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UM Music Student Overcomes Obstacles to Follow Passion for Performance

Music has played a major part in Andrew Kagerer’s life. The UM student has studied piano since he was a very young child, and he’s played the trumpet for almost a decade.

MISSOULA – To say music has played a major part in Andrew Kagerer’s life would be an epic understatement.
The University of Montana student has studied piano since he was a young child, and he’s played the trumpet for almost a decade. His family owns a music store in Anchorage, Alaska, and his parents met when his mother took her broken flute to have it repaired at the family shop.

A future in the arts seemed an almost certainty for Kagerer, who had researched music conservatories while finishing high school.

But then, as often happens, life threw him a curve, leading him to enroll at UM not in music, but in pre-pharmacy.

Kagerer explains matter-of-factly that an injury to his face from improper playing techniques and a rare metals allergy made it difficult, if not impossible, to play brass instruments.

“I thought to myself, well, what do I do know?” Kagerer recalls. “I loved my science classes, and I had an uncle who was a pharmacist, so that’s what I chose. My parents were a bit shocked at first, but they were super supportive. Having lived in the music world, they knew a lot of professional musicians who didn’t make it.”

Kagerer looked at several universities to study pharmacy. He fell in love with Missoula and UM.

But as he successfully made his way through his pre-pharm studies, music was never far
away, and he began to practice again in the fall of 2018 thanks to an upgrade to his trumpet.

“Mouthpieces are brass with silver plating, which I am allergic to,” Kagerer said. “I tried plastic for a while, but it doesn’t respond the same. I now have one that is made of titanium and that worked.”

Today, he is studying piano and trumpet and playing in a number of ensembles, including perhaps the largest of them all – the Grizzly Marching Band, where he serves as a section leader.

Major renovations to the Music Building’s ensemble rooms have made playing and practicing a more professional experience, Kagerer said.

Between classes, lessons and late-evening rehearsals, Kagerer puts in long hours at the School of Music building. As he puts it, he’s in “one building, all day, every day.”

The time spent, he said, has become significantly more pleasant and professional thanks to the ongoing major renovations to the Music Building made possible by alumni donors. Within the past year, many of the rooms where Kagerer and his fellow students rehearse have undergone upgrades – the first since the building was constructed in 1953. Improvements included reconstruction of the facility’s two largest ensemble rooms, as well as a suite of basement-level practice rooms.

Additional renovations, including additional practice rooms, classrooms, the recital hall and
Kagerer has a full appreciation for what the improvements have meant to the students and faculty.

“The old spaces were falling apart and very loud. It felt like something you would see in middle school,” he said. “The new spaces feel so high class. There’s not a lot of reverberations. They are great for recording.

“It’s just a blast to play in them.”

In addition to playing instruments, Kagerer also repairs them. He even built his own trumpet, with an added fourth valve, said Jim Smart, UM’s director of bands and trumpet.

“Andrew has an insatiable appetite for music of all kinds,” Smart said. “He is so curious and has a drive to explore at a high level.”

That drive, he adds, inspires fellow students.

“The biggest thing he brings for others is to listen to him play,” Smart said. “Not just how he plays, but the intent he brings to playing. He is very expressive.”

Margery Whatley, an adjunct professor of piano, started teaching in the fall and considers it a stroke of luck to have Kagerer as one of her first students. She tutors him every week and is impressed not only with his high level of play but also with his affability and humbleness. His ability to cross genres is also remarkable.

“He’s actually introduced me to new repertoires,” she added.

As to next steps when he graduates, Kagerer may teach or he may go on to graduate school to ultimately work at the collegiate level.

“I am super passionate to share what I do with others,” he said of teaching. “And to see that spark – to ignite it in others – is exciting.”
UM Music Student Overcomes Obstacles to Follow Passion for Performance

To make a gift in support of Music Building upgrades, contact Director of Development Cate Sundeen at 406-243-4990 or cate.sundeen@supportum.org.

Contact: Dave Kuntz, UM director of strategic communications, 406-243-5659, dave.kuntz@umontana.edu.
UM Music Student Overcomes Obstacles to Follow Passion for Performance
Kyle Brekke, a U.S. Marine Corps veteran, majors in forestry at the University of Montana.

**MISSOULA** – Kyle Brekke admits feeling lost when he first found Missoula.

A Minnesota native, Brekke kicked off his senior year of high school by signing up for the U.S. Marines. During five subsequent years in the infantry, he was stationed in Hawaii and deployed to Hong Kong, the Philippines, Korea and Japan. Afterwards he bounced around colleges in California, becoming an unhappy economics major.

“It was a weird stage in my life,” the veteran said. “I kind of dropped out. Then COVID hit.”
Brekke decided to return to Minnesota. He had always found solace in the outdoors, so he and his pickup camper took a circuitous, soul-searching route home that passed through Missoula. A friend showed him around town, and he walked across the University of Montana campus beneath looming Mount Sentinel.

“It felt right,” he said. “I was thinking about a forestry degree, and as soon as I got back to Minnesota, I applied.”

Brekke isn’t alone. More than 1,400 military-affiliated students attend UM, which this year earned a Gold ranking for being a Military Friendly School from MilitaryFriendly.com. He learned right away why UM earned the designation.

“I applied to all the big forestry schools, and the communication process was really smooth for me here at UM,” said Brekke, now a junior in the University’s W.A. Franke College of Forestry and Conservation. “An adviser put me in touch with a veteran in the forestry school, and he told me all about things and sold me on it. I didn’t get that from any other school I applied to.”

That same adviser, Darryl Lee, helped Brekke land a job with UM’s Military and Veteran Services Office. In that role he helps other veterans like himself transition to university life. This includes helping them process their benefits and getting them signed up for everything from health care and housing to email.

“We even help them get to class and decide where they want to sit in class,” he said. “Some of them are older and getting back into all that can be a struggle. The main thing is we try to have other students helping them who have basically lived through the same experience.”

The Military and Veterans Services Office is located in a house at 1000 E. Beckwith Ave. on the edge of campus. It’s a base of operations where veterans can share experiences and support one another. Brekke said they offer a lounge, coffee station and television, and the basement has a bank of computers where veterans can study and work on assignments.

“UM really provides a special learning environment for military and veteran students because we clearly understand where our students are coming from while empowering them to get where they want to go,” said Patrick Beckwith, the West Point Military Academy graduate who directs UM’s Military and Veterans Services Office. “We earned the Military Friendly Gold designation because we recognize our military and veteran students are a core component of
Beckwith said his office actively works to recruit veterans and active-duty members of the military and their families. It also works to certify and process VA benefits and collaborates with UM academic departments to help improve credit transfer.

Brekke has helped launch the University’s new Student Veterans Organization, which is designed to help students with military connections succeed in higher education and navigate post-military life.

“This includes an ambassador program where we try to match veterans with another student in their major,” he said. “We want to alert them to all the available resources at their disposal and help them plan for the classes they need to take.”

Brekke said he felt supported as a veteran when he arrived on campus, and it doesn’t hurt that UM is surrounded by mountains and nearby wilderness.

“The school and the outdoor opportunities here are endless,” he said. “For a lot of veterans that was a lot of what the career was – you are outside, rucking and camping – and you can do a lot of that here as well. I try to get out a lot in our area.”

Brekke plans to graduate in 2023. Does he feel like he’s found his path?

“It took me a long time to figure out where I need to be,” he said. “I’m glad I didn’t rush it, and I’m happy where I am. I felt a little lost, but I found a home here.”

Contact: Patrick Beckwith, director, UM Military and Veteran Services Office, 406-243-2744, patrick.beckwith@mso.umt.edu.
The University of Montana has employed a new approach to teaching math gateway courses that is showing demonstrated success in student retention and pass rates.

MISSOULA – After Jeff Knopp finished pounding the final nail into the house he built himself near Stevensville, he had an epiphany.

“After I finished, it hit me that I’d never really challenged myself – everything I did up until that point had always been easy,” Knopp said. “I knew it was time for a change.”
A career as a welder that began after high school took Knopp to the Canadian oil fields and back to western Montana. All the while, he dreamed of a career in health care.

The tradesman with a high school education enrolled at UM and is now about halfway through an integrative physiology and athletic training degree, with sights set on medical school. He loves chemistry and applied calculus.

Knopp’s trajectory may not have been possible largely because of a single class that stumps just about everybody: math.

That’s where the new approach to math being implemented at UM comes in.

“So much about success in math, as in anything, is confidence,” said Lauren Fern, assistant professor of math at UM’s Missoula College and the University’s student success coordinator for math. “The key is to build skills step-by-step at a pace that fits the student’s level of preparation.”

Fern, who consults with university systems around the nation on best practices for remedial math, has led a multiyear effort to revamp UM’s developmental math program. That effort has resulted in changes to the process for placing students in their initial math courses, the development of area-specific math pathways and the implementation of a “corequisite” model to support under-prepared students.

Fern said, historically, most universities required college algebra as the basic math course, because algebra was seen as the gateway into the STEM fields.

Students who were not ready for college algebra were tracked into developmental math courses that did not provide college credit but had to be completed as prerequisites for college algebra. Many students became discouraged, finding themselves in courses that did not seem applicable to their chosen areas and delayed their progress. High drop-out rates were the result.

“We want students to see the applicability and relevance of math to their lives and work,” Fern explained. “They need mathematical concepts that will help deepen their understanding of their chosen field.”
Now students in the social sciences are directed to statistics, while students in the humanities receive a focus on financial and quantitative literacy. Students in STEM fields follow the more traditional path through college algebra.

The next step was to restructure the courses themselves to better meet students where they are.

The new model moves away from the reliance on noncredit developmental courses and toward a corequisite model, where students go directly into college-level courses but with additional support.

“In the past, not only were we asking these students to pay for something they didn’t receive credit for, but the remedial courses didn’t come with a whole lot of support,” said Brian French, director of UM’s Office of Student Success. “The corequisite classes allow students to not only to stay in school and progress toward their degree, but they also provide college credit.”

The new model allows students to stay on track with their peers and complete the same college-level courses, but with more frequent meetings to provide support on both prerequisite material and course content.

“We’re putting students into the course with a structured support system so that they can succeed,” said Fern. “The corequisite portion of the course focuses on study skills, problem-solving, and critical thinking, which will benefit them in other courses as well as in daily life.”

The final piece of the puzzle, implemented this spring, was the new placement system, which shifts away from reliance on one high-stakes exam to place students in math courses and instead toward a more holistic model that looks at multiple measures of competence.

“We are reframing placement as a snapshot in time that provides students the opportunity to improve their initial placement level by working through an individualized study-plan based on their initial diagnostic,” Fern said.

Key to the new system is a self-paced program called EdReady, made available to UM students through the generosity of the Dennis and Phyllis Washington Foundation. EdReady is a personalized, free, online platform that helps students master the math skills they need to
succeed. Students can work at their own pace in a program that is tailored to their precise needs.

That was key for Carolyn Koefod from St. Ignatius, who said she nearly didn’t graduate from high school because of math.

After a midlife career change, Koefod is now a forensic anthropology major at UM who plans to achieve her medical examiner’s license for future work as a county coroner or funeral home director. In her way of getting there, she said, were math classes. Koefod, who had not taken a math class since high school and suffers with dyslexia when it comes to numbers, was encouraged to refresh her skills through EdReady before enrolling in probability and linear math with a corequisite component.

After completing a module in EdReady to refresh her skills, Koefod felt confident enough to enroll in required math class, probability and linear math, with Fern. Because it had been so long since Koefod enrolled in a math class, she elected the five-days-a-week math corequisite.

“The way Lauren explains things, takes comments and answers questions is amazing,” Koefod said. “She never approaches students with the belief that it’s their fault they don’t understand. Instead, she works harder to explain it.”

For the first time in her life, Koefod earned an “A” on a math test.

“She’s given me the courage to do this,” Koefod said. “There’s something so incredible about being told your smart enough to do something you thought was impossible – especially by someone you deeply respect.”

Koefod is just one example of how the new approach is working.

Instead of high drop-out rates, classes with a corequisite option in both math and writing are showing a 72% pass rate at UM.

In previous years, math has been such a barrier for students, that UM Associate Vice Provost Brian Reed posits that STEM achievements may have been impacted.

“I wonder if we would have had a cure for cancer by now,” Reed said. “Think about all the
creative, bright minds and unique perspectives that we've kept at bay because of an entry-level math class. Think of how many doctors, scientists and other professionals that we could have had a hand in creating a pathway for them, had we just figured out how to provide better teaching and support in math.”

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Related Story:

Washington Foundation Online Learning Gift Lifts Montana Learners

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Launch UM virtual tour.
UM’s Jim Elser, shown holding a display of a pipe coated with invasive mussels, is one of only two Montanans ever elected to the prestigious National Academy of Sciences. Elser directs the Flathead Lake Biological Station, which works to defend Montana waterways against invasive species.
FLATHEAD LAKE – After a two-year pandemic delay, researcher Jim Elser finally will attend his official induction ceremony for the National Academy of Sciences during the NAS Annual Meeting in Washington, D.C., on Friday, April 29.

Elser directs the University of Montana’s Flathead Lake Biological Station and serves as the station’s Bierman Professor of Ecology. He was elected to NAS in 2019 in recognition of his distinguished and continuing achievements in scientific research.

He is the first person from UM inducted into the prestigious academy, and only the second in the history of Montana.

“We are so pleased that the scientific community has recognized Professor Elser as one of our country’s most important scientists,” UM President Seth Bodnar said. “The UM family proudly celebrates this well-deserved recognition.”

The National Academy of Sciences is a private, nonprofit institution that was first established
under a congressional charter signed by President Abraham Lincoln in 1863. It recognizes achievements in science by election to membership, and – with the National Academy of Engineering and the National Academy of Medicine – provides science, engineering and health policy advice to the federal government and other organizations.

Elser was elected by current members of the academy in 2019. He has since joined them virtually to advise the nation on matters relating to science, engineering and medicine. His attendance at the induction ceremony will mark the first time he’s had the opportunity to engage other NAS members face-to-face in an official capacity.

“It’s exciting to prepare to attend this event, as it will allow me to meet so many great colleagues,” Elser said. “My election to the NAS will help bring more attention and expertise to Montana, UM and to the Flathead watershed. It brings me into contact with cutting-edge researchers and their work – much of which is highly relevant to the challenges that water resources and ecosystems faces in Montana.”

As a scientist, Elser is best known for his role in developing and testing the theory of ecological stoichiometry, which is the study of the balance of energy and chemical elements such as carbon, nitrogen and phosphorus in ecological systems. As FLBS director, Elser has expanded the biological station’s freshwater monitoring program, increased community outreach and launched a Flathead Lake Aquatic Research and Education (FLARE) K-12 program, which now engages thousands of local students each year.

His current research is focused on Flathead Lake and other mountain lakes in western Montana. A new project investigates the possible role of nitrogen and phosphorus in supporting blooms of snow algae in alpine ecosystems. He also works actively to advance the cause of phosphorus sustainability in the food system to protect water quality.

Though by far the most prestigious, this recognition is by no means the first of Elser’s storied career. He also was named a Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, is an elected foreign member of the Norwegian Academy of Arts and Sciences, and has received the G.E. Hutchinson Award of the Association for the Sciences of Limnology and Oceanography, the world's largest scientific association dedicated to aquatic sciences. He also served as the ASLO president from 2014 to 2016.

Elser and Montana State University earth scientist Cathy Whitlock are the only two active members of the National Academy of Sciences in the state of Montana.
On April 29, Elser will join roughly 100 other members of the 2019 National Academy of Sciences class for a final induction ceremony. During that event, he will officially sign his name in the NAS register, which features the signatures of NAS members dating back to the mid-19th century. The ceremony is scheduled to begin at 7 a.m. MDT and will be streamed live online through the NAS website. Following the event, assembled members of NAS will convene for an annual meeting that will include various scientific sessions, receptions and election of new NAS members.

For more information, visit the NAS website at http://www.nasonline.org/about-nas/events/annual-meeting/.

Contact: Jim Elser, UM Flathead Lake Biological Station director, 406-872-4500, jim.esler@flbs.umt.edu; Tom Bansak, UM Flathead Lake Biological Station associate director, 406-872-4503, tom.bansak@flbs.umt.edu.
UM First: Bio Station Director Joins National Academy of Sciences
UM anthropology junior Cailei Cummins, a member of the Crow Tribe, will serve as head woman dancer at this weekend's Kyiyo Pow Wow. The Kyiyo Native Student Association has provided a sense of community and home to the Lodge Grass native.
MISSOULA – For University of Montana student Cailei Cummins, a member of the Crow Tribe, the decision to enroll her junior year at the Missoula campus was perhaps the biggest step taken in her young life.

Transferring from Little Big Horn College, the Lodge Grass native had never spent much time off her reservation and the move came with great trepidation about leaving a place she loves. And then there was the sticky business of forgoing college at nearby Montana State University, where many of her family had graduated.

“Bozeman doesn’t have the kind of anthropology program that I wanted to enroll in,” said Cummins of her decision to become a Griz.

Despite her determination to forge her own path, the first few weeks at UM were a culture shock for Cummins, who said she noticed few Natives on campus.

“I was kind of going crazy and I called my mom one evening, and she suggested I go to the Kiyiyo meeting that day,” Cummins recalled after learning about UM’s Native American student association. “Oh my gosh, it was so good to see other Natives and to meet them and get advice for living in a city.

“Kiyiyo,” she adds, “has definitely made me feel at home.”

Now the secretary of Kiyiyo, Cummins will serve as the head woman dancer for this weekend’s...
Kyiyo Pow Wow. The powwow, now in its 53rd year, brings participants from across the county and is dedicated to preserving the rich heritage of Indigenous history and culture.

“Several of my relatives have served as head woman for powwows back home,” said Cummins, adding that her mother is preparing her regalia, and the family plans to travel to Missoula for the powwow.

“They are pretty excited for me,” said Cummins.

For her part, Cummins will help organize volunteers and lead the powwow.

It’s a big job, said Gisele Forrest, an administrator in UM’s Native American Studies program and a co-adviser for Kyiyo.

“We have more than 100 people volunteering for the powwow,” Forrest said. “For students this is often the first time they’ve organized such large groups. We’re excited to work with Cailei and the Kyiyo officers on this year’s event, especially after two years of not having the event in person.”

Professor Mizuki Miyashita, director of the linguistics program in the Department of Anthropology, got to know Cummins in two classes.

“Cailei brings valuable insights from a tribal point of view to class,” Miyashita said. “It is very important and much needed.”

As for her future, Cummins plans to pursue a master’s degree in archeology. But the reservation and the people who live there will always be a part of her life.

“I really can’t picture myself living off the reservation. I see myself going home,” she said. “We all have a responsibility to take care of our culture, language and traditions because our ancestors did it for us.”

The 53rd Annual Kyiyo Pow Wow will be held in UM’s Adams Center. Grand entries will take place at 7 p.m. Friday, April 22, and noon and 7 p.m. Saturday, April 23.
Contact: Dave Kuntz, UM director of strategic communications, 406-243-5659, dave.kuntz@umontana.edu.

Launch UM virtual tour.
Maj. Michael Blanchard (left), a UM graduate student, and his teammate, Maj. Brian Slamkowski, simulate treating a casualty during the recent Best Ranger Competition in Georgia.
MISSOULA – Michael Blanchard, a business graduate student at the University of Montana and former Griz decathlete, runs at least 40 miles each week to stay in shape as a U.S. Army major.

Blanchard recently added to his training regimen to prepare for the Best Ranger Competition, a grueling 60-hour event over four days against the most elite Army Rangers in the nation. He started building his endurance by taking long walks with a 65-pound rucksack.

“I’m sure people in Missoula probably thought I was weird as I was walking around the streets with a big camo rucksack on my back,” Blanchard joked.

Blanchard’s hard work paid off. He and fellow Army Maj. Brian Slamkowski, a graduate student at Stanford and Blanchard’s teammate in the Best Ranger Competition, finished fifth overall out of 51 teams.

The impressive showing at the event, held April 8-11 in Fort Benning, Georgia, meant Blanchard and Slamkowski are considered top 10 Army Rangers in the country. And Blanchard became the first active UM student to be in the competition since it began in 1982.

“Earning a spot at this event is an accomplishment in itself, but competing and finishing in the top five is a remarkable feat,” said Pat Beckwith, director of UM’s Military and Veteran Services. “Most teams come from large military installations where they can train and practice...
many of the events. Mike and Brian are unique because they are both graduate students, and despite their limited access to training facilities and not being co-located to regularly train as teammates, they still managed to place fifth amongst the best ranger soldiers in the nation.”

Some may ask why put yourself through the difficult Best Ranger Challenge, especially for Blanchard, who at 34 was older than most of the other competitors still proving themselves in the Army. The average age at the competition was 28.

“Both Maj. Slamkowski and I wanted to show just because we are majors and just because we are older than most of the guys there, it doesn’t give us the excuse to be idle,” Blanchard said. “It doesn’t give us the excuse to let our skills and military attributes wane.”

Blanchard and Slamkowski were stationed together at Fort Benning in 2016, when they tried the Best Ranger Competition for the first time and finished third overall. That experience helped them mentally prepare. However, the physical challenges change each year. Blanchard was ready for the obstacle courses, long runs and shooting tests with machine guns and shoulder-fired missiles, but one event almost kept him from the finish line.

The Prusik climb is a race up a 60-foot fixed rope, like an extreme version of climbing a rope in grade-school gym class. Blanchard and his teammate had never climbed a Prusik rope and worried how they would fare. After watching other competitors, they finally figured it out and moved on to the next challenge.
“We were both very concerned we would be the only ones in the competition to not make it up the rope,” Blanchard said.

After the competition, Blanchard returned to Missoula, where he is finishing the first year of his Master of Business Administration studies. He is on track to graduate with his MBA next spring. He is not a traditional MBA student as an active-duty member of the Army. But he said his studies go hand-in-hand with what he hopes to accomplish in his Army career.

“It’s a mix of technical business skills and attributes to broader organizational leadership that is applicable to the Army,” he said. “I’m enjoying my time so far.”

Blanchard, who grew up in the small town of Selah, Washington, near Yakima, came to UM in 2006 as a pole vaulter on the Griz track and field team. He was introduced to the Reserve Officers’ Training Corps and decided to join. When he graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in sociology in 2010, he also was commissioned as a United States Army officer.

A decade later, when he decided to pursue graduate school, Blanchard knew exactly where he wanted to go.

“There was really only one choice,” he said. “Come back to Missoula and go to the U.”
Montana Tough: UM Grad Student Excels at Army Ranger Competition

Contact: Dave Kuntz, UM Strategic Communications director, 406-243-5659, dave.kuntz@umotnana.edu.

Launch UM virtual tour.
MISSOULA – The University of Montana’s Max S. Baucus Institute recently received $800,000 from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation.

A $500,000 grant from the Gates Foundation will help students from underserved and rural communities in Montana – including tribal communities – participate in Baucus Institute...
programs, as well as those of UM’s Blewett III School of Law.

A second $300,000 gift from the Hewlett Foundation will help the institute build program capacity and support students.

Housed in UM’s school of law, the Baucus Institute is designed to prepare the next generation of outstanding public servants. It is named for Max Baucus, who served 35 years in the U.S. Senate and four years as U.S. ambassador to China.

“The institute is furthering Ambassador Baucus’ career-long focus on public service and providing opportunities for students to engage in the world by participating in public service,” said Sam Panarella, director of the institute and a UM law professor. “Those are important goals for both foundations, so there was a great fit with what they support and what we do.”

By providing training, education and internship opportunities, the Baucus Institute prepares current and future leaders to address the critical legal and policy challenges facing Montana, the United States and the world.

With this new funding, the institute will provide more opportunities, increase access to underserved students and create more diversity in its pools of applicants and admitted students. This includes recruiting students to apply, providing them with financial assistance and hiring staff to support the expanding programs.

Currently, the institute offers academic programs in its Department of Public Administration and Policy, study abroad experiences in China and Ireland, a speaker series and three distinct leadership programs.

The institute’s Baucus Leaders and Baucus Leaders Montana programs place undergraduate and graduate students as summer interns in Congressional offices and committees in Washington, D.C., as well as with local and state government offices, nonprofits and agencies throughout Montana. Baucus Climate Scholars intern with national organizations working on climate and environment issues, including the Brookings Institute, Nature Conservancy and American Enterprise Institute.

“My vision for the institute when I returned to Montana from China was to inspire young people to engage in public service and to give them access to life-changing opportunities to do so,”
Baucus said. “I am impressed by the impact these students are having on their communities, our state and the entire country through the experiences they have in our programs.

“I believe that Montanans, and particularly our young people, have a tremendous amount to contribute to the most pressing issues of the day, including combatting climate change, increasing social justice and strengthening the rule of law,” he said.

LaRenzo Roanbear, a first-year UM law student also working toward earning his Master of Public Administration, will intern with U.S. Sen. Amy Klobuchar this summer.

“I have always wanted to be a positive role model for my community and represent my views as a rural tribal member from Montana,” Roanbear said. “Being a Baucus Leader has helped me find my voice and use it positively through policy development, producing positive communication and creating understanding between leaders of all kinds.

“Getting to network with experts and professionals in law, policy and communications and other movers and shakers has opened my eyes to the possibilities I can take advantage of,” he said.

For more information about the Baucus Institute, visit https://www.umt.edu/law/baucus-institute.

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Launch UM virtual tour.
Baucus Institute Receives $800K to Build Programs, Access
Chemistry graduate student Sierra Paske serves as vice president for the student-led Kyiyo Native American Student Association at UM. A member of the Standing Rock Lakota Sioux tribe, she will spend the two-day Kyiyo Pow Wow registering dancers and tabulating scores.

MISSOULA – University of Montana graduate student Sierra Paske is studying some pretty
serious chemistry these days. Consider the topic of her Ph.D. dissertation research.

“Chiral separation of enantiomer in capillary electrophoresis using a chiral pseudostationary phase,” she said with a smile borne from the quizzical looks she often gets when talking about her work. “It’s developing materials used to improve pharmaceutical analysis and development.”

Paske, a member of the Standing Rock Lakota Sioux tribe and native of Rochester, Minnesota, is in the second year of her graduate studies.

As vice president of the Kyiyo Native American Student Association, she will play a pivotal role at this weekend’s Kyiyo Pow Wow, registering dancers and tabulating scores. Since its founding 53 years ago, UM’s powwow has grown into one the largest and oldest student-sponsored such events in the country and attracts attendants from across the nation.

“We'll have some 500 dancers and 50 drummers this weekend. It takes a lot of organization from our students,” said Gisele Forrest, an administrator in UM’s Native American Studies program and a co-adviser for Kyiyo. “Sierra is amazing in that she volunteers many hours for Kyiyo, while also doing her grad studies and running her lab. We are so lucky to have her.”

Paske enrolled at UM after earning her undergraduate degree at the University of Minnesota, Morris, in forensic science with an emphasis on chemistry and Native studies.

“I developed an interest in forensics in high school – the merging of science and criminality,” said the ardent fan of “CSI.” “You can’t solve a crime just by looking at it.”

While her interest in forensics hasn’t waned, Paske opted to focus on chemistry for her graduate studies. She chose UM because the Department of Chemistry provides one-on-one attention to students, and the campus has an active group of Native American students.

“I wanted that community,” said Paske, who helped organize Native student activities at UM, Morris and participated in powwows as a child. “I’ve always wanted to learn more about myself and where I come from.”

Her time at UM, she adds, has also introduced her to other tribes.
“I didn't know very much about the Crow, especially their style of dance,” Paske said. “Also, the Blackfeet. I love their language.”

Paske’s adviser, chemistry Professor Chris Palmer, said her ability to analyze problems and work to solve them makes her an excellent graduate student. It’s also a skill set she brings to students in her work as a teaching assistant.

“Sierra is patient and understanding with students and explains things so they understand it,” Palmer said, adding that as a Native, she serves as an important role model.

“Being a teaching assistant takes a lot of time, but I love it,” Paske said.

Explaining the specifics of her research, though, remains a challenge. Even to her family, she admits.

“They are very supportive of what I am doing,” Paske said. “But they don’t always understand it.”

The 53rd Annual Kyiyo Pow Wow will be held in UM’s Adams Center. Grand Entry will take place at 7 p.m. Friday, April 22, and noon and 7 p.m. Saturday, April 23.

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**Contact:** Dave Kuntz, UM director of strategic communications, 406-243-5659, dave.kuntz@umontana.edu.

Launch UM virtual tour.
UM Student Finds Community in Campus Native Association, Kyiyo Pow Wow
REPORT:
‘YELLOWSTONE’ TV SERIES PRODUCTION INJECTS $70M INTO MONTANA ECONOMY

18 APRIL 2022
MISSOULA – Filmed in and around the Bitterroot Valley of Montana, the fourth season of the hit television series “Yellowstone” brought more than $70 million in additional spending to the state, according to a study conducted by the University of Montana Bureau of Business and Economic Research.

The study found that because of “Yellowstone,” the Paramount global hit TV series starring Kevin Costner, there were:

- 527 permanent jobs in the state, not including the 624 Montana residents who were employed during filming as extras.
- $25.3 million in annual personal income for Montana households.
- $85.8 million in additional gross receipts for Montana businesses and non-business organizations.

Additionally, annual revenues of state government were higher by $10.6 million, according to BBER Director Patrick Barkey.

“The production activities of ‘Yellowstone’ season four in Montana supported jobs and income well in excess of its own economic footprint, making Montana’s economy larger and more prosperous than it otherwise would have been,” Barkey said. “The high-paying nature of the production-related jobs, and the considerable demand for locally produced goods and services, are the main reasons why the economic impacts were so sizable.”

The report found that Montana has experienced growth in television and film in the last 10 years, with 122 productions filmed in 2019. Some of those films qualified for tax credit. More than 30 states, including Montana, currently offer some form of tax credit, often transferrable, to studios in return for locating activities within their states.
The BBER study on “Yellowstone” was sponsored by the MEDIA Coalition of Montana and Paramount.

“We felt it was important to have accurate data as to the impacts of the media industry in Montana,” said Steve Grover, CEO of Montana Studios and co-founder of the MEDIA Coalition of Montana.

During five months of filming in western Montana, the studio’s significant spending on everything from lodging and rental cars to veterinary and animal services benefitted a broad spectrum of Montana businesses. “The business we got from ‘Yellowstone’ really helped our bottom line,” said Lynn-Wood Fields, owner of the Montana Media Center, a locally based services provider.

Barkey said economic gains should continue if Montana becomes a more regular site for large-scale film productions with a similar scale and scope to “Yellowstone.”

To view the full study findings, visit the Bureau of Business and Economic Research website at www.bber.umt.edu. Based in the UM College of Business, BBER was founded in 1948 to monitor Montana’s economic and business conditions.

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Contact: Patrick Barkey, director, UM Bureau of Business and Economic Research, 406-243-2723, pat.barkey@mso.umt.edu.

Launch UM virtual tour.
Report: ‘Yellowstone’ TV Series Production Injects $70M Into Montana Economy
An electric vehicle charging station on the University of Montana campus.
MISSOULA – The University of Montana is leading the charge to expand access to electric vehicle infrastructure in western Montana.

UM recently installed four level II dual-port ChargePoint electric vehicle charging stations on campus. The EV charging stations are funded in part by “Charge Your Ride,” a Montana Department of Environmental Quality program.

“Over the next few years, our goal is to add more stations to campus, including in our facilities compound and at the residence halls,” said Eva Rocke, UM’s sustainability director. “This grant is a game-changer for us as we become one of the only college campuses in the region to install high-quality EV charging stations. Hopefully adding a few more stations to those that already exist in Missoula will make it that much easier to own and drive an EV.”

The new charging stations further signal UM’s effort to support electric vehicle ownership by students and employees, as well as provide the necessary charging infrastructure for any future state-owned electric fleet and utility vehicles. As vehicle manufacturers increase production of electric vehicles, UM is positioned to meet the EV charging demand that is likely around the corner.

“DEQ’s partnership with the University of Montana expands clean transportation alternatives to the campus,” said Dan Lloyd, chief of the DEQ Energy Bureau. “As more Montanans look at electric vehicles, partnerships like this between UM and DEQ will be important to drivers who need to charge up and get back on the road.”

Since the charging stations became active, UM employees and students have used them consistently. The spaces adjacent to the charging stations are reserved for EVs, and the installation of these charging stations is the latest step in UM’s effort to address vehicle emissions and climate change, Rocke said.

“Expanding on-campus EV charging station access is just one of the proactive steps we are taking to address air quality issues in our valley and do our part to make a low- or zero-carbon future campus that much more attainable,” she said. “Our shared goal is to make sure UM leads the effort towards a sustainable future.”

The four University EV stations are located at the Parking Garage, near the University Center, near the Fitness and Recreation Center, and on the south side of campus in Lot E. The new station locations are available online with the U.S. Department of Energy.
The installation of the charging stations comes on the heels of UM’s groundbreaking on a new Combined Heat and Power Plant – a project that will slash campus emissions by 30%.

DEQ’s “Charge Your Ride” program distributes funds to numerous projects around the state from a portion of the $12.6 million Montana received through the Volkswagen Environmental Mitigation Trust Settlement. The goal of the settlement funds is to reduce harmful nitrogen oxide emissions that contribute to unhealthy air.

To learn more about UM’s sustainability efforts, visit the UM Sustainability webpage.

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Contact: Eva Rocke, UM sustainability director, 406-243-4323, eva.rocke@umontana.edu.

Launch UM virtual tour.
MISSOULA – One of the nation’s oldest student-run powwows and a beloved University of Montana tradition, the Kyiyo Pow Wow, will be held on campus Friday, April 22, through Saturday, April 23, in the Adams Center. Unifying Native Americans from across the nation and Montana, the annual celebration preserves the rich heritage of tribes and cultures while renewing old traditions.

Now in its 53rd year the powwow will feature Native singing, dancing, story sharing and events.
The last two years, the powwow has been cancelled altogether, or held virtually, because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Sierra Paske, a graduate student in chemistry and Kyiyo vice president, said the return of the in-person Kyiyo Pow Wow is a meaningful event.

"Hosting Kyiyo in person again means so much not only to those who have attended Kyiyo in the past but to those who have yet to experience it," Paske said. "The joy and celebration of the Kyiyo Pow Wow can only be fully experienced in person and we are excited to bring this event back to the campus and the community. We hope everyone is able to partake in the enjoyment Kyiyo provides after so long apart."

Last year, UM President Seth Bodnar established an endowment of $300,000 to support the powwow with the gift, named after the late Blackfeet Chief Earl Old Person. Investment proceeds from the endowment have yet to be generated, though the endowment will offset costs for the powwow in the future.

Grand Entry times are 7 p.m. on Friday, April 22 and noon and 7 p.m. on Saturday April 23. Admission prices for children 6 and under and seniors over 65 are free. General admission is $5 for a session or $12 for a weekend pass.

2022 Kyiyo Royalty are:

- Miss Kyiyo: Lynell Shepherd.
- Miss Kyiyo: Michelle Wolfchild.
- Little Miss Kyiyo: Miyoskahim “Minnie” Whitford.

2022 Kyiyo head staff are:

- Master of Ceremony: Tommy Christian and Ruben Little Head.
- Head Man: Shawn White Grass.
- Head Woman: Cailei Cummins.
UM’s Kiyiyo Pow Wow Set for April 22-23

- Arena Director: Devan Kicknosway.
- Head Dance Judge: Jeremy Shield.
- Host Drum: Black Lodge.

For questions about specials, entries or for special requests email Kiyiyo@umontana.edu.

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Related Stories:

UM President Announces $300K Endowment to Powwow in Honor of Old Person

We Still Sing: Blackfeet Rawhide Singers Carry On Commencement

Contact: Brianna Maxwell, Kiyiyo media manager, 406-243-5946, kiyiyo@umontana.edu.

Launch UM virtual tour.
University of Montana junior and Polson native Beatrix Frissell has been named a prestigious Truman Scholar.

MISSOULA – There are 58 names on the list for the prestigious Truman Scholarship this year out of more than 700 applicants.

Beatrix Frissell, a runner from Polson and University of Montana junior, is still processing how her name ended up on that list that includes the nation’s top-tier students interested in public...
But don’t be fooled by her Montana humility.

Her penchant for academic rigor coupled with a UM education steeped in justice, gender equity, policy and environmental sciences prepared her to earn this national scholarship.

“I’m still a little bit in shock,” Frissell said. “The feeling of being named a Truman alongside a very elite group of people and past awardees is incredible. It’s a feeling I wish everyone could have.”

Truman Scholars demonstrate outstanding leadership potential, a commitment to a career in government or the nonprofit sector and academic excellence. Each Truman Scholar receives funding for graduate studies, leadership training, career counseling and special internship and fellowship opportunities within the federal government.

Frissell is the first Truman Scholar to come from UM since 2014, when Mara Menahan earned the scholarship.

Double majoring in political science in UM’s College of Humanities and Sciences and environmental sciences and sustainability in the W.A. Franke College of Forestry and Conservation, Frissell also is a student in UM’s Davidson Honors College. In addition to a rigorous academic load, she runs women’s cross country and track and field for Grizzly Athletics and makes time in between her studies to complete about 60 miles of long-distance running a week.

Balancing life as a student athlete with a rich and deep interest in natural resources, environmental sciences, climate and public policy is something Frissell said she was able to do at UM because of the support she encountered at every turn.

“My teammates are some of my best friends, and they’ve been so supportive of me during this entire journey,” Frissell said. “I get to be surrounded by an amazing group of women every day. My coach, Clint May, made sure I was able to commit time to the Truman application because he encouraged me to create opportunities for the future.”

Frissell said running long distances for practice reflects her academic pursuits at UM.
“In running, you’re in constant pursuit of perfection and you have to manage your own self-improvement,” she said. “That’s a bit like my time in the classroom at UM, because I’ve had to push myself to get outside of my comfort zone and seek new challenges that I wasn’t sure I could accomplish.”

Just a few of those accomplishments include maintaining a 4.0 GPA, undergoing training in natural resource policy as a Demmer Scholar, co-captain for the women’s cross-country team, completing UM’s Global Leadership Initiative 12-credit certificate program, serving on the Associated Students of UM Sustainability and Elections Committees and participating in UM’s first SEA Change Cohort (Safe, Empowered, Accelerated) to advance gender equity and combat stereotypes.

Last summer, Frissell completed an internship at the U.S. Department of Interior, working alongside the Office of Environmental Policy and Compliance, where she said her “eyes were opened to the notion of environmental justice on the ground and what that looks like” when it comes to hazardous waste sites in American communities.

Growing up on the Flathead Indian Reservation, Frissell was enveloped in a deep connection to land, people, climate and culture that all intertwined by the time she arrived at UM, enrolling as a Presidential Leadership Scholar.

“UM has a lot of things to apply for and people who can connect you and help provide funding,” she said. “I found so many wonderful resources and incredible faculty advisers who would point me in the directions where was I interested, and they connected me with resources and support.”

Kylla Benes, director of UM’s office of External Scholarships and Fellowships, is a personal mentor to Frissell and supported her application process to the Truman Foundation.

“Bea’s efforts to promote equity and justice in athletics and environmental issues have had important impacts on our campus and beyond,” she said. “The Truman committee selected her for her academic and professional accomplishments that clearly demonstrate Bea’s potential as a future leader who will create positive change in environmental policy.

“UM’s undergraduate program fosters future leaders through a liberal arts education and the flexibility for deep, active engagement in the issues they care about,” Benes said. “We are
proud to have one of those future leaders recognized with such an honor."

Deena Mansour, executive director of UM’s Mansfield Center, came to know Frissell when she was accepted into the Montana NEW Leadership Program hosted by the Mansfield Center and focused on empowering women in leadership.

“Beatrix is not only a driven student athlete, she demonstrates the capacity to expertly manage multiple competing commitments, while making it clear that intellectual growth is her top priority,” Mansour said. “She truly distinguishes herself by the way she demonstrates flexibility of thinking and curiosity, easily thriving in an inquiry-based environment, and she demonstrates a commitment to diversity and inclusion.”

Frissell plans to attend graduate school for a combination of public policy and environmental science, or possibly law school. This summer, she’ll intern with the U.S. Forest Service Region 1 office in Missoula in forest management planning and public outreach, as well as serve as a Baucus Climate Scholar in UM’s Max S. Baucus Institute.

When asked where Frissell imagines herself in the future, she replied with another goal dedicated to public trust and serving her home state.

“Becoming governor of Montana, she said.

The 2022 class of Truman Scholars was selected from 275 colleges and universities. They were recommended by 17 independent selection panels based on the finalists’ academic success and leadership accomplishments, as well as their likelihood of becoming public service leaders. Regional selection panels met virtually and included distinguished civic leaders, elected officials, university presidents, federal judges and past Truman Scholarship winners.

Established by Congress in 1975 as the living memorial to President Harry S. Truman and presidential monument to public service, the Truman Scholarship carries the legacy of the 33rd President by supporting and inspiring the next generation of public service leaders.

The 58 awardees this year join a community of 3,442 Truman Scholars named since the first awards in 1977.
UM Honors Student Named Prestigious Truman Scholar

Contact: Kylla Benes, director, UM External Scholarships and Fellowships, 406-243-5241, kylla.benes@umontana.edu.

Launch UM virtual tour.
Sara Rinfret, director of UM's Department of Public Administration and Policy (standing), leads the top public affairs graduate program in Montana.

MISSOULA – The University of Montana again has the top graduate program for public affairs in Big Sky Country, according to new rankings by U.S. News & World Report.

Climbing nine spots from last year on the report’s Best Graduate Schools list, UM ranked No. 114 in the nation for Best Public Affairs Programs. This ranking establishes UM as the top
UM Public Affairs Graduate Program Improves Ranking

institution for public affairs in Montana and tied for No. 2 in the Big Sky Conference.

“Our increase in rankings is a true testament to the faculty’s commitment to student success and serving our community by providing solutions to public-sector problems,” said Dr. Sara Rinfret, director of UM’s Department of Public Administration and Policy and acting dean of the Blewett III School of Law. “This fall we will launch several new programs to ensure our students can continue to excel.”

The rankings of public affairs programs, published in 2022, are based on peer assessment survey results. In fall 2021 and early 2022, U.S. News surveyed deans, directors and department chairs representing 270 master's programs in public affairs and administration.

UM’s Department of Public Administration and Policy is the first of its kind in Montana, offering the only accredited Master of Public Administration program in the nation within a school of law. The department is housed within the Max S. Baucus Institute to provide a cutting-edge education for individuals interested in excelling in the public service profession. The department offers undergraduate and graduate curricula in addition to professional development and training.

Next fall, the department will launch four new programs: 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.

For more information, visit the Department of Public Administration and Policy website at https://www.umt.edu/law/mpa.

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Contact: Dr. Sara Rinfret, UM law school acting dean and Department of Public Administration and Policy chair, 406-243-4702, sara.rinfret@umontana.edu.

Launch UM virtual tour.
Prominent statesman John Kerry will participate in a lecture hosted by UM's Baucus Institute on Thursday, April 21.

Max Baucus

MISSOULA – John Kerry, the first U.S. special presidential envoy for climate, will be in conversation with Max Baucus, former Montana senator and U.S.
ambassador to China, on Thursday, April 21, at the University of Montana.

The timely lecture is hosted by UM’s Max S. Baucus Institute and is part of the Stockman Bank Speaker Series in partnership with the Montana World Affairs Council.

The conversation will begin at 6:30 p.m. and broadcast live on Zoom. Baucus Institute Director Sam Panarella will moderate. The event is free and open to the public, and preregistration online is encouraged.

“Following our illuminating and inspiring event with Vice President Al Gore last fall, we are excited to host another conversation about the challenges and opportunities in the critically important effort to combat climate change,” Panarella said.

Kerry served as the U.S. secretary of state from 2013 to 2017 and was a key player in the international negotiation of the Paris Agreement on climate change. His current position is a Cabinet-level member of President Joe Biden’s National Security Council, signaling the administration’s concern that climate change is a major threat to America’s security.

The conversation between the former U.S. senators will be grounded in their lengthy service in Congress together and their dedication to public service. Kerry represented Massachusetts from 1985 to 2013, while Baucus represented Montana from 1978 to 2014. After serving as the U.S. ambassador to China, Baucus returned to Montana in 2017 and founded the Baucus Institute at UM to engage young Montanans in public service.
“The Baucus Institute is committed to bringing leading voices on the climate to Montana for open, frank and fact-based discussions on topics of paramount importance to our state,” Panarella said. “We look forward to having Montanans from every corner of our state join in this event.”

For more information about this event, please visit the Baucus Institute’s Stockman Bank Speakers Series website and register at tinyurl.com/3zwwwuzd. Learn more about the Max S. Baucus Institute at www.baucusinstitute.org.

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**Contact:** Mel Brittner Wells, program manager, Baucus Institute, 406-243-5383, mel.brittnerwells@umontana.edu.

Launch UM virtual tour.
Three Grizzlies Receive One of Nation’s Top STEM Awards

The National Science Foundation named two current UM graduate students and one UM alumna as recipients of the prestigious NSF Graduate Research Fellowships Program.

MISSOULA – The National Science Foundation recently announced the awardees and honorable mentions for its 2022 Graduate Research Fellowships Program, and the list includes two University of Montana students and one UM alum – all of them women.

The awards are among the most prestigious graduate science recognitions in the country.

Three Grizzlies Receive One of Nation’s Top STEM Awards

Students named NSF Graduate Research Fellows are provided five-year fellowships with the NSF, including three years of financial support, an annual stipend of $34,000 and a cost of education allowance of $12,000 to the student’s current institution.

Awards are given to graduate students pursuing research-based master’s and doctoral degrees in science, technology, engineering or math at accredited U.S. institutions.

“UM has had a lot of success attracting GRFP award winners due to the quality of our STEM programs and faculty members, who recruit from a national pool of high-quality graduate student candidates,” said Ashby Kinch, dean of UM’s Graduate School. “We are delighted to see the success of our students as researchers – both the undergraduates who leave here to pursue graduate degrees and then ones we who bring their GRFP to UM to pursue their graduate research with our excellent community of faculty and student researchers.”

The NSF named two current UM graduate students and one graduate student at the University of California, Davis, who received her undergraduate degree from UM.

- Allison Monroe received her undergraduate degree in biology from Hendrix College in 2019 and researches Indigenous knowledge and environmental sustainability as a graduate student in the Department of Environmental Studies, housed in UM's College of Humanities and Sciences.

- Grace Erba will receive her undergraduate degree in May from UM. She studies wildlife biology in UM’s W.A. Franke College of Forestry and Conservation and has committed to a doctoral program at UM in wildlife biology.

- Emily Leonhardt received her undergraduate degree in 2017 in wildlife biology from UM and now researches life sciences at UC-Davis.

The NSF awards reflect UM’s growing research enterprise.

This year, UM was named a top-tier “R1” research institution. The honor was conferred by the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education organization. UM was upgraded to the “Doctoral Universities: Very High Research Activity” classification, also known as R1.

Scott Whittenburg, UM vice president for research and creative scholarship, said the NSF Graduate Research Fellowships speak to UM’s excellence in training undergraduates for
postsecondary work and providing graduate students rigorous training and diverse experiences across UM’s research profile.

“We’re thrilled to celebrate these impressive NSF Fellows,” Whittenburg said. “UM provides a world-class education and training that’s on par with the nation’s best when it comes to graduate-level research and training.”

Last year, UM was ranked in the top 10 nationwide for research growth, according to the NSF. UM ranked No. 6 nationally for research growth among all universities with more than $100 million in research expenditures, growing from $55 million in 2014 to a record $122 million this year.

Research at UM spans a wide range of disciplines, including health sciences, biological and biomedical sciences, natural resources and conservation, mathematical and physical sciences, geosciences, social sciences and computer sciences and engineering.

Kylla Benes, director of UM’s office of External Scholarships and Fellowships said the award reflects UM’s standing as a prestigious research university, one that compares with with any graduate education in the country.

“This is one of the biggest awards for STEM graduate students in the nation,” Benes said. “UM has a long history of producing top-level researchers, and we are thrilled for these scientists to receive such an accolade at our University.”

Contact: Scott Whittenburg, UM vice president for research and creative scholarship, 406-243-6330, scott.whittenburg@umontana.edu.

Related Stories:

UM Earns Top Tier 'R1' Research Status

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Three Grizzlies Receive One of Nation’s Top STEM Awards
UM students Stephanie Barron, Gardner Dee, Malcolm Gilbert, and Allison Monroe have been named 2022-23 Wyss Scholars.

MISSOULA – Four University of Montana students with leadership experience in land conservation have been awarded the prestigious Wyss Scholarship for U.S. Conservation.
UM’s Environmental Studies Program, housed in the College of Humanities and Sciences, administers the Wyss Scholars program with UM’s W.A. Franke College of Forestry and Conservation. The scholarship provides financial support to UM students who are committed to careers in U.S. land conservation through a federal, state or tribal land management agency or nonprofit. Funded through the Wyss Foundation, a private charitable foundation dedicated to land conservation, the scholarship supports a portion of attendance for a master’s degree at UM.

UM students Stephanie Barron, Gardner Dee, Malcolm Gilbert, and Allison Monroe have been named 2022-23 Wyss Scholars.

**Stephanie Barron** completed her undergraduate degree at Randolph College in Lynchburg, Virginia, then worked extensively for public, tribal and nonprofit organizations involved with conservation. She joined UM’s environmental studies master’s program this fall with a focus on traditional ecological knowledge approaches to investigate the differences in risk perception between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples around carnivore — specifically mountain lion — conflict and presence. Barron said she envisions a career wherever wildlife management professionals facilitate the coexistence of humans and non-humans in their habitat.

**Gardner Dee** is a self-described “passionate public lands user,” actively involved in conservation issues from a young age. He graduated in 2018 with a bachelor’s degree in environmental humanities from Whitman College in Walla Walla, Washington. He then lived in Colorado where he worked extensively with Trout Unlimited to preserve local waterways and
Four UM Students Named Wyss Scholars for Conservation Leadership

Malcolm Gilbert graduated from Seattle University with a bachelor's degree in biology and is enrolled at UM's Alexander Blewett III School of Law. As a staff member and Editor-in-Chief-Elect for the Public Land and Resources Law Review, Gilbert has expanded his research and writing toward conservation. He has incorporated climate justice, focusing on “how rural and indigenous communities in Montana can continue building climate resilience and energy independence to better-incorporate indigenous tribal and ecological knowledge into the conservation dialogue.” Gilbert said his clerkship next year with Earthjustice Northern Rockies will provide an opportunity to ensure community involvement in future clean energy development and policymaking.

Allison Monroe holds a degree in biology from...
Hendrix College in Conway, Arkansas, where she received a Thomas J. Watson Fellowship to study community-based insect conservation alongside rural communities in Madagascar, South Africa, Scotland and Costa Rica. She is currently enrolled in the UM Environmental Studies graduate program with a focus on Indigenous knowledge and environmental sustainability. Monroe’s research involving traditional ecological knowledge and models of biodiversity and landscape conservation establish what she states is her ultimate career goal: to work for an NGO (non-governmental organization) as a community collaboration manager, or any position that allows me to maintain a multiculturally-engaged research and teaching program, informs management initiatives and advances scientific understanding.”

For more information on the Wyss Scholars program email evst@mso.umt.edu.

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**Contact:** Dave Kuntz, UM director of strategic communications, 406-243-5659, dave.kuntz@umontana.edu.

Launch UM virtual tour.
Four UM Students Named Wyss Scholars for Conservation Leadership
UM student Cana Odegaard, who is studying Arabic, has won a coveted Critical Language Scholarship in just her first year in college.

MISSOULA – University of Montana student Cana Odegaard said it’s a long shot, but one day she’d love to work for the United Nations or UNICEF helping refugees and children around the world.

That shot, it turns out, might not be all that long considering Odegaard, who is studying world
languages and cultures along with Arabic and international development, has won a coveted Critical Language Scholarship in just her first year in college.

UM sophomore Kolter Stevenson will use his Critical Language Scholarship to enhance his Russian. He said UM’s Russian Studies is the best program west of the Mississippi.

Joining her in receiving this competitive recognition is sophomore Kolter Stevenson, who is majoring in management information systems, finance and international business, with a minor in Russian.

The CLS is a summer study abroad program sponsored by the U.S. Department of State to expand the number of Americans mastering foreign languages critical to America’s national security and economic prosperity. Finalists for the 2022 program were selected from a diverse pool of over 4,500 applicants, representing all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Guam and Puerto Rico.

Both Odegaard and Stevenson had deep language experiences long before their collegiate studies and said the CLS will do much to accelerate their skills.

Odegaard, from Missoula, spent portions of her childhood living internationally. Her father was in computer programming and traveled overseas with her family, which also was involved in ministry work in Cairo and other parts of the world. Living in the Middle East sparked her deep interest in Arabic.
“The alphabet is fascinating to look at, and the people that I met were so hospitable. It’s how I feel in love with Arabic,” she said.

Stevenson’s family is from Norway, and the Amsterdam, Montana, native has a close bond with his family’s homeland. After two years of high school, he elected to study in Bergen, Norway, to learn more about the Norwegian language and culture. Along the way, he took a course in Russian and developed a passion for the language.

Today, he counts himself fortunate to study Russian at UM, which has the “best Russian program west of the Mississippi,” he said.

“Russian is spoken in many countries, so it’s useful beyond Russia,” said Stevenson, who also spent time in 2019 studying in Moldova through another U.S. Department of State language initiative for youth. “The cultural aspect is beautiful, and a respect for nature is imbedded in the language, which I find fascinating.”

Stevenson said he struggles with every language he studies, which includes Spanish, and jokes that he’s not even fluent in English.

This humble attitude belies his “awesome” commitment to his studies, said Clint Walker, UM associate professor of Russian language and culture.

“If you raise the bar, Kolter is there,” Walker said. “He works on a different level and is always challenging himself to be better. Students like him fire you up as an instructor.”

Deena Mansour, executive director of the Maureen and Mike Mansfield Center, met Odegaard as a student in Mansour’s Global Public Diplomacy class and was so impressed she offered to write a recommendation letter to the CLS committee.

"For any scholarship program, a commitment to community and leadership are essential. Cana has consistently demonstrated such qualities, even in her short time at the University of Montana,” Mansour said, noting that Odegaard has embraced a role as citizen diplomat.

“I can always rely on her to ask a thoughtful question that represents herself, our University, and our state well,” Mansour added.
With world conditions in flux, Odegaard said she will do her studies virtually with an institute in Oman this summer. Stevenson recently learned he will travel to Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan to study at the American University of Central Asia. Both said they’d like to use their language skills someday to live and work internationally.

That might be owning an environmental business in Estonia for Stevenson. For Odegaard that very well might be for the U.N.

“I really hope to one day go back to some of the countries and talk to refuges and learn their stories in their language,” she said.

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**Contact:** Dave Kuntz, UM director of strategic communications, 406-243-5659, dave.kuntz@umontana.edu.

**Launch UM virtual tour.**
UM Students Win Prestigious Critical Language Scholarships
UM researcher Will Rice led a study that found the National Park System online campground reservation system favors higher-income white campers.

MISSOULA – University of Montana Assistant Professor Will Rice is a self-avowed “campground nerd.”
Spring signals the start of high season for campers and Rice – he is of the tenting ilk, more than the motorhome – looks forward to getting out into the great outdoors.

But camping is more than Rice’s avocation it’s also his vocation, and as a researcher in outdoor recreation and wildland management, he studies the science and art of camping, including how campers actually pick their campsites and the seismic changes taking place in U.S. national parks due to COVID-19.

That research, conducted with colleagues around the country and at the W. A. Franke College of Forestry & Conservation, has found a park system strained by the exploding popularity of outdoor recreation and struggling to find ways to balance park protection with equitable access to all.

As Rice puts his work: “We are studying people trying to have fun to make sure they, and everyone else, can keep having fun or start having fun, without destroying the things that allow them to have fun. That sounds simple, but it turns out this is an incredibly complex puzzle – and one that is incredibly important to Montana and our nation’s economy.”

His research has been featured in prominent popular publications, including USA Today, Men’s Journal, The Guardian and National Geographic.

In March, Rice, along with UM Associate Professor Jennifer Thomsen and graduate students Jaclyn Rushing and Peter Whitney, released their latest study, which digs deeper into the issue of online camping reservations systems and their impact on the demographics of national park campers.

“There is a massive push right now to go to online reservation systems,” said Rice, noting that two areas of Glacier National Park are now online for the first time. “It’s just more efficient for the park agency.”

Efficient, perhaps, but not without unintended consequences, his team’s research found.

Using federal camping data and mobile device location technology – with funding secured from UM’s Center for Population Health Research – Rice was able to more closely correlate the ethnicity and income of campers with their ability to access campground sites. The research looked at five national park campgrounds across the country that offered campsites both
Camping Reservations: ‘A Wicked Problem of Equity,’ Finds UM Researchers

through the park system’s reservation platform, Recreation.gov, and on a first-come, first-served basis.

The analysis found that on average campers accessing sites that require reservations came from areas with significantly higher portions of white residency and higher-incomes than those accessing sites not requiring reservations.

The reasons for these outcomes are many, Rice said, and are based on everything from technology to workforce dynamics.

“To use these systems you need high-speed internet, which can be a problem for some campers – particularly in remote places like we have in Montana,” he explained. “You also need flexibility to plan your trip for six months from now. People with lower-income jobs often don’t have the ability to set vacations that far in advance.”

Success in securing the site also requires a level of institutional knowledge on how the system works, which can lead to fewer novice campers landing coveted sites, he said.

Within the past few years, these disparities were further exasperated by the rise of startups that can, at a cost, alert customers the moment a campsite becomes available.

Rice said these findings add much-needed research to a growing conversation around inequitable accessibility to National Park Service campgrounds – a phenomena as old as the park system itself.

“There has always been an aspect of exclusivity to the national parks,” Rice said, noting campgrounds were conceptualized by the leisure class to emulate the suburbs. “And to a large degree they remain exclusionary.”

Still, he adds, as overall numbers of campers grow, so too has the representation of campers of various ethnic groups. Participation in outdoor activities, while not representative of the overall population percentages, has grown among Blacks and Hispanics in the past few years in particular.

Rice calls the demographic change a “camping bright spot.”
So how does the National Park Service preserve what makes parks “natural” while keeping them accessible to all?

“We can’t use tools employed in the private sector. We simply can’t raise prices as they do in the hospitality industry,” Rice said. “It’s a super-wicked problem.”

One possibility, now used in some Yosemite campgrounds, is a lottery system for long-term reservations and on a daily basis.

“We’re hoping for funding at UM to look deeper into lottery system to see if it works,” Rice said.

As a tent guy, Rice said he prefers dispersed camping but realizes that “sometimes you want a toilet” and is hoping solutions for everyone who shares his love of camping can be found in the near future.

He grins when asked if, what with his inside track on the industry, he has a secret list of easily accessible camp spots. He does and shares one.

“I like Death Valley National Park,” he said of one of the hottest places on Earth. “But not a ton of people want to go there.”

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