal for public use**.

"When we monitor a river continuously instead of just taking snapshots, a picture starts to emerge of what the life of the river is really like," said Carter, an author on the study.

"Disturbance and change are the norms. Measuring the 'pulse' of a river allows us to see how this influences the lives of organisms and how humans are changing these patterns."

While analyzing the data, the researchers made an interesting discovery. Although changes in average annual temperature and precipitation often explain changes in terrestrial ecosystem productivity, for streams the most important controls are annual light availability and flow stability.

Streamflow changes seasonally, day to day, and even minute to minute with sudden storms, so stream organisms must contend with flows that range from a trickle to a torrent. Highly variable flows tend to dislodge algae and organic matter, lowering metabolic rates. High light stimulates photosynthesis.

The researchers contend focusing more attention on sunlight exposure and changes in water levels due to droughts or flooding will substantially improve scientists' ability to predict river ecosystem dynamics in a way that may fundamentally change the way rivers are studied moving forward.

The study also found that streams respired more carbon than they produced, showing that organic matter transported from the land to water subsidizes metabolism in rivers.

"Our study provides a lens from which we can examine how changes in land use and climate can affect energy inputs to riverine food webs across many rivers through time," said Hall, an FLBS stream ecologist. "Our approach will enable managers to monitor ecosystem processes in addition to water quality metrics such as dissolved oxygen."

When it comes to the future of our stream ecosystems, their condition will likely depend on human activity. Study authors emphasize that changes to light and flows in streams greatly impact their communities and conditions. Changes in shade-producing riverbank vegetation, climate change-caused shifts in rainfall and streamflow regulation by dams can all affect how much energy is available for stream food webs.

If human-induced changes influence river and stream flows, then food webs, fish populations, outdoor recreation and other related industries that depend on our rivers may be impacted as well.

To put it another way, the researchers contend, whether it be a river in the rainforests of Puerto Rico or the sun-dappled icy flows of the Flathead River here in Montana, the future ecological health of our rivers is up to us.

This study was made possible by the National Science Foundation. For the complete study, visit <https://www.pnas.org/doi/full/10.1073/pnas.2121976119>. Data from the study are publicly available at <https://data.streampulse.org/>.

###

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UM / News / UM Law School Rises 31 Spots in National Ranking



UM students study in the William J. Jameson Law Library.

MISSOULA – The Alexander Blewett III School of Law at the University of Montana jumped 31 spots in the latest **U.S. News & World Report's Best Law Schools list**, earning a rank of 103 nationally.

This ranking evaluates institutions on their successful placement of graduates and bar passage rate, faculty resources, academic achievements of entering students, and peer assessment by law schools, lawyers and judges on overall program quality.

The high ranking recognizes the law school's amazing students, talented faculty and dedicated staff, said Cathay Y. N. Smith, acting dean of academic affairs and a UM law professor.

"As the only law school in Montana, we attract exceptional students from all over the state and nationwide," Smith said. "Students come to the Blewett School of Law to gain a place-based and student-centered education and to live the outdoor recreational lifestyle that Montana offers.

"The faculty are experts in their areas of law and have significant legal practice experience that allows them to integrate theory with practice in the classroom," she said. "We may be a small school, but we are proud to offer an exceptional and affordable legal education to our students."

UM law students receive practical training to help them excel in practice after graduation. Every student in their third year is placed in a clinic, where they have the opportunity to practice law under the supervision of faculty and experienced attorneys in a variety of settings.

"The excellent education that our students receive here is reflected in our high bar passage rates, judicial clerkship placements and employment rates," said Monte Mills, a law professor and the acting dean of student success.

During the past year, UM's law school also ranked No. 7 in National Jurist's PreLaw Magazine's **2021 list of Best Value Law Schools** and No. 5 for clerkship placement, with 30.4% of the law school's 2020 graduates placed in judicial clerkships. Additionally, it ranked 4th in Best Value Schools' **20 Most Affordable Law Schools**.

In addition to achieving high standing in the overall law school ranking, the Blewett School of Law also placed No. 34 in U.S. News' Best Environmental Law Programs list.

The Blewett School of Law's Natural Resources and Environmental Law Program (NREP) is nationally recognized for its place-based learning, rich curricular offerings and guaranteed environmental clinical opportunities with agencies and nonprofits that provide students a strong foundation for entering practice.

The program's faculty members have substantial and diverse practice experience in natural resources, environmental and Indian law, coming from careers in the public, private, nonprofit and tribal sectors. Drawing from that experience, they help students apply legal principles and

examine issues from a variety of perspectives.

“It is particularly exciting for me as the first woman of color to lead the admissions office to receive these high U.S. News rankings during my tenure,” said Alicia Miles, director of admission for the Blewett School of Law. “It allows us to raise our national profile and increase our visibility to the best students. But regardless of our ranking, Montana truly is an amazing place to begin a legal career. The people, place and community here are unmatched.”

For more information about the U.S. News and World Report, visit <https://www.usnews.com/>. To find out more about the Blewett School of Law, go to <https://www.umt.edu/law/>.

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Contact: Alexander Blewett III School of Law, 406-243-4311, lawadmissions@umontana.edu.

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UM / News / Indian Country Today Editor to Present Journalism Lecture

COLLEGE OF THE ARTS AND MEDIA

INDIAN COUNTRY TODAY EDITOR TO PRESENT JOURNALISM LECTURE

28 MARCH 2022

Mark Trahant

MISSOULA – Mark Trahant, editor-at-large of Indian Country Today, will present the 2022 Dean Stone Lecture at the University of Montana on Thursday, April 7. The event

celebrates the founding dean of the **UM School of Journalism**, Arthur Stone.

As the Dean Stone distinguished lecturer, Trahan will give a public talk titled “Crafting a Narrative of Indigenous Excellence” at 7 p.m. in the University Center Theater. He will focus on why it’s so important to have more voices in journalism.

Under Trahan’s leadership, Indian Country Today evolved into a daily digital news platform covering the Indigenous world of American Indians, Alaska Natives and First Nation people reaching some 800,000 readers a month. ICT was founded in 1981 as a print publication, and, after nearly going under in 2017, was reimagined and relaunched as a digital-first platform with a television presence in some 30 markets.

Trahan currently is working on an Indigenous economics project – a comprehensive examination of the contributions made by tribes to regional economies – as well as a look at how the new standards of the ESG (Environmental, Social, Governance) investing tool impact both extractive resource development and climate change.

A member of the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes, Trahan is known for his election reporting in Indian Country, developing the first comprehensive database of American Indians and Alaska Natives running for office. His research has been cited in publications ranging from The New York Times to The Economist and Teen Vogue.

His previous work includes reporting for PBS “Frontline.” His most recent “Frontline” piece, “The Silence,” was about sexual abuse by priests in an Alaska Native village. He was the



editorial page editor of the Seattle Post-Intelligencer and has worked for The Arizona Republic, Salt Lake Tribune, The Seattle Times, the Navajo Times Today and the Sho-Ban News.

UM's Dean Stone Lecture celebrates the founding of the School of Journalism. The next night on Friday, April 8, the school will hold its annual Dean Stone Scholarship and Awards Banquet, where more than \$200,000 in scholarships are given to current and incoming journalism students.

###

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UM / News / UM President's Lecture to Discuss Women's Suffrage

A close-up portrait of Elaine Weiss, a woman with curly brown hair and blue eyes, wearing a dark blue shirt and a gold necklace. The background is a solid light gray.

UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA

UM PRESIDENT'S LECTURE TO DISCUSS WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE

23 MARCH 2022

MISSOULA – Just over 100 years ago, women finally earned the right to vote in the United States. The next installment of the President's Lecture Series at the University of Montana will expound on that fact with an expert on women's political organization and modern voting rights.

Prize-winning journalist and author Elaine Weiss will present "The Woman's Hour: The Great Fight to Win the Vote" at 7 p.m. Saturday, April 2, in the University Center Ballroom. The event is UM's Lucille Speer Lecture and is sponsored in part by the League of Women Voters and the American Association of University Women.

A popular public speaker and frequent media commentator, Weiss has published recent op-eds in The New York Times and been featured on NPR's "All Things Considered" and "CBS Sunday Morning."

Her highly acclaimed 2018 narrative history – titled the same as her lecture – follows a handful of remarkable women who led their respective forces into battle. It's an inspiring story of activists winning their own freedom in one of the last campaigns forged in the shadow of the Civil War and the beginning of the great 20th-century battles for civil rights.

Weiss is also the author of "Fruits of Victory: The Woman's Land Army in the Great War," which is a story of a long-forgotten women's movement during World War I.

Weiss' work has appeared in The Atlantic, Harpers and The Christian Science Monitor, as well as reports and documentaries for NPR and "Voice of America." A MacDowell Colony Fellow and Pushcart Prize Editor's Choice honoree, Weiss lives in Baltimore.

The UM President's Lecture Series is an opportunity to learn about and discuss ideas and issues that animate public discourse. [Learn more about the President's Lecture Series online](#). Sign-language interpretation will be provided for this event. To request another disability-related modification, call 406-243-4866.

This lecture honors Lucile Speer, a UM librarian from 1928 to 1968 who later served as a delegate to the 1972 Montana Constitutional Convention.

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Contact: Office of the President, UM, 406-243-2734, thepresident@umontana.edu.

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UM / News / UM Students Find Interprofessional Health Care Experience Transformative

COLLEGE OF HEALTH

UM STUDENTS FIND INTERPROFESSIONAL HEALTH CARE EXPERIENCE TRANSFORMATIVE

22 MARCH 2022

Alastair Lewis talks with Rachel Jaquith, a registered nurse with the Community Care Team at Partnership Health Center, left, in an exam room at Partnership Health Care Center.

MISSOULA – A group of graduate students at the University of Montana recently participated in an experience they say has fundamentally challenged the way they view American health

care.

The students were part of a select, interdisciplinary group from UM's **College of Health** that provided intensive, holistic support to a single patient struggling to navigate today's complicated health system. The experience was part of the Montana Interprofessional Student Hotspotting program.

The goal of Hotspotting is not to provide clinical care, per se, but to work alongside a patient and connect missing dots when it comes to their ability to attain health. More often than not, health obstacles are related to a patient's "social ecosystem," said Jennifer Bell, director of clinical education in UM's **School of Physical Therapy and Rehabilitation Science** and co-director of Student Hotspotting. This might include food insecurity, insufficient housing or feelings of isolation and loneliness, Bell said.

"For many people in our community, the health care system is broken," Bell said. "Patients who struggle within their social environment, for example, can end up overusing emergency care with little impact on their long-term health or goals," said Bell, noting that these issues have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Now in its third year at UM and the only program of its kind in Montana, the Montana Interprofessional Student Hotspotting program is funded by the Montana Health Care Foundation and the Montana Geriatric Education Center. The program pairs UM graduate students from physical therapy, psychology, pharmacy, public health, speech, language and hearing sciences and social work for six, intensive months of working with a patient identified by Missoula's Partnership Health Center. The program also includes students from Montana State University nursing programs.

The group meets on a weekly basis with the patient, attends their medical appointments and identifies potential issues holding the patient back from attaining robust health.

Gabriella Ji, a UM clinical psychology student and Hotspotting student, said her front-row seat to participating in an integrated way with other students in health care will help her become a better practitioner.

She said the experience allowed her to widen her view of health care and humbled her understanding of what a patient experiences when they're not being understood.

“From a psychology perspective and working with other students in health care like nutrition, physical therapy and pharmacy, I realized we each have our own jargon and ways of communicating,” Ji said. “That kind of language doesn’t always translate to the patient, and it keeps us operating in silos. So, I learned a lot about terminology and communication from different areas of health care, and I found I was able to help my colleagues think about their approach and language when working with a patient.”

Ji said the Hotspotting experience has encouraged her to seek advice and support from other health care disciplines as she plans to eventually pursue counseling work with a veteran population.

Charles Rourke, an outreach administer for Partnership Health, said the Hotspotting program helps patients who are labeled as “complex” or “high needs” to see themselves in a different light and navigate a path to better health.

“Every UM student that comes through this program has learned something about helping patients navigate a medical system,” Rourke said. “For many of these patients, they are discouraged, without a lot left to give. To gain a better understanding of a person, we have to see them as more than their diagnosis and understand that health is process-oriented and often has more to do with a person’s social ecosystem than we realize.”

For Reece Brandon, a UM physical therapy and Master of Public Health student, that means drawing parallels between a person who doesn’t own a car and their ability to regularly attend health care appointments. Or, understanding that if a person is homeless, physical therapy exercises probably aren’t a priority.

“The tricky thing about this experience is that it required us to assist these patients in a non-clinical way,” Brandon said. “I think the most important aspect for me, as a future healthcare provider, is a deeper understanding and appreciation that individual things that people struggle with are bigger than what the health care system gives them credit for.”

Brandon said he observed the ways doctors can interrupt patients and not always use respectful terms, or even take into account challenges with basic needs like a patient’s stress levels or access to reliable transportation.

“The patient that we worked with had a very low level of trust in the health care system,” Brandon said. “And it was our job, as a group, to place the relationship with the patient at the

center and have them be in charge of their care and their investment in their health outcomes, which is a model that's in opposition of the way most healthcare is framed.”

The patient Brandon worked with had used emergency medical services seven times in one year. After participating in the Hotspotting program, this patient only used emergency service once.

Kate Chapin, co-director for Student Hotspotting and Project Evaluator for the UM Center for Families and Workforce Development, said about 5% of the U.S. population consumes nearly 50% of health expenditures in an already burdened and burnt out health care workforce. She said the likely cause of health care services overuse has more to do with a person's unmet social needs than anything else.

“Unmet social needs are exacerbating poor health outcomes not only in our community, but across the country,” Chapin said. “And since the onset of COVID-19, we've seen an unfortunate uptick in poor health outcomes directly related to food, affordable housing, transportation, isolation, and loneliness making conditions worse for people who are already struggling with their health.”

Chapin said the modern medical model of doctor-instructs-patient doesn't always serve a large percentage of patients who need “a wider lens of care.”

“Our students have an opportunity to practice a truly, integrated healthcare model that is patient-driven,” Chapin said. “Not only does it provide a transformative learning experience for our students – that we hope they take with them into the field – but the actual, overall health outcomes for the patients are far better with this integrated approach.”

###

Contact: Jennifer Bell, program director, UM Clinical Education, associate professor, School of Physical Therapy and Rehabilitation Science, 406-243-6827, jennifer.bell@mso.umt.edu, or Kate Chapin, UM Center for Children, Families and Workforce Development, kate.chapin@umontana.edu.

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UM / News / UM Culinary Student Crafts Recipe for a Brighter Future

MISSOULA COLLEGE

UM CULINARY STUDENT CRAFTS RECIPE FOR A BRIGHTER FUTURE

18 MARCH 2022

UM Big Sky Culinary Institute student Xavier Gonzales-Graybill has used his passion for baking to chart a new and exciting future for his life.

MISSOULA – Big Sky Culinary Institute student Xavier Gonzales-Graybill is a walking-talking disciple of the rare mix of science and art that makes up the baking process.

His academic happy zone is the University of Montana's **Missoula College** kitchen and bakery,

with its assemblage of high-tech freezers and old-world rolling pins. It's here that Gonzales-Graybill and his wingman, UM freshman Kevin Mayerchak, create sheet pans of cakes, cupcakes, breads and bagels for all Grizzlies to enjoy.

"Baked goods can bring people together," said Gonzales-Graybill, while demonstrating the dough-cutting machine. "The smell of fresh baked goods can bring a sense of peace."

For Gonzales-Graybill, that sense of peace has not always come easy. Adopted as a child after spending time in foster care, he "went down a long road of alcohol and addiction" in his late teens and early 20s. Those addictions led to prison and dark times, he said.

While incarcerated, and with many months to reflect, Gonzales-Graybill said he came to the realization that his true calling was baking.

Gonzales-Graybill enrolled at Missoula College two years ago – his sobriety and schooling going hand-in-hand.

It was a calling that harkened back to his childhood.

"My grandmother is Italian – a complete Sicilian – and a great cook," he explained. "For her birthdays I would try to make



her a birthday cake. It was a boxed cake mix, and I'd make it in the middle of the night. It was super terrible, but I was like 7. Still, I guess you could say I've always had a knack for baking."

Gonzales-Graybill enrolled at Missoula College two years ago – his sobriety and schooling going hand-in-hand. He has since become a baking force of nature at the college and now operates the college's coffee bar, the Iris, and takes requests for custom cakes and other confectionaries.

Along the way, he's made the Dean's List and racked up a 4.0 GPA.

"I wanted to prove a point to me, to my parents, to my probation officer, that I can be somebody again," said Gonzales-Graybill who, in addition to studying culinary arts, is studying business management and entrepreneurship through the [Davidson Honors College](#).

Missoula College's [Big Sky Culinary Institute](#) now has 20 students. It offers two paths for those interested in pursuing education in the culinary arts. The Certificate of Applied Science is for students wanting to work as an entry-level cook – or simply want to advance their cooking skills – and a more advanced associate degree for those, like Gonzales-Graybill, who want to manage and operate a food service business.

Michelle Boller, the college's Business Technology department chair, said Gonzales-Graybill has done "a phenomenal job" with the Iris Coffee Bar and its student staff. It was his idea, she said, to produce the baked goods in-house rather than have them supplied by an outside bakery.

"The coffee bar is doing a lot better this year, and it's become increasingly popular," she said. "Xavier has such ambition and enthusiasm. He is impressive."

Gonzales-Graybill has been instrumental, she adds, in expanding sales for the college's baked goods, including a recent campus cookie kit promotion for Valentine's Day, and he took the lead when the culinary school started selling its baked goods at Lighthouse Espresso.

Chef Instructor Amy Nack has worked with Gonzales-Graybill for four semesters and watched him come into his own in that time. A pastry chef and baker herself, Nack said succeeding in baking requires a unique set of skills.

"You really need to learn patience because you can't rush bread," she said. "Xavier has come to learn that. He's got the artistry, too. His heart is in that.

"He does everything with heart."

That includes Gonzales-Graybill's enthusiasm for planning events as a student life activity coordinator. Student coordinators plan events for fellow students, and Gonzales-Graybill has

orchestrated a number of activities on campus. That includes the Griz Attack outdoor games competition and a Mardi Gras murder mystery party. Baking and event planning go hand-in-hand, he said.

“He plans these events from top to bottom,” said Emily Ferguson-Steger, director of Student Engagement. “He’s as loud and excited as you would want a student life coordinator to be.”

Matt Parkey, restaurant director for the Big Sky Institute, has spent time getting to know Gonzales-Graybill as he made his way through the culinary curriculum and encouraged him to expand the bakery offerings, including one of the house specialties – bagels.

“Xavier has seen more things than most people, and he’s always been very open and real about his past,” Parkey said. “He’s taken the cards that were dealt him and reshuffled the deck.”

When he graduates, Gonzales-Graybill dreams of opening a bakery that caters to pets and their humans. His experiences at the institute – marketing his products, perfecting his craft and setting prices – will be valuable when he opens for business.

In the meantime, he’s anxious to add to the college’s confectionary offerings.

Next on his agenda: bear claws.

“Missoula College has made me a part of its community, they believe in me,” Gonzales-Graybill said. “No other university would have let me do this.”

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MISSOULA – Next fall, four new programs will launch at the Baucus Institute’s **Department of Public Administration and Policy** at the University of Montana.

New programs include a dual Master of Public Administration and Master of Social Work degree program, an undergraduate certificate in public policy, a graduate certificate in poverty policy, and a graduate certificate in law, public administration and policy.

“The top employer in Montana is government,” said Dr. Sara Rinfret, acting dean of UM’s Blewett School of Law and director of the MPA program. “We’re fulfilling our mission to train the best and brightest for careers in public and nonprofit-sector service.”

The dual MPA-MSW degree program combines existing curriculum from both programs, so students can complete a curriculum focused on public administration and social work. While giving students an opportunity for interdisciplinary collaboration, the joint program also prepares them to respond to the unique needs of a rural state like Montana.

“This program benefits students because it bridges social work’s direct practice skills with an emphasis on leadership and management that the MPA brings,” said Jen Molloy, director of the MSW program in the School of Social Work.

MPA-MSW dual degree graduates will be attractive to employers because their education allows them to efficiently allocate resources by hiring one person with a dual skillset, she said. Graduates of the dual degree will be advanced practitioners in both social work and public administration and policy – people prepared to contribute to statewide efforts responding to the complex problems where these fields intersect.

“There is a need for strong leadership, especially around social issues impacting our rural and indigenous communities,” Molloy said. “Students graduating from this program will enter the workforce with an intimate understanding of the needs, concerns and strengths of our communities and will be able to take on leadership roles in agencies that serve and advocate for our most vulnerable populations.”

In addition to the dual degree program, DPAP also will enroll students this fall in three new certificate programs that will provide a competitive advantage for students on the job market.

A new undergraduate certificate in public policy prepares students with the fundamental skills and knowledge necessary for social impact careers in the public sector. The 12-credit

undergraduate certificate teaches leadership skills, policy process and implementation, and data visualization – all focused on solving public-sector problems through data-informed decision-making.

“It’s a field of study that involves analyzing the problems we face as a society and then creating, evaluating and implementing solutions,” Rinfret said.

One of two graduate-level certificates will focus on poverty policy. The poverty policy certificate program provides students with a focus of serving marginalized populations and provides the skills necessary to tackle large-scale societal issues.

“Today’s public servants are tasked with addressing society’s wicked problems, including the causes and consequences of poverty and inequality,” said Christina Barsky, a DPAP assistant professor. “We created this certificate to serve our students and community in developing the practical skills and knowledge required to compassionately confront the incessant public challenge of inequity in American society.”

Drawing on curriculum and expertise from the [Alexander Blewett III School of Law](#) and DPAP, the second new graduate certificate in law, policy and public administration teaches students the fundamental skills important for the profession of public administration, policy and law. These classes provide basic knowledge and skills that enhance the level of professionalism in public administration and law.

“This certificate is built to leverage our strengths in both law and public administration,” said Anthony Johnstone, a UM law professor. “From nonprofit administration to government service and law, many professionals will encounter public policy issues throughout their work. And many of the most important issues confronting our society occur at the intersection of law, policy and public administration.”

From legislation to implementation to policy assessment, this certificate provides a comprehensive view of the public policy process and highlights several of the subject matter areas that are most important to lawyers, public servants and citizens in Montana.

The School of Law’s JD-MPA is one of the largest and fastest-growing joint degrees in the Montana University System, but for students not seeking degree-level credentials, the certificate offers an accessible pathway for law and other graduate students to obtain competencies in law and policy process that complement a broad range of career paths.

“Our goal for the Department of Public Administration and Policy is to train every public sector employee in the state of Montana,” Rinfret said. “These offerings lead to reaching that goal and better serving our state.”

For more information about DPAP and its offerings, visit <https://www.umt.edu/law/mpa>.

###

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UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA

ALWAYS THERE TO HELP: UM'S SARC UPGRADES SERVICES

16 MARCH 2022

Jen Euell directs the Student Advocacy Resource Center (SARC) at UM.

MISSOULA – The calls can come at any time. Jen Euell might be making dinner for her husband and 13-year-daughter or sleeping soundly at 3 a.m. But when she gets calls from work, she always picks up and finds a private place.

She might need to help someone having the worst day of her life.

For the past year, Euell has directed **SARC, the Student Advocacy Resource Center** at the University of Montana. SARC offers counseling services and a 24-hour crisis line (406-243-6559) for students and others dealing with sexual assault, relationship violence, bullying, intimidation or discrimination.

“Those phone calls are a vital part of the work,” she said. “I think all of us at SARC are just committed to the idea that we do not fail people. If they are in a situation that we respond to, and they need us, we are not willing to ever miss that call.”

Euell first came to UM in 1991, eventually earning master's degrees in social work and environmental science. As a student she worked at SARC before launching a career focused on improving equity for women and girls. She founded the GUTS (Girls Using Their Strengths) program, which she ran for 13 years, and then went on to direct programming for YWCA Missoula and the Women's Foundation of Montana. But when the SARC director position became available, she jumped at the opportunity to return to her UM roots and help upgrade an organization that has meant so much to her.

“I love it here, I love the people, and I love the fact that there are so many people striving to make positive change on an ongoing basis, including our students, who are the biggest change-makers,” she said. “This role definitely offers me a personal connection again with our students in my day-to-day work.”

The SARC 24-hour-crisis line calls this phone, which is forwarded after hours to someone always willing to help.

That work is never easy. SARC often is the confidential first call for students and others in the community who have experienced trauma or are suffering. They might be



struggling to navigate the legal system or work with the University's **Office of Equal Opportunity and Title IX**. Housed in UM's Curry Health Center, SARC is there to help, and Euell has spent her first year overseeing improvements to this vital organization.

"If a student has the courage to come forward and say, 'I need help,' it's the University's responsibility to be there, and that's what SARC does," she said. "We are the ones who are there. We are the first-line responders."

In the past year, SARC has doubled its staff to four. That includes Euell, an outreach educator, a program coordinator and direct service coordinator. Euell also oversees seven graduate student interns who provide counseling and advocacy services. These students learn valuable job skills while working toward a master's in counseling, a master of clinical social work or a doctorate in psychology.

"I feel like my work with the student counselors is so rewarding," Euell said. "They are amazing humans who are learning to be care providers and professionals in the world. I learn from them every day, and I'm here for them when they've had a really hard client conversation. I have the opportunity to help and observe their development and success, and, yeah, it's pretty amazing."

SARC also engages about 10 undergraduate advocate volunteers. These students do outreach work like bystander training – helping prevent sexual assaults before they happen – or trainings

in diversity-equity-inclusion or healthy relationships. Euell said organizations such as fraternities, sororities, the Women's Resource Center or Grizzly Athletics often request such resources, adding that undergraduate advocates come from a wide variety of majors across campus.

"They just want to help – to have a work experience where they really feel like they are making a difference," Euell said.

Gabriella Ji, a fourth-year student in UM's [Clinical Psychology Ph.D. Program](#), started working at SARC as a peer advocate and then progressed to clinical intern work – conducting therapy sessions, holding groups and providing Title IX advocacy for clients she sees on a regular basis.

"I have become very interested in trauma-focused work," Ji said. "Being in school, it's great to learn the theoretical backgrounds of theories and how therapies come to be, but at SARC I definitely get to have a firsthand, more-empirical learning experience."

Ji said SARC made her realize that many people in the community don't have the resources she took for granted, like access to shelter, food, water and other basic needs. At one point she worked with a woman who had been sexually assaulted while living on the street. Ji held the woman's hand during a medical forensic examination, trying to help her not be further traumatized. She also worked with a team that connected the woman to the Missoula Food Bank, a female-only shelter and a job-training program.

"We ignited the flame of hope for that person," Ji said. "Working at SARC, I've also seen the traditional therapy we do, over time, have a really strong effect on our clients. We get to see their growth, which is really rewarding and amazing."

Euell said SARC employs a person-centered, empowerment model.

"Oftentimes, our clients feel like they were in a situation where they weren't able to keep themselves safe and didn't feel like they had control over the situation," she said. "In order for them to feel safe and take back that control in their life, our job is basically to say we are here to support you and whatever decision you make. Here are the potential options, and this is what they would look like."

She stresses that SARC is a totally confidential service. Staff members are not required to report anything to the authorities unless someone's life is in danger or a child has been hurt. The victim decides whether any charges advance to the authorities. Euell said it's not uncommon for police officers to visit the SARC office, so staff members can sit with a victim while a report is made. In this way they don't need to visit a police station or have anyone see them talking to an officer.

Euell said the 24-hour crisis line would not be possible without a valuable community partnership with **YWCA Missoula**. She said SARC has seven shared cellphones, and someone is always on duty when the University is in session. The YWCA, staffed by community advocates with parallel training, also helps with the crisis line.

"We don't always have our student interns available when school is not in session or it's a holiday," Euell said, "so our partnership with YWCA Missoula is essential. And while our counseling services are for UM students, anyone in the community can call the crisis line. We will never turn away someone in need."

SARC also partners closely with the **First Step Resource Center** at Providence St. Patrick Hospital in Missoula, which can collect forensic evidence of assault or abuse. (The phone number for that organization is 406-329-5776.) SARC offers First Step response in two-week shifts that alternate with YWCA Missoula.

Euell said more staffing has increased SARC's capacity, and the office also has moved to a new electronic records system. She also is helping implement **Culture of Respect**, a national program that is conducting a two-year review of SARC. Culture of Respect studies UM's services as it trains SARC in best practices. The organization also is undergoing a strategic planning process that will help it provide more and better prevention outreach services, including a BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, people of color) liaison to better serve those populations.

"I think we are providing better services than ever before," Euell said. "We have people with more experience and expertise than ever before, and Culture of Respect will help us ensure we are in line with the best practices across the nation."

And always be there to take those calls.



###

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UM / News / UM Accounting Student Brings Military Experience to Business Startup

COLLEGE OF BUSINESS

UM ACCOUNTING STUDENT BRINGS MILITARY EXPERIENCE TO BUSINESS STARTUP

15 MARCH 2022

UM graduate student Charles Luther, a Marine veteran, is earning a Master of Accountancy in the College of Business while also stitching products for his recently launched outdoor equipment business.

MISSOULA – Ask University of Montana students what consumes their time and most would put studying somewhere near the top.

Studying *and* sewing? Not so much.

But such is life these days for graduate student Charles Luther, who is earning a **Master of Accountancy** in UM's **College of Business** while also stitching products for his recently launched outdoor equipment business.

That business, **Red Patch Outdoors**, claimed second place in last year's prestigious **John Ruffatto Business Challenge**, hosted by UM, and earning Luther and co-founder and UM alum Ethan Pateman, a check for \$7,500 to reinvest in their business. Red Patch Outdoors produces handmade belts and storage pouches for outdoor sports.

Luther describes their products as "outdoor gear meets Legos."

Luther sews Red Patch gear in the basement of his home.

Right now, the company is looking for someone to do the cutting and sewing because it's a bottleneck, said Luther, who used his wife's sewing machine to make the first prototypes.



"If a photo is worth 1,000 words, a prototype is worth a million," he explained.

Entrepreneurship and college were a long time coming for Luther, who joined the Marines out of high school. Originally stationed at Camp Pendleton, he served as a logistics officer and did a tour in Afghanistan and one on board the USS Comstock.

“One thing you learn in the Marines is no matter what job they give you, you get it done,” Luther said. “It made me the person that I am today.”

After his service, Luther took that Marine determination to Missoula in 2013 to start the next chapter in his life. His older sister had attended UM. For Luther, an avid outdoorsman, the Garden City seemed like the “promised land” compared to his hometown in central North Dakota.

“The winters in Missoula are so much milder and it’s beautiful,” he recalls. “I didn’t care what happened, I was coming here.”

Luther began his initial studies at UM’s Missoula College in 2016 while working at the KettleHouse’s former northside taproom. He started out on the canning line. Soon enough, brewery fans were sipping two permanent brews that Luther went on to make as the KettleHouse R&D brewer: SnowBlind White Stout and Fish On! Juicy Montana Pale Ale. He crafted 60 brews in all.

In the fall of 2019, about the time the northside tap house closed, Luther enrolled full time in UM’s undergraduate program, selecting a rather hefty list of majors – accounting, finance, and management and entrepreneurship. To earn the management major, the college requires students to develop a business idea.

For that, Red Patch Outdoors was born.

Drawing on his experiences with the outdoors, Luther knew every sport required its own unique equipment – you can’t hunt with a fly-fishing vest – and that translates into a massive investment in money and storage space. A better idea, he and partner Pateman reasoned, would be to build an interchangeable system of belts and compatible pouches that mimics those used in the military.

*The name Red Patch
reflects Luther’s service
in the Marines.*

He chose the
name Red Patch
Outdoors as a nod
to his time in the



Marines, where the bulk of his work was transporting cargo and personnel to places around the world. His predecessors in the World War II Battle of Guadalcanal, he explains, had to land troops on the beaches and devised a unique form of identification.

“The Marines needed a way to designate who were supposed to stay at the beach and continue managing the landings and who were meant to continue,” Luther said. “The landing support Marines added small red patches to their hats, pants and jackets. Landing support still use the patches and they have been more colloquially known as the ‘Red Patchers.’”

UM Associate Professor Lisa Eiler, director of UM’s MACct program, said Luther has the perfect entrepreneurial mindset.

“He sees a problem and solves it,” she said. “He asks: What do you need? I will build it.”

Eiler remembers online classes during the pandemic with Luther, who tuned in from what looked like his basement. Only later did she learn it also was his sewing studio and that he was veteran who has spent time in Afghanistan.

“He is just a really humble person,” she said. “And he’s one of the nicest people and definitely the kind of student we want to come back to UM. He’s given so much for this country.”

Like the majority of the students in the MACct program, Luther participated in internships as

part of his studies. He did a summer internship with the Montana State Legislative Audit division and with national accounting firm Wipfli for the spring 2020 tax season. Both experiences reconfirmed that accounting is his preferred profession. He likes the concise processing of numbers, he said, where auditing is just too gray.

“I think the internship program is key to being able to make an informed decision about what you want to do with your degree because at least 50% of knowing what you want to do is knowing what you don’t want to do,” Luther said. “This program does an amazing job connecting willing applicants with employers, and it seems to me like a poor decision not to take advantage of the opportunity.”

While a profession in accounting is definitely in Luther’s future when he graduates this spring, Red Patch will continue to be his inspirational “side hustle.” Right now, he and Pateman are working on a fly-fishing line of accessories that will add “Georgia Peach” to the company’s existing color palette of orange, green, tan and camouflage.

“My wife helps with the color choices,” Luther said with a grin. “I am very colorblind.”

###

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UM / News / Mansfield Lecture Features Condoleezza Rice, Mike McFaul

UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA

MANSFIELD LECTURE FEATURES CONDOLEEZZA RICE, MIKE MCFAUL

15 MARCH 2022

MISSOULA – The 2022 Mansfield Lecture at the University of Montana will feature two of the country’s leading voices on democracy, Condoleezza Rice and Michael McFaul, on Monday, April 18.

The two will present “Fostering Freedom at Home and Abroad: A Conversation with Condoleezza Rice and Michael McFaul” live via Zoom at 11:30 a.m. MDT. Their conversation will focus on the hard work of creating and sustaining democracy, with topics ranging from the importance of engaging rural America to Russian aggression in Ukraine.

The event is free and open to the public, but Zoom seats are limited. Advance registration is required at <https://www.umt.edu/mansfield/>.

Rice served as the secretary of state under President George Bush. McFaul served as ambassador to Russia under President Barack Obama. At a time when people around the world are wondering whether democracy is in decline, Rice and McFaul will share their insights from experiences as policymakers, scholars and citizens in order to put democracy's challenges into perspective. In keeping with the vital role of higher education in nurturing a healthy democratic society, the conversation will be moderated by UM President Seth Bodnar.

"The University of Montana embraces its role in supporting a knowledgeable and engaged citizenry," Bodnar said. "The Mansfield Lecture is just one way we support our students and the community in engaging grand challenges of our nation and the world."

Mansfield Center Executive Director Deena Mansour said it was an honor to host two renowned leaders in national security at this Mansfield Lecture.

"Our work emphasizes civil exchanges of ideas from a diverse range of viewpoints, the importance of democratic institutions and the role ethical values play in public life," Mansour said. "Featuring a Republican and a Democrat in civil discourse is critical to this mission."

From the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union to the ongoing struggle for human rights in the Middle East, Rice has served on the front lines of history. As a child, she was an eyewitness to a third awakening of freedom when her hometown of Birmingham, Alabama, became the epicenter of the civil rights movement.

McFaul was born and raised in Montana. As President Barack Obama's adviser on Russian affairs, he helped craft the United States' policy known as "reset," which fostered new and unprecedented collaboration between the two countries. Then as U.S. ambassador to Russia from 2012 to 2014, he had a front-row seat to changing relations with Russia as Vladimir Putin returned to the presidency.

Both Rice and McFaul currently are based at the Hoover Institution at Stanford University.

Founded by an Act of Congress in 1983, the Mansfield Center fosters globally minded leaders

of integrity in honoring Mike Mansfield's legacy of patriotic statesmanship. As the U.S. Senate's longest-serving majority leader during polarizing times, Mansfield's steady hand was a stabilizing force for our country. The Mansfield Lecture was founded in 1968 in honor of Mansfield's critical role as a statesman. Recent speakers included Dr. Anthony Fauci and Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Nicholas Kristof. Early distinguished speakers included Milton Friedman, Daniel Ellsberg and Barbara Tuchman.

###

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UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA

UM TO PRESENT TWO HONORARY DOCTORATES THIS SPRING

11 MARCH 2022

MISSOULA – One served as CEO of Australia’s largest retailer. The other grew the largest bank in Montana. Both have lived lives of generosity and community building, and each will receive an honorary doctorate from the University of Montana.

On March 11, the Montana Board of Regents approved UM’s request to present businessman Dennis K. Eck with an Honorary Doctorate of Business and banker James “Jim” R. Scott with an Honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters.

The honors will be conferred during **UM Commencement ceremonies** on Saturday, May 14. The two also will serve as Commencement speakers, with Eck speaking to graduates at the 9 a.m. ceremony and Scott speaking at the 2 p.m. ceremony.

“Dennis and Jim embody what we call ‘the heart of a grizzly,’” UM President Seth Bodnar said. “They have led lives of impact, becoming leaders in their chosen fields and spearheading efforts to lead positive change in their communities and here at our University. It is our great privilege to present each with an honorary doctorate.”

Dennis Eck

A native of Wolf Point, **Eck** graduated from UM in 1967 with a degree in history and political science. His meteoric business career launched in grocery retail, when he became manager of produce buying with Jewel Companies Inc. He rose through the ranks, becoming Jewel’s executive vice president for American stores.

Eck later assumed executive positions with The Vons Companies and then Coles Myer in Australia. With the latter company, he served in several roles, eventually rising to chief executive officer and director. As a leader, he actively sought to provide equitable access to education and career advancement.

Recent professional positions include interim chief executive officer and non-executive chairman of the board of Ulta Beauty Inc., the largest U.S. beauty retailer. He also has been a principal with DKE Retail Studies since 2001.



In her nomination letter, Cindy Williams, president and CEO of the UM Foundation, said Eck was a recognized retail industry leader who developed emerging technologies related to e-

commerce, loyalty programs using electronic data, automated bookkeeping systems, web-based training tools and virtual warehousing.

Dennis and his wife, Gretchen, a Butte native, have contributed more than \$10 million to UM. They funded a renovation and update of the south wing of UM's Liberal Arts Building, which was renamed Eck Hall in their honor. They also funded the University's S.E.A. Change Initiative, which prepares students to be change-drivers and next-generation leaders who champion gender equity, and they established a scholarship fund for Native Americans.

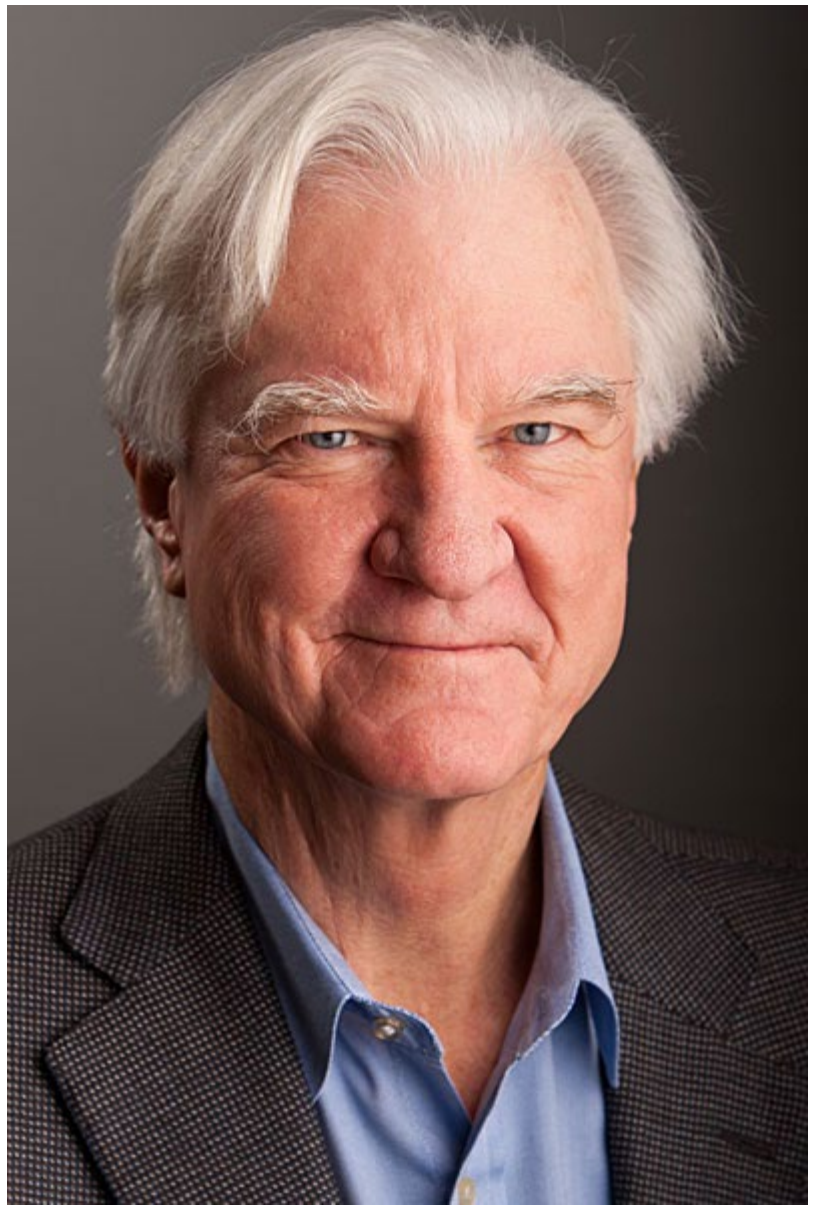
The Ecks were the recipients of the 2019 Neil S. Bucklew Presidential Service Award for their service and commitment to UM. In 2019, Dennis received UM's Distinguished Alumni Award.

In his nomination letter for Eck, Christopher Comer, a biology professor and former dean of UM's College of Humanities & Sciences, wrote, "Dennis embodies the best we hope for from a liberally educated member of the Griz family: generosity of spirit, demonstrated respect for diversity of talent that people from all backgrounds bring to solving the problems, and a zest for advancing projects in a sustainable relationship with the environment."

Jim Scott

A native of Sheridan, Wyoming, **Scott** studied at the University of Denver and the University of Wyoming. He and his wife, Chris, moved to Billings in 1976, where he launched his exceptional 45-year career, growing First Interstate BancSystem into the most expansive banking group in Montana and one of the largest in the Pacific Northwest, while remaining true to Scott family values and a commitment to the communities served.

In Billings, Scott has been involved with downtown urban planning, the Billings Centennial, the Great Montana Centennial Cattle Drive and community-based clean-air initiatives. He also worked to support Billings' Alberta Bair Theatre and the



Yellowstone Art Museum.

Both Jim and Chris strongly support science-based conservation and are lifelong supporters of the Nature

Conservancy. In the 1990s, Jim became heavily involved with philanthropy, founding the First Interstate Foundation and chairing the Homer and Mildred Scott Foundation after the death of his father.

Scott was deeply influenced growing up near the Crow Indian Reservation. In the '80s he began working on community and economic development on the Crow and Northern Cheyenne reservations and in the '90s served on the board of the American Indian College Fund. He proudly served on the board of the Montana Community Foundation where he became a close friend of Elouise Cobell, who chartered the first tribally owned bank in the nation and eventually won the largest class action suit in history against the U.S. government for mismanagement of Native trust assets.

"I have had the gift of meeting some amazing Native people and families," Scott said. "I am deeply moved by their ancestors' stories in the development of our country, by their economic

and cultural reality today, and their commitment to achieve a more just future.”

The Scotts helped create the Foundation for Community Vitality, which supports leaders and communities on the Crow, Northern Cheyenne and Blackfeet reservations.

UM has strongly benefitted from Jim’s engagement, guidance and generosity. He has helped fund the University’s O’Connor Center for the Rocky Mountain West, Flathead Lake Biological Station, Payne Family Native American Center, UM Foundation, Crown of the Continent & Greater Yellowstone Initiative and “This is Montana” community vitality program.

###

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COLLEGE OF FORESTRY AND CONSERVATION

UM INSTITUTE GAUGES ATTITUDES TOWARD MONTANA TOURISM

09 MARCH 2022

A 2021 survey from UM's Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research found Montanans still support tourism, but there are growing concerns about overcrowding.

MISSOULA – A recent University of Montana survey found state residents still generally support tourism. However, there are growing worries about overcrowding, quality of life and newcomers flooding the state due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Since 1992, UM's **Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research** has conducted annual

surveys of Montana residents on their attitudes toward tourism within the state. This study is conducted from October to December to track perceptions of the tourism industry in Montana.

In addition to a standard set of questions about their attitudes toward tourism in 2021, residents were asked about the economic benefits of tourism, travelers and travel behavior during the COVID-19 pandemic.

A large majority of Montanans (71%) still agree that the overall benefits of tourism outweigh the negative impacts. Similarly, more than eight out of 10 residents agree that tourism promotion by the state benefits their communities economically.

That question, however, saw a great deal of variation in its level of agreement when different travel regions of the state were compared. For example, the areas with the highest level of agreement are closest to Yellowstone National Park, with the lowest level of agreement being in the Missouri River travel region in northeast Montana.

When it comes to a sense of overcrowding due to visitors in 2021, residents expressed the highest level of agreement since the start of the annual survey nearly 30 years ago, with 56% of residents agreeing that the state is becoming overcrowded because of more tourists. This is the first time more residents have agreed than disagreed with this statement. When compared to pre-pandemic levels, this represents a 75% increase since 2019. The residents who live closest to Montana's two national parks had the highest levels of agreement regarding crowding.

When it comes to quality of life for Montana residents, more respondents than ever expressed concern, with just under 40% agreeing that quality of life would improve if tourism increased. When looking at trend data for this statement, sentiment began to shift toward disagreement before COVID-19 began – only to be exacerbated by pandemic conditions.

For the second year in a row, residents were asked questions related to COVID-19 and travel. Less than half of Montana residents stated they are concerned about visitors in their community, and just under half agreed they were more likely to travel within Montana than out of state due to the pandemic.

Compared to 2020 data, residents in 2021 were less concerned about visitors in their community and were more likely to leave Montana for travel – showing some easing of pandemic worries.

Finally, residents had the chance to share comments with surveyors, and many noted that the crowding they perceive is not necessarily from tourism and visitors, but from those who chose to move to Montana during COVID-19. These residents also expressed the sentiment that tourism within the state is good economically, but the influx of new residents is having an impact on housing costs and affordability for locals.

For the full report, visit https://scholarworks.umt.edu/itrr_pubs/428/. All ITRR reports are available online at <http://itrr.umt.edu/>.

###

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Erim Gomez, assistant professor of wildlife biology in the W.A. Franke College of Forestry and Conservation at the University of Montana, has a personal and professional mission to diversify his discipline.

Gomez
instructs
a



classroom in UM's W.A. Franke College of Forestry and Conservation.

MISSOULA – The term for a traditional Latin American men’s shirt is a guayabera. The shirt, most often worn for formal events, is distinguished by two rows of embroidered patterns on the front and back. Understanding the garment’s history might be important to know as a student in Erim Gomez’s classes at the University of Montana, because he wears them almost every day.

The UM assistant professor of **wildlife biology** in UM’s **W.A. Franke College of Forestry and Conservation** shares that he likes to bring his “whole self” to the classroom. That includes his Mexican heritage alongside a larger goal of diversifying the next generation of land managers, conservationists and wildlife biologists. For Gomez, being a person of color in front of students at UM is a first step toward greater representation in the higher education and within STEM, he said.

“We need everyone in this field – and we want them here at the University of Montana,” Gomez said. “I’m talking about students from underrepresented backgrounds who don’t see themselves in the field – Indigenous students, LGBTQ, people of color and first-generation college students. You have a place here and the larger field of conservation needs you.”

Gomez is quick to laugh and talks as excitedly about amphibians as he does about why federal

internships should pay a living wage. At UM, Gomez started a chapter for the Society for Advancement of Chicanos/Hispanics and Native Americans in Science, or SACNAS. The group fosters the success of underrepresented students to attain advanced degrees, careers and positions of leadership in STEM. This semester, Gomez began a teaching lecture that shared the brutal history of the Swan Valley Massacre of 1908 as an introduction to the history of land management in Montana.

“Only one student in my class knew about this event,” Gomez said, “which was a wakeup call for me and the students that we need to be talking more about the troubling ways land management in this country has failed – so that we can do better.”

Gomez sat down with UM News to share his thoughts about DEI (Diversity, Equity and Inclusion) efforts at UM and why sharing stories of complicated histories when it comes to land and people, will only make the future brighter.

UM News: You're a member of the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee within UM's forestry college. What kind of work does that committee engage in, and why is it important for UM?

We do several different things. Right now, we are surveying the college's students, staff and faculty to determine what the most pressing DEI needs are, and why these issues are important to our college. We're also holding listening sessions that are run by students, for students, so that they can share more about DEI with us in a comfortable way. It's important to really think about DEI issues at the college level, and I'm proud of the work that we're doing. Of course, there's a lot more work to be done. We're just getting started.

UM News: You have a rich, cultural heritage of being Mexican-American, a first-generation college student and the son of immigrants. How do you fold these experiences into your teaching and scholarship?

I've attended three universities. Never once I have had a faculty of color teaching one of my STEM classes or a Latino professor – not even in my Spanish classes. I bring my whole self to my class, which I think and hope all of us can do. My history and culture affect the things I teach about. In every single one of my classes, I'm concerned with the big idea about how we protect ecosystem wellbeing alongside human well-being. I am most concerned about the human well-being part of this discipline, often because in the conservation arena, we have neglected to think about Indigenous communities or communities that don't have as much

political or social power when it comes to conservation. I give a more holistic history of the conservation movement in my classes, including addressing highly problematic views by conservation heroes. These include difficult views of people of color from the “fathers of conversation” like John Muir and Gifford Pinchot. I bring these stories into my classes, because for our Indigenous students or students of color, they already know these stories. And if they recognize that we’re not telling them in the classroom, then they’re going to know we’re not giving an, accurate view of history.

What being a person of color in front of my students means, is that I hope no matter who they are, or if their parents were farm workers or immigrants or are people of color, that they, too, can become a wildlife biologist and achieve their professional and academic dreams.

Representation matters. The further you get into the academic journey, the more of a trailblazer you are (for many, this includes even the undergraduate level). The farther you go, the fewer people like you are encountered. I’m one of the few Latino wildlife biologists in the country, and I hope it empowers all of my students – even those with disabilities. I’ve been diagnosed with learning disabilities that include difficulty with reading, writing and ADHD. I share that with my students so they are comfortable knowing that yes, there will be challenges – but we will empower them. We need the next-generation of conservation and wildlife biology to look different than it has.

UM News: The land management and conservation disciplines are not immune to histories of social injustice and inequity. For UM students who will serve as next-generation land managers, how can they benefit from having a deeper cultural awareness and traditional ways of knowing when it comes to our natural environment?

I’ve witnessed national leaders in the fields of biology talking about ecological issues at a prestigious conference unknowingly and simultaneously insulting traditional ways of knowing. I don’t think this particular person realized how problematic his views are. And I share this story because we are in a moment of a major cultural awareness, and we can’t be making those same mistakes. If we think about the idea of wilderness, from the Western perspective, it’s that it has been “untouched” by man. However, there’s millions of people living in North America, and that idea of wilderness to many, most especially for Indigenous people, doesn’t quite make sense. They’ve been living on the land and managing it for millennia. It’s important for students to know that humans have been part of North American landscape for more than 10,000 years or more. We have evidence of this, and we need to incorporate that into our knowledge and teaching. These are also really good conversations for our next-generation land managers and conservationists to be having and to be thinking more about. To be a successful land manager,

you need to have buy-in from your community. Indigenous people and people of color are stakeholders who have been historically neglected in these conversations. The field is starting to realize this.

UM News: You've mentioned UM as the "ultimate" program in the country in wildlife biology and teaching in this program as a dream job Why UM? Now that you're here, what do you want to accomplish?

I've known about this program for 22 years. There's a rich history here. I sit in the office of a former chief of the U.S. Forest Service, Jack W. Thomas. The reason I wanted to become a wildlife biologist was because of a video about Grizzly bears from the Craighead brothers. [John Craighead was the former director of UM's Montana Cooperative Wildlife Research Unit and a former UM faculty member.] To have those connections and that legacy here is inspiring. Everyone in wildlife biology knows about the University of Montana wildlife biology program. We enroll students from across the country, including all 50 states and several countries that come here to study at UM. We have great access to the outdoors, wilderness, national forests and all kinds of opportunities to do research in our own backyard.

In our immediate environment, there's also a lot of intriguing issues and problems, including hosting the largest collection of superfunds sites in the country (from Milltown State Park to Butte). We have some of the nation's best environmental experts (my colleagues) researching heavy metal issues along the Clark Fork River, with enormous ecological restoration going on. We are home to beautiful landscapes, none of which are untouched, and we still have beautiful ecosystems filled with opportunities to figure out how to restore some of the ecosystems that we've negatively impacted. It's truly a dream to be here.

UM News: How do you find ways to connect to your culture in Missoula?

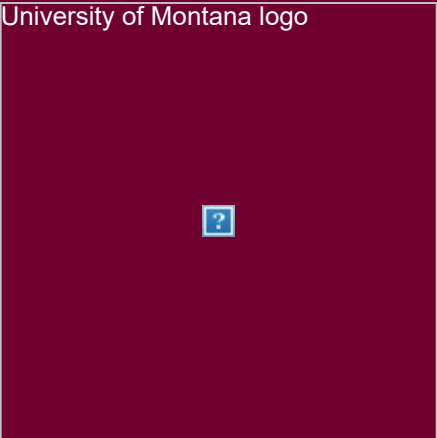
Latino dancing! Dancing is part of my soul. I have found a wonderful community here in Missoula, and I like get my students up and moving. I've connected with a program called Here Montana, managed by the City of Missoula, that organizes outdoor recreation adventures and education for the local BIPOC community. I've guided a raft, participated in skiing and backpacking events, and we've hosted opportunities for different groups to participate and make deeper connections across campus.

Follow Gomez on Instagram [@cumbiaconservationist](#) and on Twitter [@erimgomez](#).

###

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UM / News / UM Visiting Professor Brings Western History to Life

COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES AND SCIENCES

UM VISITING PROFESSOR BRINGS WESTERN HISTORY TO LIFE

01 MARCH 2022

Historian Eric Zimmer, UM's new A.B. Hammond Visiting Assistant Professor of Western United States History, will spend the next 18 months bringing the region's complicated history to the forefront of current day discussions in the classroom and community.

MISSOULA – For historian Eric Zimmer, history is more than a set of scholarly books lining an academic's office shelf. It's a living, breathing entity that informs everyday life.

Zimmer, the University of Montana's new A.B. Hammond Visiting Assistant Professor of

Western United States History, will spend the next 18 months teaching at UM and bringing the region's complicated history to the forefront of current day discussions within our community.

"Eric is a dynamic historian of the U.S. West," said UM Associate Professor Kyle Volk, chair of UM's **Department of History**. "We couldn't be more thrilled that he's joined us and will be helping to reestablish Western history as a cornerstone of our department and its contributions to humanities education on and off campus."

Prior to joining the Department of History, housed in UM's College of Humanities and Sciences, Zimmer worked as a senior historian for a historical consulting firm. There he used narrative, digital, oral and exhibit-based projects for organizations across the country, looking to present historical stories in engaging ways that emphasized the relevance of history to contemporary needs. Zimmer hopes to do the same at UM.

"The University of Montana is a quintessentially Western university," said Zimmer, a Rapid City, South Dakota native who earned his Ph.D. in history at the University of Iowa. "You're surrounded by public lands, and this university has



an exceptional record of producing students and faculty working in the American West. I hope to do justice to this tradition and join the conversation."

Zimmer calls himself "a student of Western history," which he points out is "a very human story" with a lot of relevance for the present. Much of his scholarship and community-based work have been projects rooted in Indigenous histories.

He currently is writing a book on the successful and historic efforts of the Meskwaki Nation to buy back its land in Iowa and has served as a volunteer researcher for the Rapid City Indian Boarding School Lands Project.

This Indigenous-led community research project is dedicated to identifying the unmarked graves of Native children who attended the Rapid City Indian School – built to assimilate Native children – and honoring those who died under the policy’s harsh conditions. The project also addresses land discrepancies with Rapid City, which has been working with Native stakeholders to develop a multimillion-dollar plan to resolve outstanding land issues. The project also is planning to build a large, outdoor memorial to the children who died at the boarding school a century ago.

“Lakota families in Rapid City have been telling the story of these schools for 75 years, but no one was listening,” said Zimmer, who has given dozens of talks on the history of the boarding school, its land and connections to ongoing challenges in the community. “There is more knowledge now, and I’ve been pleasantly surprised that younger people want to hear it.”

As his body of work suggests, Zimmer takes a particular approach to studying the past.

Volk said Zimmer is very much a “public historian. He is all about involving the public in the creation of history and also making sure that history reaches the broader public, not just the ivory tower.”

Zimmer’s work as a public historian makes him a perfect fit for UM, which is the only place in Montana offering undergraduate and graduate students the opportunity to earn a **Certificate in Public History**, Volk said. The Department of History’s program trains students in the methods, theories and ethics that guide how historians exhibit history in public spaces and use their expertise to make history understandable and accessible to the wider public.

This semester, in addition to a historical research seminar focused on the American West, Zimmer is teaching an upper division course titled Global Indigenous Struggles Since 1900. The course addresses the many common injustices and experiences faced by Native communities – climate change, mining, government oppression – while also talking about their shared strategies for addressing these challenges.

“It can be a trap to only look at negative things,” Zimmer said. “While those stories are certainly there and they need to be told, we also need to talk about the incredible resilience of

Indigenous peoples. Resilience in their art forms, in their stories, all the way up to organizing on an international level.”

Zimmer has been outside the college classroom for a few years and finds today’s students more keenly aware of contemporary challenges facing Native peoples and other historically marginalized groups. With growing national discourse on historical issues such as those surrounding the place for Confederate statues in modern society and systematic racism in the United States, students today are challenging the literature and ideas around them. For Zimmer, that’s a good thing.

“It’s refreshing to get new perspectives – what students hope to get out of their degrees, what jobs they want, what issues are important to them,” he said. “It’s definitely an inspiration to my work as a public historian.”

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