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Launch UM virtual tour.
Hydrology Professor Jay Famiglietti will give a talk at UM Thursday, Feb. 9, as part of the President's Lecture Series.

(Photo by Steve Anderson)

By Abigail Lauten-Scrivner, UM News Service
MISSOULA – Hydrology Professor Jay Famiglietti isn’t hesitant to make waves when it comes to speaking out about the state of the world’s fresh water.

When asked about the global water crisis in the 2011 documentary “Last Call at the Oasis,” Famiglietti’s responded “we’re screwed.” That warning became a tagline for the film and an encapsulation of the attitude many continue to have about water.

Over a decade later, conditions are more dire. But the situation isn’t hopeless. The causes for both hope and alarm will be the subject of Famiglietti’s Thursday, Feb. 9 talk at the University of Montana, “Changing Freshwater Availability as Viewed from Space: The Good, the Bad and the Ugly.”

Part of UM’s President’s Lecture Series, the event will be held at 7:30 p.m. in the University Center Theater and on Zoom. It will serve as the 2023 Brennan Guth Memorial Lecture in Environmental Philosophy. The talk is free and open to the public. Register in advance to attend via Zoom.

Famiglietti uses satellites and computer models to track how fresh water availability is changing. His talk will offer a candid look at the state of the global water supply and reveal how better understanding it could help combat the crisis.

“There is far greater social and political awareness of the need to take action on water issues today compared to a decade ago,” Famiglietti said. “I would probably say, ‘We are thoroughly and completely screwed unless we get right on this today.’”

In the years since Famiglietti’s warning, he’s continued to lend his expertise on television programs like “60 Minutes” and “Real Time with Bill Maher,” hosted an award-winning science podcast and been featured in dozens of international news articles, including The New York Times, the Washington Post and The Guardian.

Famiglietti recently began a new position as a Global Futures Professor in the School of Sustainability at Arizona State University. He previously served as executive director of the Global Institute for Water Security at the University of Saskatchewan and was the senior water scientist at the NASA Jet Propulsion Laboratory, among other roles.

The President’s Lecture Series brings the community together to learn and discuss issues that stir public conversation. Famiglietti hopes the audience will leave thinking about where their
water comes from, how those sources are at risk due to climate change and over-exploitation, and what that risk means for the future.

“We can no longer take water security – that we will always have enough water to do all the things that we want and need to do – for granted,” he said.

In anticipation of the upcoming event, Famiglietti spoke with UM News to preview his talk.

**UM News: How has studying water changed the way you think about it in your everyday life? Has researching water amid a time of crisis impacted how you see the world?**

Today I have a far deeper appreciation for the importance of water to my life, and to everyone’s everyday lives, than I did 20 years ago. When my wife and I walk our dog along the Saskatchewan River each morning, I think about how that river sustains everything that has happened and will ever happen in the city of Saskatoon.

To preview some of the ugly part of my talk, sadly, I see much of our physical water crisis – that is, the patterns and pace of changing water availability – as being rooted in greed. That’s the same greed that has led to the climate crisis. On this point, I am deeply cynical.

However, today I understand that we are not going to move the needle on global water security without deep industry engagement. Over the last couple of years, this has become my new mission.

**UM News: What do people misunderstand about water? What should they know?**

There is not an infinite supply, and there are no new, mythical, enormous sources of pristine water out there waiting to be discovered. We need to stop thinking about supply-side solutions and focus on the more difficult, demand side: far greater efficiency across all sectors, greatly enhancing recycling and generally working toward using less water and using it with far more care.

There is a second key point, and that is groundwater. Groundwater, in my opinion, is the world’s most valuable water asset. Our groundwater is disappearing, and with it goes our drought resilience and a key resource for climate adaptation. If we valued water the way we value oil, and we should, this would never be allowed to happen.
UM News: The state of our water and how it could impact the future may, to some, seem too complex of an issue to truly understand. Others, such as those living in places like Montana that receive a relatively steady amount of precipitation, may feel disconnected from the issue. Why is water important enough that everyone should care?

First, no region on Earth can escape the impacts of climate change, and that includes Montana. There is no reason to expect that the flows in Montana’s rivers, large or small, or the moisture levels in its soils, will not be impacted. This is everyone’s issue.

A second factor to consider is how water is critical to food and industrial production. I’m betting that if I went into any local supermarket, like Albertsons, that I would find produce from California or Mexico or Peru, all of which are water stressed. When these places run out of water, you will feel it here, through shortages and higher prices.

The world is extremely interconnected today, and water is one of the key threads that weaves us together.

UM News: What can people do to be a part of the solution? Where does change realistically need to come from?

Well, taking shorter showers isn’t really going to get it done.

Today, I encourage people to hold their elected officials accountable for their water platforms. What are their plans to deal with climate change and its impact on Montana’s surface and groundwaters? Given these realities, how will these supplies be protected and sustained for generations to come?

This goes hand-in-hand with the theory of change. It won’t happen unless we, collectively, ask for it. We need to protect our waters because they can’t protect themselves, and there are hundreds of thousands of players out there willing to take advantage of that – but with consequences that impact billions of people.

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Contact: Dave Kuntz, UM director of strategic communications, 406-243-
Griz Chat: Expert to Address the Good, Bad and Ugly of Global Water Crisis
MOMENTUM CONTINUES IN UM’S FIRST YEAR AS ‘R1’ RESEARCH UNIVERSITY

30 JANUARY 2023

UM wildlife biology student Bailey Underwood processes samples from fruit flies in an evolutionary genomics lab.

Scott Whittenburg

MISSOULA – The University of
Montana was named a top-tier "R1" research institution last year. It was the culmination of a decades-long goal for UM, and the science surge has only gained momentum in the first six months of the 2022-23 fiscal year.

During the past decade, expenditures from research grants have more than doubled at the University. This past fall reported research expenditures were a record $126 million, up $4 million from the year before. UM experienced a 129% increase from the $55 million reported in 2014.

Scott Whittenburg, UM vice president for research and creative scholarship, was a chief architect of the University’s bid to earn R1 status from the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education. Only about 3.7% of degree-granting institutions across the U.S. earn the designation. Of the 146 R1 universities, UM ranks No. 9 for research growth since 2014.

Whittenburg said the amount of new external funding received by UM in the first six months of this fiscal year is up 18% over where it was a year ago. The award volume stands at $99 million, compared to $84 million at this time last year.

“So our trajectory looks strong – poised for another record,” he said. “We expect this trend to continue for the next several years as our research awards continue to reach new heights.”
Momentum Continues in UM’s First Year as ‘R1’ Research University

The number of research proposals submitted in the first six months is about even, 260 this year compared to 263 a year ago. However, the amount of external funding requested, also called the proposal volume, is $151 million this year compared to $123 million last year.

Additionally, research and associated instructional expenditures are up 8%. Whittenburg said this figure does not yet include expenses channeled through the UM Foundation and the Montana Technology Enterprise Center (MonTEC), UM’s business incubator.

Of the 146 R1 research universities in the U.S., only two – UM and the University of Oregon – managed to achieve that status without also having an engineering school or a medical school. Whittenburg said the University’s R1 status should continue contributing to the growth of UM and its research enterprise.

“In addition to the added prestige of being an R1 university, the designation also helps in the recruitment of students – both undergraduate and graduate – and new faculty,” he said. “Many students will only consider R1 universities when looking at where to apply in much the same way that they only consider D1 athletic schools.

“I also meet with many of the faculty candidates during the recruitment process, and they have all mentioned our achievement of R1 status as a major factor in their decision as to where they would like to continue their career.”

Contact: Scott Whittenburg, UM vice president for research and creative scholarship, 406-243-6670, scott.whittenburg@umontana.edu.

Launch UM virtual tour.
Momentum Continues in UM’s First Year as ‘R1’ Research University
Holly Old Crow, a Crow Nation member, traditional dancer and UM law student, said dancing in full regalia with her children Katlyn Birdinground, 12, and Titus Old Crow, 6, on center court of UM’s Dahlberg Arena was a special experience.

By Phil Stempin, UM News Service

MISSOULA – This week’s Nike-inspired N7 basketball games at the University of Montana will honor the state’s Indigenous tribes – from the jerseys worn by the players to the display of the
UM Law Student’s Nike N7 Native Dance Celebrates Crow Traditions

state’s Tribal Nation flags during the National Anthem. Included in the tributes will be a moving promotional video featuring Crow traditional dancer and UM law student Holly Old Crow, performing with her children in full regalia on center court of Dahlberg Arena.

“Crow style dancing is putting the tribe on the map,” said Old Crow, a second-year law student at UM’s Alexander Blewett III School of Law. “It’s such a visual part of our culture. But there is much more about the people behind the regalia.”

Old Crow’s story is an inspiration itself.

A single mom who had her kids early in life, Crow always wanted more for her family.

“I didn’t want to be the stereotype,” she said. “I wanted to set an example for my kids so they can see anything is possible. I want to give them the world.”

Old Crow wants to use her legal education to help her reservation, while showing her children the importance of chasing their dreams.

That example started with Old Crow earning her undergraduate degree in sociology and criminology with a minor in Native American Studies. Then, knowing she needed more skills to land the kind of job she was looking for, she decided to pursue a law degree at UM.

“I was really young when I had my kids, and they are my first priority,” Old Crow explained. “I made a promise to them that I would better our lives through improving our opportunities. Law school is the path that will create these opportunities for us.”

A legal education isn’t easy. Most students work more than eight hours a day studying, going to
class and writing papers. For Old Crow, the day includes taking care of her two children and motherhood, which is a fulltime job.

“I start my day around 6 a.m. and get the kids fed and ready for school,” said Old Crow. “Then I’m studying at school and going to class from 8 a.m. until five.”

After school she cooks dinner and helps her children with their schoolwork. Then she studies from their bedtime until after midnight.

Old Crow grew up on the Crow Agency, a community that values education in equal measure as culture.

“I see more community support from home than I could have imagined. The whole community rallies behind me,” she said. “They have helped pitch in for the cost of my books and supplies, offer words of encouragement when they see me, and they pray for me.”

This encouragement gets her through the day.

“I know I can do this with their help; they are really in my corner,” she said. “It’s a reminder I’m part of something bigger than myself.”

Old Crow credits some of her drive to growing up in a supportive family of “go-getters.” Her father was in tribal government, and she grew up watching him as a leader in her community. Her brothers worked in law enforcement, and her grandfather is a highly respected elder.

“My 90-year-old grandpa is my biggest supporter,” she said of Newton Old Crow Sr. “When times are tough, he always reminds me of where I have been.”

Old Crow Sr. has seen a lot in his lifetime. She said his grandparents lived a traditional Crow lifestyle and were born in teepees. Now he is watching his granddaughter get her law degree, and even lets his great grandson crawl over him when they see each other.

“He would have never allowed that when I was a child,” said Old Crow. “He is so happy watching his family grow through time. It is such a blessing to have him involved in our lives.”
Old Crow’s ultimate goal is to move home and practice law to help her reservation. She wants to buy a large plot of land that her family will be able to live on and visit.

It’s important, she said, to pay back her parents and grandparents for their support, and to succeed and help others as she can.

When asked what advice she would give to her younger self, she spoke with experience.

“Regardless of the challenges you face, everything will work out as it should,” said Old Crow. “Keep working hard and trust the process.”

The promo video created by Grizzly Athletics, she adds, is really exciting for her and her children.

“This production will be in our family forever,” she said. “It was a really special moment for my kids and me. We love dancing, and this was a great way to show it to the world.”

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Launch UM virtual tour.
UM Law Student’s Nike N7 Native Dance Celebrates Crow Traditions
Griz Hockey's growth is partly due to its outreach with Missoula and surrounding communities.

By Kyle Spurr, UM News Service

MISSOULA – Griz Hockey player Mason Perich never felt nervous before a game until his first action last year in front of over 1,200 roaring fans in Missoula’s Glacier Ice Rink.
Perich grew up playing hockey in Windsor, Colorado and played Division 1 hockey for the University of Colorado in Boulder, but he never saw an electric atmosphere like playing for the University of Montana.

“We never really got big turnouts in Boulder, but here it’s the thing to go and do,” said Perich. “I never experienced anything like that. It’s just awesome.”

**Griz Hockey**, an officially recognized club sport at UM, is in its second season after a seven-year absence. The beefed-up team has captured Missoula’s love of hockey and Griz sports. Home games pack the Glacier Ice Rink with a rowdy student section and fans who cram into standing-room-only spots to watch the action. The return of Griz Hockey also has renewed a rivalry with Montana State’s club hockey team.

“The way Griz Hockey has touched the community is one of the coolest things I’ve seen,” said UM alumnus Tucker Sargent, the hockey team’s general manager, who also coaches UM’s club lacrosse team. “Kids are lining up to fist bump the players, and they are looking at these players like they are true heroes.”

Sargent believes the team’s growth is partly due to its outreach with Missoula and surrounding communities. The team traveled to Philipsburg last year to visit locals and play on the city’s outdoor ice rink. Players also made an appearance at the Missoula grand opening of the sporting goods store Scheels.

To kick off this spring semester at UM, students and community members were invited to skate with the hockey team on the UM Oval’s ice rink.

“You have to be out in front of people to let them know who you are,” Sargent said. “Whether it’s giving the general hockey fan a reason to become a part of the Griz fan base, or letting the fan base know we’re here and trying to grow the sport and brand of the University of Montana.”

"Griz Hockey players taught Woodman School students about the sport during a visit to the school’s ice rink."
an outdoor ice rink in front of their historic school. Woodman’s middle school students built the rink over the past three years, and proudly hung a Griz Hockey flag above the rink along with an American flag and Montana’s state flag.

“They have been skating out here for a few years, but this is the first year they have been really getting into hockey,” said Neil Murray, Woodman’s supervising teacher.

The Griz Hockey players scrimmaged in front of the students, and then invited them on the ice to teach them how to pass and shoot a puck. The young students asked questions about how the players balance on skates and how often they practice. One student asked if any of the players ever lost control and slid into the goal. Most of the players said they had.

“I like them to be able to see people who are really good at what they do,” Murray said. “And to be interested in something happening in the community.”

After the unforgettable day on the rink, the hockey team invited the Woodman students to their game against Williston State. The students spent the week making posters to bring to the game. After the Griz won, the players stayed to sign all the posters.

“It was really cool,” Sargent said. “It was intimate and fun and the players got to interact with them right after the game.”

Sargent marvels at the progress of his team since its return. The history of hockey at UM started in the 1970s with some college friends who called themselves the Flying Mules. In more recent years, the club was student-led but eventually dissolved. That’s when Sargent stepped in and worked to bring back Griz Hockey. He partnered with co-coaches Mike Anderson, former assistant coach of the Missoula Junior Bruins, and Will Grossman, manager of the local Hockey Wolf store.
With the help of a few others, the local men were able to recruit players – both locally and out-of-state – and built a team that now sells out the Glacier Ice Rink and competes in the American College Hockey Association.

“The goal is to make it an institution where it’s a community event that people look forward to,” Sargent said. “I think we can grow this to be bigger and better every year.”

Eddy Lochridge, a sophomore forward on the Griz Hockey team, grew up in Missoula and played for the Missoula Bruins in high school. He felt the local support of hockey as a kid, but nothing has compared to the crowds at the Griz Hockey games, he said.

“When I was in high school, it felt pretty cool if we had 100 people there,” Lochridge said. “It felt cool back then, but this is a step up.”

For Perich, a sophomore defense man for the Griz, joining the team was his last chance to play competitive hockey in college. Injuries derailed his career at Colorado University and he was looking for one more opportunity to play. When Griz Hockey reached out, he wasn’t familiar with the team or Missoula. But after a visit, Perich was hooked.

Now he and the rest of the team are preparing for one of the biggest games of the year at home against rival Montana State, where Perich thought about attending before his visit to UM.

“I love hockey and I found this perfect opportunity,” Perich said. “I considered Bozeman, but once I heard about it here and visited, I knew this was my spot.”

###


A video on the team’s recent visit to Woodman School also is available on YouTube.

**Contact:** Dave Kuntz, UM director of strategic communications, 406-243-5659, dave.kuntz@umontana.edu
Griz Hockey players spent a day at Woodman School to share their love of the game with students.

Launch UM virtual tour.
Maegan Rides At The Door, executive director of UM’s National Native Children’s Trauma Center, leads one of the many training sessions the center hosts each year for tribes as far afield as Florida and Alaska.

MISSOULA – When asked about historic trauma among members of her Oklahoma tribe, University of Montana employee Kimee Wind-Hummingbird recalls an opportunity she had last summer to attend the first stop of the national Road to Healing tour.

Sponsored by Interior Secretary Deb Haaland to collect stories from survivors of the federal
boarding school system, these tour stops would be steeped in emotion, Wind-Hummingbird said, and deeply impactful – never more so than for Native Americans of Oklahoma, which had more boarding schools than any other state in the nation.

“I asked my father if he wanted to go,” said Wind-Hummingbird, a citizen of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation, “and he said ‘no.’ I didn’t ask why. I felt it. I knew.

“Some of our ancestors never made it home from the boarding schools, and those that did were forever changed,” she added. “They were no longer the same children they were when they left that community.”

Today, as a training and technical assistance specialist for the UM’s National Native Children’s Trauma Center, Wind-Hummingbird helps tribal community leaders, educators and others identify and respond to trauma both historical and contemporary among the nation’s Native children.

“We have issues with housing, health care, getting to health care, some communities don’t have great roads … challenges that mainstream America doesn’t even know about,” Wind-Hummingbird said. “In our work at the center, we look at our practices, our way of life, our way of being that can help us feel whole.”

Kimee Wind-Hummingbird, left, and Veronica Willetto DeCrane, the center’s Training and Technical Assistance manager, conduct child trauma trainings for Native tribes. Here they provide training at a Child Advocacy Center in Oklahoma with service dog Lady Sybil, aka Sybi.

The center, housed in UM’s Phyllis J. Washington College of Education, is affiliated with the National Child Traumatic Stress Network, created by
UM Center Helps Native Children and Communities Overcome Trauma

Congress in 2000 as part of the Children’s Health Act to raise awareness and services for children and families experiencing trauma.

NNCTC Executive Director Maegan Rides At The Door said the center at UM is one of only a few focused on Native children on a national level. Since its founding in 2007, staff has developed a catalog of trauma-focused interventions and trainings for tribes as far afield as Florida and Alaska.

Funding for much of the center’s work comes from federal grants, so the staff’s level of involvement with a tribe can vary, said Rides At the Door, an enrolled member of the Assiniboine-Sioux Tribes of the Fort Peck Reservation. While they don’t actively promote one-time trainings – “Trauma 101” as they call it – these initial introductions often lead to longer-term collaborations with the focus being on tribal members who know the community’s children best.

“We actually don’t train a lot of mental health professionals because there are typically only one to five clinicians working in most rural areas,” Rides At The Door said. “One to five can’t heal an entire community of traumatic experiences, so that has led us to expand support and trainings to other community-wide efforts while building systems of care that aren’t just focused...
specifically on mental health.”

This team approach comes to the fore in school systems where everyone from the principal to the bus driver is trained to view students with a “trauma lens,” said Amy Foster Wolferman, the center's director of school-based training and technical assistance.

“We work with these teams to develop systemwide policies and procedures that focus on nonreactive discipline and creating safe spaces for students,” she said. “By understanding how trauma can trigger behavioral reactions, we can help students develop social skills for success at school and in society.”

Having a trauma lens applies, as well, when working with parents of school children, said Bettina Sandoval, director of the Taos Pueblo Education & Training Division in New Mexico.

“Parents often have trouble advocating for their children because they had bad experiences in school themselves,” said Sandoval, an award-winning educator who grew up on the Taos Pueblo. “If a principal only calls when there is a problem, a parent is less likely to show up. These are a traumatic response not because the parent doesn't care. They care.”

The Taos Pueblo first worked with NNCTC during the COVID-19 pandemic, which resulted in significantly more deaths among Natives than other racial and ethnic groups.

“We wanted training to help us recognize and respond to pandemic deaths and its impact on children and their families,” Sandoval said. “Staff who took the course actually recognized trauma in themselves.”

Sandoval said the community now holds biweekly meetings with NNCTC, and trainings have extended to law enforcement as well as others in the community. As a professional, she said, the trainings have given her the tools and resources to be more effective in helping her tribe.

“We're talking layer upon layer of trauma,” Sandoval said. “Not just historical, also present day. Death. Drugs. We're opening a box that people have kept shut.”

Because of the diversity of their clientele, Rides At The Door said, their work with Taos Pueblo and other tribal groups is very much a partnership – one that recognizes traditional healing methods along with modern.
“We look at how the community defines trauma, including words in their Native language that define traumatic experiences in their tribal context,” she said. “We ask questions like what were and are the types of traumatic experiences that are different from other communities? How are these systems expressed given the cultural norms of these communities? How best to heal and what healing means?”

The center, she said, is helping tribes and groups who work with Native Americans in urban areas establish Child Advocacy Centers that will provide a hub of specialists for children facing abuse.

“So often these children fall through the cracks or they have to tell their story over and over again,” Rides At The Door said. “CACs allow professionals to coordinate care and better serve as advocates for victims of abuse.”

Although their work can be emotionally challenging, Wind-Hummingbird and others at the center see positive changes taking place in caring for Native children. Personally, she takes great pride in the fact her three children are learning Creek, their native language, and that young adults on her reservation are now talking about their tribal past and current-day challenges.

“They understand the role historical trauma has had in their lives and how we need to work together and come together and shakes some trees,” she said. “I am in awe of our team. Not just the work we are doing in Indian Country, but across the nation.”

Contact: Maegan Rides At The Door, executive director, UM National Native Children’s Trauma Center, 406-243-2644, maegan.ridesatthedoornmt.edu.

Launch UM virtual tour.
HELENA – Three University of Montana School of Journalism students are providing daily and weekly news coverage of the 68th Montana Legislature to scores of news organizations across the state this semester as part of the UM Legislative News Service.

The service distributes the student-produced coverage to more than 150 news organizations,
providing the coverage since 1993. The project is made possible through a partnership of the UM School of Journalism, the Greater Montana Foundation, the Montana Broadcasters Association and Montana Newspaper Association.

A new partnership with Kaiser Health News also enabled the service to expand its coverage, adding Keely Larson, a KHN fellow and graduate student, to the team to cover how the Montana legislative session will impact health issues in the state.

“The health bills and policy changes that will be debated this session will affect the lives of all Montanans, and they deserve to know what decisions are being made in their names,” said Matt Volz, KHN Mountain States editor. “This partnership between KHN and the University of Montana aims to empower Montana citizens with that knowledge.”

Larson is joined at the Capitol by senior Caven Wade, who provides weekly written coverage to newspapers across the state, and Elinor Smith, who produces daily audio stories for Montana broadcasters.

“The UM Legislative News Service is a vital part of our members' legislative coverage,” said Jim Strauss, communications & development director for the Montana Newspaper Association. “It is especially important for our weekly newspapers, which do not have the resources to have a person in Helena covering the session. In fact, some of our members rely solely on the UM reporters for their legislative coverage.”

Each week, Wade, who grew up in Helena, writes a long-form feature and concise briefs for newspapers, offering them flexibility to focus their coverage to best suit their communities.

"The UM Legislative News coverage does a great job sorting legislative news by region and topic, so our members are able to select and run the content that is most important to their readers," Strauss said.

Smith, who hails from Boise, Idaho, hits airwaves with her broadcast stories in markets across the state, providing daily coverage for radio listeners in communities from Kalispell to Lewistown to Glendive.

“The Montana Broadcasters Association has been an underwriter of the UM Legislative News Service for many years, and it is an important service to our members providing coverage of
Montana’s Legislative sessions and training students in news coverage,” said Dewey Bruce, the director of the Montana Broadcasters Association.

The training aspect of the program is especially valuable for students, said Courtney Lowery Cowgill, a School of Journalism adjunct professor who has headed the service since 2013.

“There is no better education, on journalism or public affairs or government in general, than covering Montana’s citizen Legislature,” Cowgill said. “Students are immediately immersed in the professional Capitol press corps and learning how to understand complex policy and make it all make sense to the people it actually effects on the ground.”

Alumni of the UM Legislative News Service include Michael Wright, editor of the Bozeman Daily Chronicle; Jonathon Ambarian, senior political reporter for the Montana Television Network; Shaylee Ragar, Capitol reporter for Montana Public Radio; and Freddy Monares, producer at KNKX Public Radio in Seattle.

Between broadcasters and newspapers combined, the UM Legislative News service reaches countless Montanans.

“Without a doubt, UM Legislative News Service coverage reaches readers in every corner of Montana, benefiting our members and their audience,” Strauss said.

News organizations that are MBA and MNA members and wish to receive the reports can sign up online. The students’ published work is curated online.

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Launch UM virtual tour.
UM Journalism Students Cover Montana Legislature
Kevin Costner plays John Dutton, the sixth-generation patriarch of a fictional Montana ranch family, on Paramount’s “Yellowstone” TV series. (Paramount Network image)
MISSOULA – Paramount Network’s “Yellowstone,” TV’s most popular series, has sparked the interest of a worldwide audience, bringing an estimated 2.1 million visitors and $730 million in spending to Montana in 2021, according to a new University of Montana study.

Conducted by UM’s Bureau of Business and Economic Research and UM’s Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research, the study found that the TV show has been a significant factor in marketing Montana. Centered on the fictional Dutton family ranch, “Yellowstone” is largely filmed in Darby, Hamilton, Missoula and the Bitterroot Valley, and it treated more than 12 million viewers to the scenery of Montana during its season-five premiere.

A 2022 study conducted by BBER found “Yellowstone” contributed significantly to the state’s economy, but when the more recent study was extended to include the impact of visitor spending, these effects changed dramatically, according to Patrick Barkey, director of BBER.

“Extending our previous analysis to include the impacts of tourism spending was eye-opening,” Barkey said.

The study found that the combination of visitor spending and film production spending associated with the production of “Yellowstone” in Montana resulted in:

- $730.1 million in spending to the state’s economy.
- $44.5 million in state tax revenues directed in whole or in part to the general fund.
- 10,200-plus jobs across a wide spectrum of industries, including both tourism-related and other industries.
- $376 million in income received by Montana households.
- roughly $1.1 billion in output, or gross receipts, of Montana business and nonbusiness
- 1 million visitors to Montana in 2021 whose decision to visit was the result of the show.
- 3,305 more people attracted and retained to the state by the increased economic opportunity.

“Film is an economic driver of tourism, and the ‘Yellowstone’ TV show has demonstrated the
power of Montana’s American West image to influence people to visit the state,” said Melissa Weddell, the ITRR director.

“Everything from food services, hotels, rental companies and transportation services to high tech and skilled trades such as electricians and carpenters, are benefiting from the film industry’s activity in the state,” said Todd O’Hair, president and CEO of the Montana Chamber of Commerce. “It is also clear that ‘Yellowstone’ has proven to be a big economic driver of tourism, creating more jobs, tax generation and a wave of economic activity.”


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**Contact:** Patrick Barkey, director, UM Bureau of Business and Economic Research, 406-243-2723, pat.barkey@mso.umt.edu; Melissa Weddell, director, UM Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research, 406-243-2328, melissa.weddell@umont.edu.

Launch UM virtual tour.
UM Honors College Joins Network to Train Students for Food, Climate, Ag Careers
MISSOULA – The Davidson Honors College at the University of Montana recently joined a national collaborative to train students for leadership roles in the FANH fields of food, agriculture, natural sciences and human sciences.

Fourteen universities are part of the three-year collaborative project, “The Justice Challenge: Engaging Students in the Future of Food, Climate and Sustainable Agriculture.” The project aims to create diverse, well-prepared graduates in FANH disciplines who are ready to tackle complex challenges.

“Graduates of the program will enter the workforce with innovative skillsets and mindsets essential for today’s world,” said Tim Nichols, the DCH dean. “As a result of these learning opportunities, our honors graduates will prepare to address the world’s greatest challenges with system approaches that are both informed and compassionate.”

The collaborative was funded by a $750,000 grant from the National Institute of Food and
Agriculture of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. UM will partner with initiative host institutions South Dakota State University, Oklahoma State University, Texas A&M University and Virginia Tech.

The project is expected to bring together more than 500 students from across the country. They will leverage the nimble and innovative structure of a university honors education to participate in the Grand Challenge Scholars Institute. Every year, the institute will address a USDA priority theme, such as food justice, climate justice and sustainable agriculture.

Nichols said each institute will kick off with a colloquium that introduces students to the theme and to one another. Then students will participate in a signature experience of their choice, such as a field experience or design challenge. The institute will conclude with a conference to showcase student work and enhance networks between students and leading FANH experts.

A Fellow of the National Collegiate Honors Council, Nichols previously directed two other USDA grants titled “Honors in Agriculture” and “Meeting Grand Challenges” while working at South Dakota State. He said this new national collaboration will build upon and expand those efforts.

Open to all majors, DHC offers an enhanced honors education to a community of student scholars within the University, with limited class sizes and mentoring for scholarships, internships and study abroad opportunities.

Nichols said the Grand Challenge Scholars Institutes will build upon the DHC’s interdisciplinary curriculum, as well as its climate change studies and QUEST programs, which engage students in exploring and finding solutions to important contemporary issues – both locally and globally.

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**Contact:** Tim Nichols, UM Davidson Honors College dean, 406-243-2534, timothy.nichols@mso.umt.edu.

Launch UM virtual tour.
UM Honors College Joins Network to Train Students for Food, Climate, Ag Careers
The University of Montana welcomes returning students for spring semester 2023 with a host of winter events meant to celebrate the return of Grizzlies and highlight the unique sense of place western Montana provides during deep winter.
MISSOULA – University of Montana students and community members are invited to celebrate the start of the semester with a slate of winter events. UM welcomes returning students for spring semester 2023 with a host of winter events meant to celebrate the return of Grizzlies and highlight the unique sense of place western Montana provides during deep winter. Part of UM’s winter charm includes an on-campus ice rink, open to community use, a rising club hockey team and plenty of cross-country skiing available on the UM Golf Course.

“Winter is a special time at UM, so we’re leveraging our unique environment to welcome students back during what can be a cold and gray time,” said Leslie Webb, vice provost for student success. “Our campus culture, recreation and community directly impacts the total UM experience. A big part of that vibrancy means getting out and engaging with what this place offers, it’s part of creating a well-rounded student experience.”

The lineup of Welcome Back Winter Events includes:

- From 5 to 7 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 17, on the UM Oval, the Griz Hockey team will host a community skating event on the University’s ice-skating rink. Griz Hockey players and UM cheerleaders will help attendees learn to skate. Hot chocolate will be available, and the UM fire pits will be lit. A limited supply of ice skates is available to rent in the University Center Gaming Den. The event is free and open to the public.

- From 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 18, new and returning students are invited to participate in a Griz Winter Welcome on the Oval. The event includes games, ice skating, fire pits and s’mores. Additionally, the grand opening of a new campus dining area in the UC called Monte’s Den will run from 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. The new on-campus
UM Winter Week: Ice Rink, Bonfire and More to Welcome Returning Grizzlies

- Join the UM Alumni Association from 5 to 7 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 19, at Draughtworks in Missoula for a Griz on Tap event. The event is jointly hosted with the UM Forestry Club, which is organizing the annual Forrester’s Ball. Tickets to the ball will be raffled. Bring memories, photos and stories of previous Forrester’s Balls to receive a free raffle ticket.

- From 5 to 6 p.m. Friday, Jan. 20, the UM Bookstore will host a Welcome Back UM Shop Night with store discounts and raffle prizes. New this year, from 6 to 7:30 p.m. a bonfire Griz pep-rally will be held on UM’s River Bowl fields with fireworks. From 8 to 8:30 p.m. the Griz Hockey team will take on Providence at the Glacier Ice Rink.

- The Lady Griz and Griz basketball teams will play Montana State University on Saturday, Jan. 21, with games at 2 p.m. and 7 p.m., respectively. Tickets are on sale now at GoGriz.com.

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**Contact:** Dave Kuntz, UM strategic communications director, 406-243-5669, dave.kuntz@umontana.

Launch UM virtual tour.
UM alumna Clarise Larson, shown here working at the Juneau Empire newspaper, earned a national writing award from the Hearst Journalism Awards Program.

By Kelly Mulcaire, UM News Service

MISSOULA – University of Montana graduate Clarise Larson didn’t become a journalist by accident, saying she was drawn to the craft long before enrolling in her first class in the School of Journalism.
“I’ve always had a really deep love for writing and a curiosity to learn more about other people and their lives,” Larson said.

This drive to tell compelling stories came to the fore often during her studies at UM, including her time as an editor for the student newspaper, the Kaimin, and the pieces she produced in classes.

One of those stories, written for the Native News Honors Project, recently earned Larson second place in the Feature Writing Competition of the prestigious 2022-23 Hearst Journalism Awards Program. It was one of 150 entries from 82 schools nationwide.

“I am beyond grateful and honored that the piece gained recognition – it truly was a team effort beyond just the words I wrote,” Larson said. “I couldn't have done it without my peers and professors guiding me through the story and aiding me in the writing and reporting process.”

Growing up in White Bear Lake, Minnesota, Larson cultivated an interest in the arts and the outdoors, both of which made UM particularly appealing.

Despite no connection to Missoula, she made a trip to UM with her mom and soon it became clear her intuition had guided her to the right place.

“We were walking on the Oval, and I saw the journalism building and I was like, ‘No way – I can't believe they have a whole building for journalism,’” she said.

Larson firmly cemented herself in the University’s journalism ecosystem. She loaded up on capstone courses and served as the Kaimin’s Arts and Culture editor, as well as its resident astrological authority, writing weekly tongue-in-cheek horoscopes for the publication.

“A lot of people knew me as Clare the horoscope girl,” she joked.

As part of the Native News Honors Project, Larson and fellow students were assigned a Montana reservation to explore for news topics of importance. They had to find their own story, find their own sources and make a trip to the community.
Larson and photographer Van Fisher were tasked with reporting on the Northern Cheyenne Reservation.

“I was so stoked, but I had no idea what I was going to do,” Larson said. She managed to get an interview with a firefighter from the reservation. A fleeting comment on wildfires and coal seams caught Larson’s attention. She wanted to find out more.

“I didn’t see deep research on the impact and what it meant for communities and how it’s affecting people who own the land with coal seams,” she said.

Larson and Fisher made the seven-hour drive from Missoula to the reservation to investigate the relationship between wildfires and coal seams. Upon arrival, the pair put their J-school education to use.

“We just started sprinting around trying to get people to talk to us,” Larson said. “It was like real-life journalism.”

She interviewed fire officials, ranchers and geologists for the story, a comprehensive look at the realities of living with devastating wildfires fueled by climate change.

After graduating from UM in May – she minored in Chinese and was president of the Chinese language student club – Larson accepted a job with the Juneau Empire newspaper in Alaska. She and her dog, Bloon, set out on a four-day drive from Missoula to Skagway, where they boarded a ferry to their new city.

So far, Larson’s dream of being a professional journalist is living up to her expectations. She covers a variety of content for the paper, including the story of a Tlingit master carver gifting a dugout canoe to the village of Angoon, its first since a U.S. naval attack destroyed their fleet in 1882. Larson traveled to the small village by plane twice to cover the landmark moment.

“It was really special to be welcomed to that community,” she said. “I’m just some random kid from Minnesota, and being welcomed with open arms and having people tell me about their life and what their culture means to them, it really hit me in a spot I’ve never experienced as a reporter.”

Larson is excited to see where her career leads, but acknowledges the hard work and
Recent UM Alum Wins Prestigious Journalism Award

formative experiences from her time at UM for getting her to where she is. She cites the J-school’s motto: learn by doing.

“You have to really dive into it,” she said. “The more bylines you get, the more writing you do, the better you get. I tried to do a lot at UM, and it really paid off.”

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Launch UM virtual tour.
Recent UM Alum Wins Prestigious Journalism Award
UM’s Jule Banville created the podcast “An Absurd Result,” which recently was
MISSOULA – Slate magazine recently picked the best true-crime podcasts, books and movies available in 2022, and Jule Banville’s “An Absurd Result” made the cut.

Banville, an associate professor at the University of Montana, teaches audio, reporting and writing courses at the School of Journalism and advises the Montana Kaimin student newspaper. Slate highlighted her seven-episode podcast in a list of media that thoroughly depict crime without exploiting victims and their families.

“It’s wonderful to see ‘An Absurd Result’ receive this sort of attention,” Banville said. “Meeting the rape survivor at the center of this story and hearing what she has to say about everything that’s happened to her – it was the most important reporting I’ve done in my career. I’m really
honored to be in a list like this, and I hope it will help more people get to know Linda."

Slate wrote of the podcast: “Banville, an independent producer and journalism professor at the University of Montana, gave this story the space and time it needed, gorgeous (but not flowery) writing combined with impressive shoe-leather reporting. She left no stone unturned. Her storytelling skills combined with sweeping fact-finding reveal the heartbreaking hypocrisy of our justice system and the repeated failings of law enforcement toward both victims and the accused.”

“An Absurd Result” can be found online at https://www.absurdresultpodcast.com/. Banville also created the podcast “Last Best Stories,” which ran from 2015-2018 and consists of sound-rich features from Montana. Both can be found on most podcast services.

Before she began teaching, Banville worked for newspapers, public radio and ran the editorial for a website covering the Rocky Mountain West. She was the assistant managing editor at Washington City Paper, the alternative newsweekly serving the District of Columbia. Banville was a daily news reporter at the Erie Times-News in Pennsylvania for a decade. She also worked as a radio producer for WNYC, the New York NPR station, as part of the original staff that launched “The Next Big Thing.”

At UM, where she’s taught full time since 2012, she said she’s most proud of the “amazing, creative, diverse” audio stories her students have produced over the years. Dozens of their stories are archived at the Public Radio Exchange, PRX.org, under the title “University of Montana Journalism.”

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Launch UM virtual tour.
UM Alumnus, Native Artist Designs Griz Logo for Nike Event

09 January 2023

By Kyle Spurr, UM News Service

Benji Headswift, a UM alumnus and graphic designer, was selected to create a Native American logo for UM’s participation in Nike’s N7 program.

MISSOULA – Graphic designer Benji Headswift felt it was an opportunity of a lifetime
when he was selected last year to create a Native American logo for the University of Montana’s participation in Nike’s N7 program, a national initiative that encourages Indigenous youth to join in sports and recreational activities.

A UM alumnus and member of the Northern Cheyenne tribe (Só'taétane), Headswift has long incorporated Indigenous traditions into his artistic creations. But this commission places his work in the national spotlight that comes with the Nike N7 program, which has awarded more than $8 million to 270 communities and organizations through the sales of Native-inspired athletic clothing.

Headswift’s logo will appear on the Montana men’s and Lady Griz basketball teams’ shooting shirts at Nike N7 games in the Adams Center this season. Under the shooting shirts, the players will wear custom turquoise uniforms created by Nike. The Lady Griz game will be held at 2 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 28 and the men’s game will be at 7 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 4.

In collaboration with CLC, the University’s exclusive trademark licensing agency, officially licensed Nike Griz gear featuring Headswift’s logo already is available for sale. The gear can be found online and in the UM Bookstore, The M Store, Scheels, Fanatics and Dick’s Sporting Goods. As part of a request from Headswift, a portion of the proceeds will support UM’s Kyiyo Pow Wow, one of the nation’s oldest student-run powwows.

When designing the logo, Headswift wanted to create something authentic that would make his tribe and other Native American communities proud. He thought long and hard about his heritage and experiences before designing a logo with four feathers on the traditional cursive Griz logo. The feathers represent each level of education one can earn in college — an associate degree, bachelor’s degree, master’s degree and doctoral degree. Tribes have a
tradition of awarding achievements often through feathers, which gives the logo even more meaning, Headswift said.

“I hope this design gives our Indigenous people pride,” Headswift said. “I hope it inspires people to take a look at getting their education. I look at it as a new way of earning our feathers.”

UM will host N7 basketball games over the next three years. The upcoming games will be an opportunity for the University to celebrate the contributions of its Native American students, employees and student athletes. The games will feature a display of Montana’s tribal flags and a halftime Indigenous dance performance. In addition, five former Lady Griz basketball players from Native communities will attend and be recognized during time-outs.

Headswift said it will be surreal to see UM’s basketball teams wearing his logo on the Nike apparel.

“It’s going to be impactful, especially when the Native community finds out it’s somebody from the community and somebody from the state as well,” Headswift said.

Headswift also is somebody from UM. He graduated last year with a bachelor’s degree in Native American studies, housed in UM’s Department of Native American Studies in the College of Humanities and Sciences. At 41, Headswift was a non-traditional student who moved with his wife and four children from Lame Deer on the Northern Cheyenne Reservation to Missoula to study at UM.

“We took the chance and made the move,” Headswift said. “It was scary for us as a family. We never lived off reservation before with our kids. My wife and I had lived off the reservation in our younger years. I was in the Army and my wife was a UM student.”

Headswift, a former Northern Cheyenne tribal council member, now works for Missoula County Public Schools as a Native American specialist, while continuing to create artwork and designs for athletic clothing.

Michelle Guzman, director of UM’s American Indian Student Services, hired Headswift to work in her office as a student. She remembers him bringing in his artwork and encouraging other Native students.
"When I was asked for any suggestions for a student who may be interested in doing a design for the basketball team, I immediately thought of Benji and all the work he showed me," Guzman said. "Benji is a genuine person who cares about his Native American culture and people and this can be seen in his designs."

Headswift is thankful for his time at UM where he was able to see his potential as an artist. He hopes the opportunity to design the Native feather logo will inspire younger Native artists and other Indigenous youth who are considering attending college.

“I would like to encourage people to give college a try,” Headswift said. “Take it from a former Rez boy: If I can do it, I know you can as well.”

Last month, two days before Christmas, Headswift heard from a friend that the Griz gear with his logo was on the shelves in local retail stores. He immediately went to Scheels in Missoula and was in awe when he saw his artwork printed on the maroon, white and turquoise clothing.

“It was all chills and emotions,” he said, recalling the moment. “All in all, I hope this design gives strength, pride, and courage to those who wear it.”

Contact: Dave Kuntz, UM director of strategic communications, 406-243-5659, dave.kuntz@umontana.edu
Benji Headswift created a logo with four feathers on the traditional cursive Griz logo. The feathers represent each level of education one can earn in college.

Launch UM virtual tour.
UM Law Assistant Professor Anna Conley receives the 2023 Mark Tushnet Prize in Comparative Law from Mark Wojcik of the Association of American Law Schools.

MISSOULA – The Association of American Law Schools recently awarded University of Montana faculty member Anna Conley the 2023 Mark Tushnet Prize in Comparative Law. This prestigious award is given for the year’s best article on comparative law.

Conley is an assistant professor with UM’s Alexander Blewett III School of Law. She has litigated many large-scale complex cases, participated in several rule of law initiatives and published extensively in international and comparative law.
Comparative law is the study of legal systems across the world. Conley's article is an analysis of aspects of judicial power in civil and common law systems.

“Legal systems may have different histories and cultural values underlying their laws,” she said. “We look underneath the rule in comparative analysis to look at more than the law itself. We need to consider this when determining whether laws can be harmonized across systems.”

Comparative law is a fascinating topic for Conley.

“How we do it in the U.S. legal system is just one way of many,” she said. “There is a rich mosaic of legal systems in the world we can study and learn from.”

Her dedication to comparative law ultimately gives Montana law school students the chance to work directly with an expert in this field.

“I’m grateful to get to work with students to share my knowledge with future legal practitioners, judges, policymakers and global citizens,” Conley said. “I get to pass on skills and a passion for comparative analysis.”

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**Contact:** Phil Stempin, director of events, marketing and communications at the Alexander Blewett III School of Law, 406-243-6509, phil.stempin@umontana.edu.
MISSOULA – At the University of Montana, nearly 2,700 undergraduate students made the fall semester 2022 Dean’s List or President’s 4.0 List.

To qualify, students must be undergraduates, earn a semester GPA of 3.5 or higher and receive grades of A or B in at least nine credits. Students who receive any grade of C+ or below or no credit (NC/NCR) in a course are not eligible.

The students on the linked lists below made UM’s fall semester 2022 Dean’s List or the
President’s 4.0 List. Double asterisks after a name indicate the student earned a 4.0 GPA. A single asterisk indicates a GPA greater than 3.5 but less than 4.0. This information is grouped by hometowns or alphabetically by first name.

- View the Dean’s List and President’s 4.0 List for Montana students.

- View the Dean’s List and President’s 4.0 List for out-of-state students.

- View a full alphabetical list of all students who made the Dean’s List and President’s 4.0 List.

All lists also are available on the UM Dean’s List and Degree Candidates webpage.

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Contact: UM Registrar’s Office, grading@umontana.edu.

Note: The University is prohibited from publishing information about students who signed the Student Request to Restrict Release of Directory Information form through the Registrar’s Office. If students are not listed with a particular city or town, they should check other towns they may have listed as an address. If students are not listed and they believe they should be, email the Registrar’s Office at grading@umontana.edu.

Launch UM virtual tour.
Dr. Lerone A. Martin, an associate professor of religious studies and director of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Research and Education Institute at Stanford University, will speak on campus Jan. 26 as part of UM’s President’s Lecture series.

By Abigail Lauten-Scrivner, UM News Service
MISSOULA – The University of Montana’s annual President’s Lecture Series will launch in the new year with a visit by acclaimed writer and professor Dr. Lerone A. Martin.

Titled “Becoming King: How a Wavering Teenager Became a Global Icon,” the lecture will serve as UM’s Martin Luther King Jr. Day principal event. The talk at 7:30 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 26, will be held at UM’s Alice Lund Instructional Auditorium and can be viewed live on Zoom by registering in advance. It is free and open to the public.

The President’s Lecture Series brings speakers to campus who discuss issues and ideas that animate public conversation. Martin, who serves as faculty director of Stanford University’s Martin Luther King, Jr., Research and Education Institute, said his upcoming lecture will reexamine King’s life and teachings in a way that may be new to audiences. In providing a more complete look at the organizer’s experiences and beliefs, Martin hopes attendees will discover newfound power in King’s story.

“I want to reintroduce people to Martin Luther King,” Martin said. “What I hope is, in the end, it will inspire folks who maybe don’t see themselves as having any power to change their community. I hope they feel empowered by hearing his story.”

Martin is well acquainted with King’s story. As director of Stanford’s King Institute, he helps oversee the preservation and promotion of King’s work and legacy. That includes compiling the
entirety of his writings from birth to death, including all his letters, speeches and even high school papers. Meticulously chronicling King’s entire existence has highlighted facets of the activist’s life that were either previously unknown or overlooked.

“Americans believe that they know him,” Martin said. “But in order to get King to where he is as a national icon, he’s had to be stripped down.”

Too often, Martin said, King is distilled to his most famous line in his most famous speech, “I Have a Dream,” simplifying the global icon’s work and beliefs to only his nonviolent action against racism. While King’s impact on advancing racial equity cannot be understated, focusing solely on that aspect of his activism fails to encompass the entirety of King’s legacy, the roadblocks he faced while forging it and his dream for a better America.

As the title of Martin’s upcoming lecture suggests, King wavered before he set himself on the path to greatness. Before he became a gifted orator, minister and proponent for civil disobedience, King struggled in school, had doubts about religion and suffered traumatic, racist experiences.

Even as King’s influence burgeoned, he grappled against organized resistance from those who saw his vision for a more equitable nation as an alarm bell. Yet today, Martin said, King’s peaceful marches are often regarded as movements that were widely welcomed.

“They were not welcome – these were things that people found to be inconvenient. That was the point, they forced people to examine the ugliness,” Martin said. “People think that King was actually really well liked. We love him now, but the FBI considered him public enemy No. 1. His popularity declined significantly when he came out against the Vietnam War.”

King’s stance against war and militarism, as well as his beliefs about economic disparity in the U.S., are aspects of his activism that often are overlooked in history but contributed significantly to the resistance he faced by contemporary opponents, Martin said.

Simplifying King’s work solely to his efforts on racial justice allows an easy comparison between the strides made since the civil rights movement of the 20th century, yet it furthers the misconception that King’s dream for a more equitable U.S. has largely been accomplished.

“If King were able to speak to us today, I think he would be excited and applaud some of the things he’s seen,” Martin said. “I also think he would be saddened.”
Martin intends for those who attend his lecture to leave with a newfound understanding of King’s dream for a better future. He hopes the audience will gain a new sense of the global icon as a conversation partner whose words and wisdom can still be used to advance movements for equity and justice today.

In addition to Martin's role as director of the King Institute, he serves as Martin Luther King, Jr., Centennial Professor of Religious Studies at Stanford. He previously was a faculty member of the John C. Danforth Center on Religion and Politics and director of American Culture Studies at Washington University. Martin has a bachelor’s degree in religious studies from Anderson University, a master’s of divinity from Princeton Theological Seminary and a Ph.D. in religion in U.S. history from Emory University.


The President’s Lecture Series is sponsored in part by the National Endowment for the Humanities, supported by the Humanities Institute and UM departments. Learn more about the President’s Lecture Series online.

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

Launch UM virtual tour.
During Alicia Miles’ three-year tenure at UM’s
By Phil Stempin, UM News Service

MISSOULA – During the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, Alicia Miles packed up her car and moved to Montana. She had just been hired by the Alexander Blewett III School of Law at the University of Montana as the new director of admissions. Part of her new job description included increasing diversity within the law school. As a Black woman from Southwest Louisiana, she was up for the challenge.

“When I moved to Montana, I wasn’t sure what to expect,” Miles said. “I did know I wanted to create opportunities for as many different people as possible. Diversity is more than just race. There are wide socioeconomic differences [in our students] as well.”

After Miles arrived, the number of minority students entering law school in Montana increased from 11% to 20% in three years. She increased recruiting events in areas where the law school hadn’t previously spent as much time. Miles also started traveling to events at historically black colleges and universities, Hispanic-serving institutions and showed up to all Montana tribal
She is the face of the law school at recruiting events.

"Having a person of color behind the recruiting tables helps open the door for minority students to become interested in going to law school in Montana," Miles said. "Prospective students see me and think that Montana has a spot for them as well."

With first-year law student (1L) tribal representation at 16%, more Native students are finding success at the Blewett School than any other time in history. Native students at the school represent over half of the recognized tribes in Montana, as well as several tribal nations from out-of-state.

Miles said there is more to increasing the percentage of minority students than just getting students enrolled.

"It is one thing to recruit minority students to come to our school; it’s another to retain them," she said. "We are looking for opportunities for all students to be successful from when they first get accepted until they get a job. The process doesn’t stop at law school."

Many tribal members from reservations look to return to their communities to serve.

"We are looking for students who want to practice law throughout Montana, and the tribes are no exception," Miles said. "We want our graduates to effectively serve their communities throughout the state and beyond."

She said a larger percentage of non-white enrollment is advantageous to every student.

"We would be doing a disservice to all of our students if they weren’t exposed to other cultures and ways of thinking," Miles said. "Many of their future clients may look different from themselves or have different backgrounds. We want to our students to have plenty of experience with diversity before they ever graduate."

One of her favorite parts of the job has been interacting with students throughout the entire law school experience – from admissions to graduation and getting a job.
“I meet them before they know anything about law school,” Miles said. “Then I get to see them finish school and get jobs. For a lot of students, the law school process is shrouded in mystery. I like opening doors to people who don’t even know the doors existed in the first place.”

Miles enjoys introducing students to UM’s law school for the first time and said Blewett’s smaller size and hands-on approach to legal education is a big selling point.

“Many of our students integrate with our community and become part of Montana in ways they didn’t expect,” she said.

Miles recently received a national award from the American Association of Law Schools for her efforts in bettering the legal community and increasing diversity.

“Increasing diversity is an ongoing effort and not solely my task,” Alicia said. “Our community as a whole is always better with more diversity, and it can only be achieved when everyone gets involved.”

Contact: Phil Stempin, director of events, marketing and communications, UM Blewett III School of Law, 406-243-6509, phil.stempin@mso.umt.edu.

Launch UM virtual tour.
Law School Class Most Diverse in UM History