2-2023

# February 2023 news releases

University of Montana--Missoula. Office of University Relations

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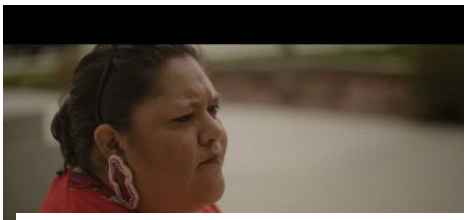

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01 FEBRUARY 2023

Launch UM virtual tour.

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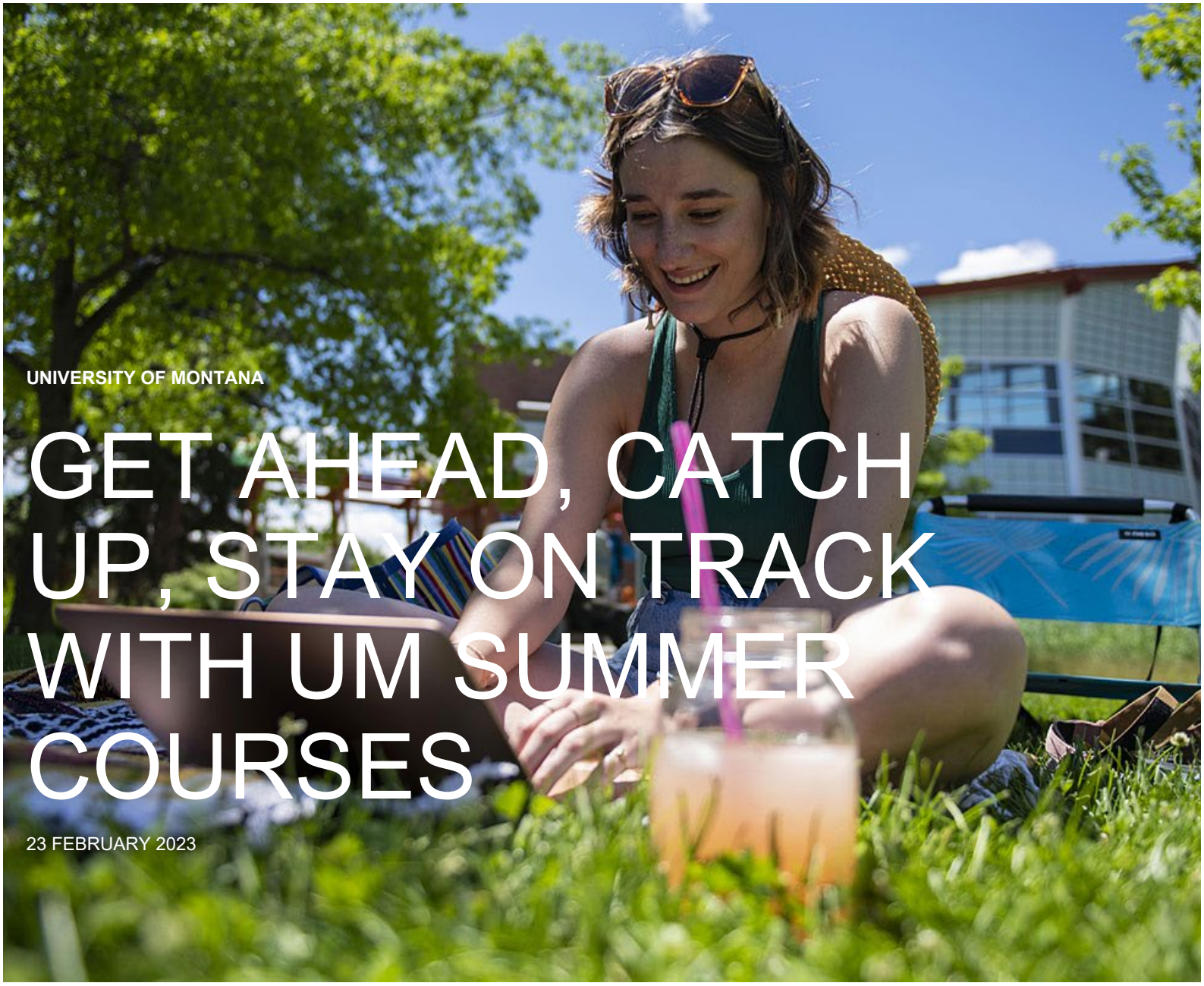
32 Campus Drive
Missoula, MT 59812





UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA

# GET AHEAD, CATCH UP, STAY ON TRACK WITH UM SUMMER COURSES

23 FEBRUARY 2023

*UM student Siena Cysewski studies on the UM Oval during a sunny summer afternoon.*

**MISSOULA** – Summer courses are on again at the University of Montana from May 22 through


July 28. With more than 700 available options – including over 200 online and remote courses – students can get ahead, catch up and stay on track during 10-week and two five-week sessions.

Last summer, more than 430 degrees, minors and certificates were awarded from UM Summer, with nearly 3,000 students taking advantage of summer offerings. Summer 2023 courses are available to view, and registration launched Feb. 21.

“Students are always commenting about how UM Summer allowed them to get ahead on classes, and they always meet so many new friends,” said Julie Cahill, the director of UM Summer. “It’s amazing to spend a summer studying at one of the most scenic campuses in America.”

Hands-on summer learning opportunities are a hallmark at UM, which is surrounded by some of nature’s greatest outdoor classrooms. Students can take special topics and field courses or participate in research beyond the classroom in places like the Flathead Lake Biological Station, PEAS Farm or Bob Marshall Wilderness.

Members of the community, alumni and visiting students are all invited to enroll in courses, along with qualifying UM employees who can use the faculty and staff tuition waiver. Summer also offers noncredit opportunities, microcredentials and certificates available through UMOnline.

Summer 2023 also will bring high school students from in state and out of state to participate in a pre-college program. One of these programs, Summer Exploration, offers students infinite possibilities during a transformative live-in, shared, two-week experience.

“Summer 2023 will be the third time Summer Exploration has run, and for the past two years we have received extremely positive feedback from the students, who enjoyed meeting new people and getting a taste of the pre-college experience,” said Becka Simons, associate director UM Summer and Pre-College. “Parents and guardians have also shared with us how their students returned home filled with amazing stories, new friendships and a realization that college isn’t as scary as they once thought.”

The UM Summer Office invites everyone to join the UM Summer Kick Off from noon to 1 p.m. Tuesday, March 28, on the UM Oval to meet the U.S. Forest Service Northern Region Pack Train. This is the third year the mule train will visit campus, and hosts will include UM’s College of Humanities and Sciences, Department of Political Science and University Center.

For more information about summer, including courses, registration, tuition, financial aid and pre-collegiate opportunities, visit www.umt.edu/summer, email UMSummer@mso.umt.edu or call 406-243-5673.

###

**Contact**: Julie Cahill, UM Summer director, Office of the Provost, 406-243-5658, julie.cahill@mso.umt.edu; Becka Simons, associate director, UM Summer and Pre-College, Office of the Provost, 406-243-5674, becka.simons@mso.umt.edu.

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University Operator
406-243-0211

Contact Us

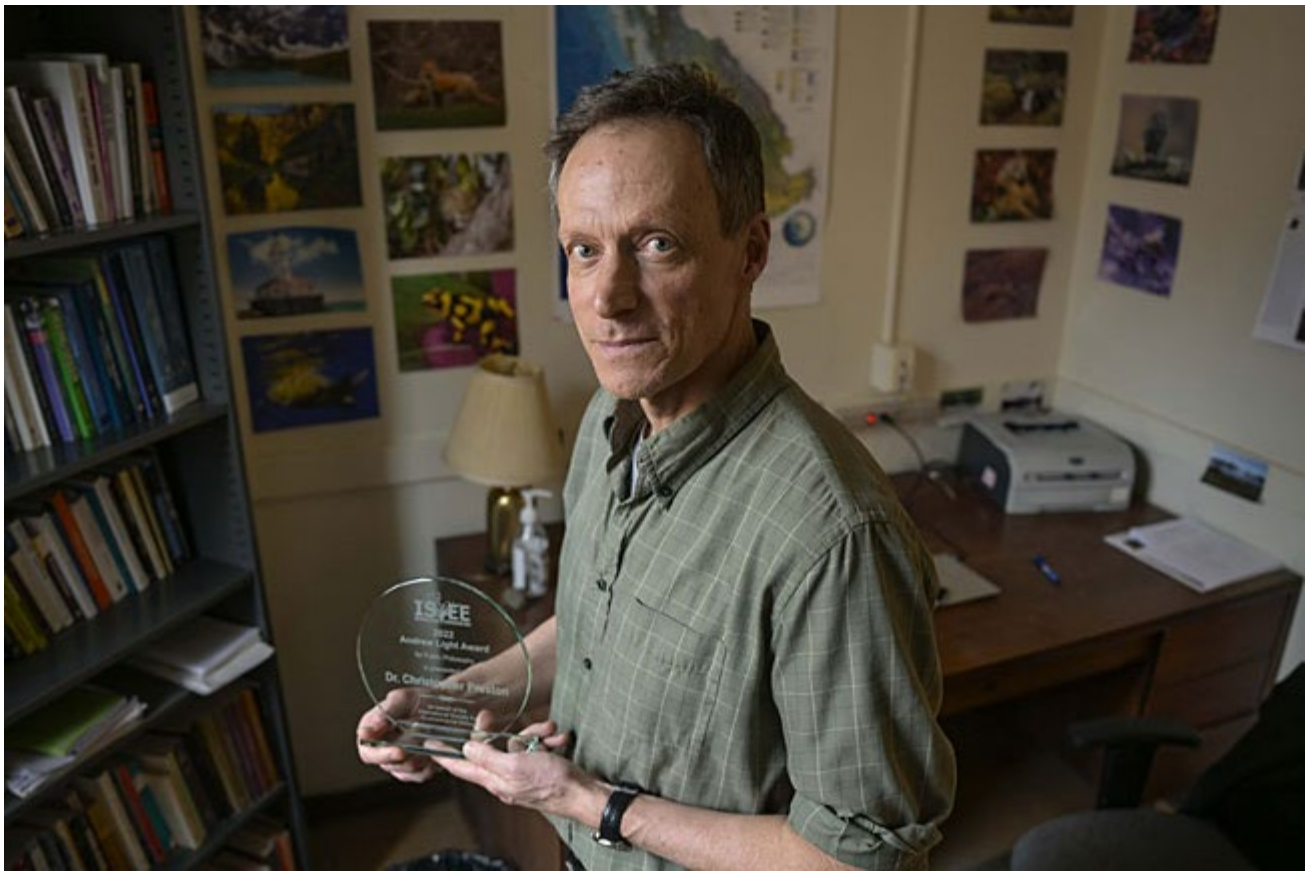
32 Campus Drive
Missoula, MT 59812

UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA

# SEEING THE LIGHT: UM PROFESSOR WINS PRESTIGIOUS PHILOSOPHY AWARD

22 FEBRUARY 2023

*Christopher Preston, a UM philosophy professor, recently was awarded the Andrew Light Award for*



*Public Philosophy. (UM photo by Tommy Martino)*

**MISSOULA** – Christopher Preston, a University of Montana professor of philosophy, recently was honored with a national award for his work to enlighten the world on emerging topics such as synthetic biology, climate ethics, geoengineering and the resilience of wildlife in this human-dominated time.

The author of four books, Preston was awarded the 2022 Andrew Light Award for Public Philosophy. The award was presented last month by the International Society for Environmental Ethics.

“The public-facing aspects of environmental philosophy are very important to me,” said Dr. Preston, a native of England who has worked at UM since 2005. “The academic debates are interesting precisely because they have relevance to public issues. I see it as my job to show exactly what this relevance is.”

The award recognizes philosophers working in environmental ethics who bring unique insights or methods that broaden the reach, interaction and engagement of philosophy with the wider public.

For over a decade, Preston has focused on reaching broad audiences through books, popular articles, media interviews, public talks, podcasts and a blog. He has a passion for wildlife and how it is influenced by the Anthropocene, the current epoch in which human influence on the

planet is everywhere.

Preston is the author of “The Synthetic Age,” which won a silver medal in the ecology category of the 2018 Nautilus Awards. The book grapples with new technologies and their implications for human relations with the natural world.

MIT Press is set to publish his latest book, “Tenacious Beasts: Wildlife Recoveries That Change How We Think About Animals,” this month. Examining wildlife recovery success stories like American bison and Italian wolves, the book has been described as “an inspiring look at wildlife species that are defying the odds and teaching important lessons about how to share a planet.”

“My work is now focused on restoration and rewilding,” Preston said, “which I see as an antidote to the claustrophobia of a synthetic age.”

In announcing the award, the ISEE said Preston’s books were notable for their “lucid and engaging prose” and “distinguished by their ability to provoke philosophical reflection on issues that matter to human lives and to the diverse creatures with whom we share the planet.”

In addition to his public-facing books, Preston has contributed articles to The Atlantic,

Aeon, BBC Science Focus, The Conversation, Ensia, Smithsonian Magazine, Philosophical Salon, the Wall Street Journal, Salon.com, Discover and Slate. He teaches UM courses such as Issues in the Anthropocene, Environmental Philosophy and Introduction to Ethics and the Environment.

The Andrew Light Award for Public Philosophy is named for Light, a distinguished university professor of philosophy, public policy and atmospheric sciences at George Mason University. He currently serves as assistant secretary of energy for international affairs at the U.S. Department of Energy.

###

**Contact**: Christopher Preston, UM professor of philosophy, 406-243-2937, christopher.preston@umontana.edu.

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University Operator
406-243-0211

Contact Us

32 Campus Drive
Missoula, MT 59812

SCHOOL OF LAW

# RANCHER GOES TO LAW SCHOOL TO PROTECT FAMILY LAND

17 FEBRUARY 2023

*First-year UM law student and sixth-generation rancher Erin Brush's decision to pursue a law degree is deeply rooted in her love of agriculture and her drive to protect the land her family has been on for 150 years. (Credit: E. Brush Photography)*

**MISSOULA** – First-year University of Montana law student and sixth-generation rancher Erin Brush grew up at the base of the Tobacco Root mountain range in **Norris**, Montana. Her decision to pursue a law degree is deeply rooted in her love of agriculture and her drive to protect the land her family has been on for 150 years.

“Our own family was once taken advantage of by a company,” Brush said. “We didn’t have the funds or time to protect ourselves. I wanted to put myself in the position to help people in similar situations.”

Brush started out in 4-H, eventually becoming a state officer in high school.

*Erin Brush showing her prized sheep at the county fair.*

“I lived and breathed 4-H,” Brush said about America’s largest youth development organization. “I tried out almost every program they offered. My favorite project was, by far, photography.”

Taking photos became a powerful way for Brush to show others her family’s way of life. She turned the skill into a small business to help support herself while in college.

“I’ve always loved taking pictures to show people what ranching is all about,” said Brush. “Most people have no idea what goes in to producing the food we all depend on. With pictures, you can show them emotion.”

Brush double-majored in agribusiness management and photography from Montana State University in Bozeman. She also picked up a minor in business administration.

She excelled within the programs and was very active on campus, serving as president of the Collegiate Stockgrowers, chair of College of Ag Ambassadors and president of Alpha Zeta, an honors club for the College of Agriculture.

“My grandpa and mother were both Alpha Zeta members as well,” Brush said. “Three

generations of us went through MSU's College of Ag."

At a Young Ag Leaders conference in Bozeman, Brush listened to a speech by UM law graduate and Montana Attorney General Austin Knudsen. One of the points he made was that the state needed more lawyers in the agriculture space.

This resonated with Brush, and she saw a law school degree as a way that could help out on the ranch.

"Farmers and ranchers are the salt of the earth," said Brush, whose family owns the oldest ranch in Montana that still raises livestock. "There is somewhat of a disconnect between them and the legal community, and how laws can actually affect their lives.

"My older brothers run the ranch, and there isn't enough money in it to support multiple families," she added. "I had to find a way that I could still help out but also earn my own living."

Brush said that going to law school in Missoula made perfect sense.

"I can drive home on weekends to help out if needed," she said. "I want to stay in Montana and advocate for the rural lifestyle. In-state tuition didn't hurt either.

"I think there was a part of me that always wanted to be a lawyer," she added. "My parents would agree based on my ability to argue with them from a young age."

Farming and ranching are difficult lifestyles to maintain. Rising production costs, severe droughts, floods, broken supply chains and inflation are only some of the challenges ag families face.

"Agriculture is facing battles today which require more specific tools to fight," Brush said. "We need more people to be zealous advocates for those in production."

According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Agricultural Statistics Service, the state has over 27,000 farms and ranches on almost 58 million acres of land. Montana commodities like wheat, barley, beef and pulse crops are recognized throughout the world for their superior quality.

The workload in law school is tremendous, a challenge Brush is well prepared for. She credits her ability to learn things quickly and her overall work ethic to growing up on the ranch. Brush says rural students bring different perspectives and her background is an asset in the classroom.

"There is a stigma surrounding ag kids going to law school," said Brush, adding that her grandpa was suspect of her leaving. "He was worried that I would become an arrogant lawyer. Before I left to Missoula he made me promise to stay humble.

"He is starting to see my education as another tool our family has on the ranch," she said. "Now he is asking me questions about our water rights."

The law school offers classes in agricultural law, water rights, and other subject matters important to protecting the rights of farmers and ranchers.

As for the future, Brush plans to finish law school and then see where her education takes her. What she does know, is that she is in this for the right reasons.

"Money isn't necessarily the main focus," she said. "It's about helping people get access to justice, what's fair."

Brush's photography depicting her family's way of life is available at https://www.ebrushphotography.com/.

###

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

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Contact Us

32 Campus Drive
Missoula, MT 59812


*UM students attend class the first day of spring semester 2023.*

**MISSOULA** – The University of Montana today reports another rise in student enrollment for the spring semester.

UM reports 10,109 students in its official census count for the 2023 spring semester, a 3.1% student enrollment increase from spring 2022. The continued growth at the Montana flagship is powered by an increase in undergraduate and graduate students, as well as the number of students enrolled at Missoula College.

“Student enrollment at the University of Montana continues to rise,” said UM President Seth Bodnar. “Across the board, we have more students on campus today than last spring. This sustained enrollment growth proves that our efforts to recruit more students and keep them on the path to graduation is yielding progress.”

The 2023 spring semester marks the fourth consecutive semester of growth at UM.

Boosting the overall growth, UM saw a 2.2% increase in the number of undergraduate students who chose to return to campus for the spring semester after being enrolled in the fall. This is the largest percentage increase since prior to the pandemic.

UM’s largest year-over-year leap is at Missoula College, where 280 additional early admit and dual enrollment students helped increase the overall growth at the two-year college by 19%.

The number of full-time equivalent students – those taking a full course load at UM – also grew by 2.3%. Additionally, UM saw year-over-year student growth in the number of student veterans, Native American students and students with disabilities.

For the second consecutive semester, UM’s Physical Therapy partnership program with Rehab Essentials saw a decrease in students. This global program is expected to see a continued decrease in the years ahead as the number of physical therapists who need a “bridge” to a doctoral degree naturally declines.

In December, UM graduated 1,190 students at the conclusion of the fall semester.

The full spring 2023 UM census report is available online at https://bit.ly/UMspring23census.

###

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

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Contact Us

32 Campus Drive
Missoula, MT 59812


ALUMNI

# UM ENTERTAINMENT MANAGEMENT ALUM NOW LEADS BIG SKY FILM FESTIVAL

13 FEBRUARY 2023

*Rachel Gregg speaks on opening night of the 14th annual Big Sky Documentary Film Festival.*

*Gregg earned her master's in communication and environmental rhetoric at UM.*

By Kelly

Mulcaire, UM News Service

**MISSOULA** – It didn't take long for Oregon native and University of Montana alum Rachel Gregg to fall in love with Montana when she took a summer job in Glacier National Park.

"I took the train from Oregon over to East Glacier and worked there for a season," Gregg said, an Oregon State freshman at the time. "And I never left."

Over a decade later, Gregg still calls Montana home. She now serves as the executive director of the Missoula-based Big Sky Documentary Film Festival, celebrating its 20th year this month. The role seems tailor-made for her after years of education and experience that all started at UM.

Her introduction to the film business started as an undergraduate student when Gregg enrolled in UM's Entertainment Management program, where she quickly developed an interest in the backstage and behind-the-scenes workings of the industry.

"They brought actual people in from the industry to teach, so you had real-life examples and application of the things you were learning in class," she said. "That's really a high-value education when you get access to that caliber of people."

Gregg attended the annual Pollstar conference as a student and took a job at The Wilma theater, helping organize community events. As an undergrad, she also took classes in the

communications department.

“Some of the most respected scholars are at UM,” she said. “I got really interested in the discipline, and I decided to make that my focus.”

She went on to complete her master’s in communication and environmental rhetoric at UM. Growing up on a farm, the environment was always a relevant theme in Gregg’s life – something she expanded upon throughout her studies. Her thesis paper focused on environmental documentary films as a tool for social movement.

“My concern grew and my interest in understanding environmental policy and problems just expanded as I was going through the communication program,” she said.

Gregg spent time working in the Adams Center box office before taking a job in the Montana Film Office, eventually becoming the public relations manager there. She helped lay the foundation for what is now a bustling film industry in the Treasure State.

When she saw the Big Sky Documentary Film Festival was hiring a producer, Gregg jumped at the opportunity to combine her education, professional experience and personal interest in documentary films. Starting in 2016, she was serving as the festival’s executive director.

Gregg led the festival through two years of pandemic restrictions and is now looks forward to once again embracing the community element in the festival’s 20th year. The slate of events features in-person screenings and discussions, as well as several options to participate virtually. Gregg is also excited to welcome back international filmmakers. The lineup has representation from all 50 states and 42 countries.

For Gregg, though, some of the most vital members of the festival’s audience are the local Missoulians who come back year after year.

“Many of them are alumni of the University and work in high-level industries,” she said, “and that curiosity that took you to college in the first place or that bloomed while you were there carries on into your life and that’s a big part of our audience. They are lifelong learners.”

Gregg is looking forward to audiences taking in this year’s selection of films, which she feels presents an interesting look into post-pandemic shifts in society. For students looking to break

into an ever-evolving entertainment industry, Gregg encourages taking advantage of every learning opportunity.

“Experiment with what’s available to you, and ask questions and don’t feel like you have to be really smart right now,” she said. “It’s always going to be a journey.”

The 2023 Big Sky Documentary Film Festival opens Friday, Feb. 17, with a screening of “Subject” at the Wilma theater. The festival will run through Sunday, Feb. 26, and tickets are on sale now.

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**Contact**: Kelly Mulcaire, digital communications manager, UM Alumni Association, 406-243-4658, kelly.mulcaire@mso.umt.edu.

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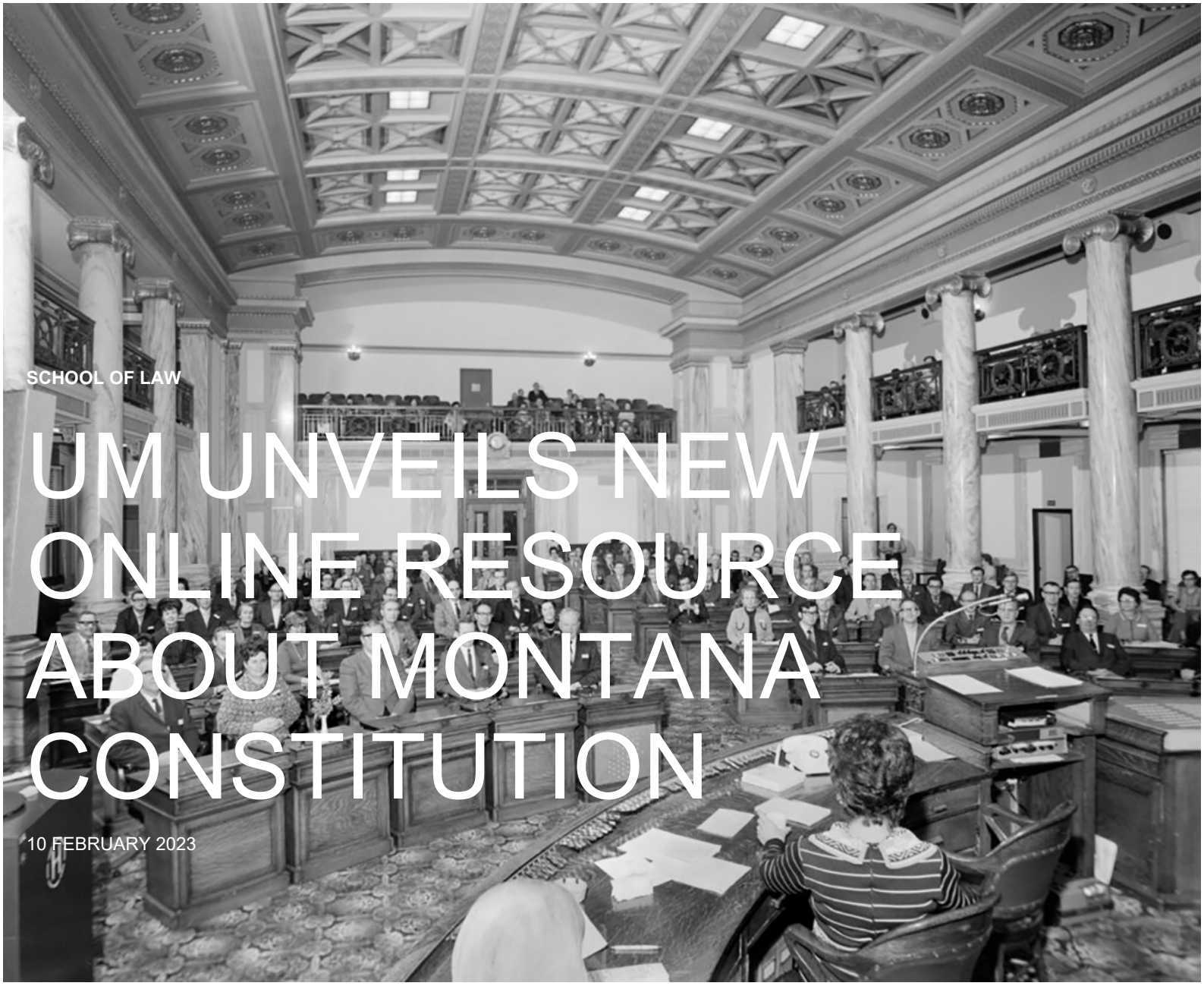

SCHOOL OF LAW

# UM UNVEILS NEW ONLINE RESOURCE ABOUT MONTANA CONSTITUTION

10 FEBRUARY 2023

*Delegates gather for the 1972 Constitutional Convention at the Capitol in Helena. (Credit: UM Archives and Special Collections)*

**MISSOULA** – Scholars from the Maureen and Mike Mansfield Center and Alexander Blewett III School of Law at the University of Montana recently created a central location for materials related to the Montana Constitution. This project serves as an open resource to scholars, students, lawyers, legislators and citizens.

“Many of these materials were out there already, but they were scattered around and weren’t easy to access,” said Robert Saldin, director of the Ethics and Public Affairs program at the Mansfield Center. “Now everything is connected in one easily accessible collection. It’s a real service to the state.”

Materials related to the current Constitution, and the 1972 Constitutional Convention that created it, are at the center of the collection. However, some materials date back to 1884, five years before Montana was incorporated as a state.

For the first time, the collection also publishes online the committee records of citizen testimony that generated most of the new ideas contained in the 1972 Constitution. The Montana Constitutional Collection consists of memos, proceedings, studies, papers and commentary surrounding the creation and adaptation of the Montana Constitution.

UM law professor Anthony Johnstone and Saldin were chatting last year about the 50th anniversary of the 1972 Constitutional Convention and thought it would be the perfect time to work together on the project.

“As scholars of Montana law and government, we felt we were well positioned to put together a collection of materials such as this,” Saldin said. “We wanted to contribute something to the state in conjunction with the [Montana Constitution’s] golden anniversary.”

Students and staff worked with Johnstone and Saldin on the collaborative research project. In particular, Wendy Walker, digital initiatives librarian at the Mansfield Library was invaluable in helping organize the documents into a cohesive collection. Undergraduate student Sam Sullivan played a key role in finding documents in various archives.

“It was great to see people working together to utilize their different skillsets,” said Saldin. “This wouldn’t have been completed without everyone helping.”

Finding the materials and organizing them in one location took about five months to complete, with almost a year of planning before it started.

When asked about interesting findings in the documents, Saldin reflected on how regular Montana citizens were the ones who wrote our current constitution.

“What goes into a state constitution is detailed and complicated,” Saldin said. “It’s easy to assume that you have to be an expert to make any sense of it. But the 1972 Constitution was written by citizens, not lawmakers, and these materials are accessible in a way the public can follow and understand.

“Our role wasn’t as advocates, this was a scholarly project,” he added. “Regardless of whether someone reveres the Montana Constitution or sees it as a problem, we felt this project had value and merit from a scholarly standpoint and a service to the state and its citizens.”

The Montana Constitution Collection is available online.

###

**Contact:** Phil Stempin, director of events, marketing and communications at the Alexander Blewett III School of Law, 406-243-6509, phil.stempin@umontana.edu.

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COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES AND SCIENCES

# UM BIO STATION STUDY: SALMONFLIES MAY ADAPT TO WARMING MOUNTAIN STREAMS

08 FEBRUARY 2023

*UM graduate student James Frakes holds handfuls of salmonflies, a favorite insect of both Montana's fish and anglers, which were collected from Rock Creek in western Montana.*

*UM graduate student James Frakes holds handfuls of salmonflies, a favorite insect of both Montana's fish and anglers, which were collected from Rock Creek in western Montana.*

By Ian Withrow, UM News Service

**FLATHEAD LAKE** – With each passing year, climate change alters characteristics and increases temperatures of mountain streams all over the world. These changing conditions impact mountain-dwelling organisms in a number of direct and indirect ways, and the fate of many will be determined by their ability to adapt and evolve before they become extinct.

To this point, determining which populations will persist in any particular location has been no easy task. But thanks to a study recently published in the Journal of Experimental Biology, a team of University of Montana researchers are closer to understanding how one particular organism, the salmonfly, may react to the rising freshwater temperatures of our changing world.

Rachel Malison, an assistant research professor with UM's Flathead Lake Biological Station, said populations of aquatic insects may respond to climate change in a number of ways. These responses include shifting their range, evolving new physiologies and behaviors, exhibiting physiological and behavioral plasticity, or going extinct.

"We studied salmonflies because they are an important part of the food web," Malison said. "One salmonfly can provide a lot of energy to a fish, and they have a lot of gills – where oxygen is taken up – which was important for physiology measurements. We need to understand how aquatic insect populations will respond to changing habitats because they play critical roles processing materials in streams and providing food for other organisms."

Focusing on physiological and behavioral plasticity responses, Malison and her team measured changes in growth, survival and observable respiratory traits of salmonfly nymphs in different experimental combinations of dissolved oxygen and temperature. Specific combinations were used because rising temperatures can stimulate a higher metabolic demand for oxygen in organisms that exceeds available oxygen in the surrounding environment, which results in insufficient oxygen for the organism.

After introducing salmonfly nymphs to varying temperature and dissolved oxygen conditions over a six-week experimental period, the scientists found that oxygen and temperature interacted to affect growth in complex ways.

They found the survival rate was only slightly lower for the nymphs subjected to warmer water temperatures. Nymphs that were able to acclimate to the warmer temperatures did not show any changes to their mobility in relation to temperature. But nymphs that acclimated to lower oxygenated water did start to lose mobility and coordination at warmer temperatures than normal.

“The temperature at which organisms lose their ability to move normally is an important indicator of temperature tolerance,” Malison said. “If a stonefly can’t crawl or flip themselves over, they can’t escape predators.”

Study results suggest salmonfly nymphs may have enough adaptive plasticity with their internal systems for uptake and delivery of oxygen to survive at least some of the changing conditions of their mountain stream habitats.

To further test the initial findings of the study, Malison and her team observed and measured the oxygen sensitivity of metabolic rates and gills structures located on the thoracic segments of the salmonfly nymphs.

Combining the results from multiple performance metrics, their findings indicate that rising temperatures and low oxygen may interact in ways that increase health risks to aquatic insects, but that physiological plasticity in respiratory systems may be able to offset some of these risks.

To put it simply, the results of the study suggest that acclimation may allow the salmonfly, which is Montana’s largest stonefly, to persist in warmer streams longer than previously

expected.

These results are notable as scientists continue to search for answers in an uncertain future. Understanding and predicting how natural populations will respond to our changing climate is a pressing issue, and physiological plasticity may be a key mechanism of population resilience. However, assessing its potential is difficult because it can occur across many different traits simultaneously at different levels of biological organization.

“Models are often used to predict what will happen to our mountain streams and the organisms in them for coming decades, but the models are only as good as the information we put in them,” said Malison. “Having data on physiological responses at the level of the individual can greatly improve models, especially when we measure unexpected responses.”

Researchers emphasize that additional studies on more species over longer time scales are needed to provide even more ecologically relevant information on the degree to which acclimation will allow persistence in the face of climate change.

These studies may require more time and resources, but they also may reveal vital information about the long-term effects of climate change both locally and throughout the world.

Additional authors on this study include UM scientists James Frakes, Amanda Andreas, Priya Keller, Emily Hamant, Alisha Shah and Arthur Woods. For the complete study, visit the Journal of Experimental Biology website at https://journals.biologists.com/jeb/article-abstract/225/18/jeb244253/276660/Plasticity-of-salmonfly-Pteronarcys-californica/

###

**Contact**: Rachel Malison, UM Flathead Lake Biological Station assistant research professor, rachel.malison@flbs.umt.edu; Tom Bansak, UM Flathead Lake Biological Station associate director, tom.bansak@umontana.edu.

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University Operator
406-243-0211

Contact Us

32 Campus Drive
Missoula, MT 59812

SCHOOL OF LAW

# UM LAW SCHOOL STUDENTS FREE INNOCENT MAN

07 FEBRUARY 2023

*UM law students Brandy Keesee, left, and Annabelle Smith were part of a cohort working with the Montana Innocence Project to free Bernard Pease, a Billings man wrongly convicted 40 years ago for murder.*

**MISSOULA** – As part of their studies at the University of Montana, students in the Alexander Blewett III School of Law get hands-on experience working for clinics practicing law in a variety of fields. For most, these clinics provide valuable experience in the legal arena, but for some they become transformative, sparking a passion they will carry well into their future careers.

This year, Brandy Keesee a first-generation college student and first-year law student, and third-year law student Annabelle Smith were part of a cohort working with the Montana

Innocence Project (MTIP) to free Bernard Pease, a **Billings** man wrongly convicted 40 years ago for murder.

“I came to [UM Law] because of its smaller community where people care,” said Keesee. “Students at other schools will get to write papers about people like Bernard Pease; we get to actually help.”

Pease was incarcerated based on forensic testing methods deemed invalid with modern DNA testing, explained MTIP Legal Director Caiti Carpenter

“We have been reviewing Mr. Pease’s case since 2008, and in 2019 we determined Mr. Pease had a viable claim of innocence under the law,” Carpenter said. “After tracking down and assessing thousands of files and considering evidence for retesting, we filed a petition to test for DNA.”

MTIP worked with the state Legislature to amend Montana’s DNA testing statute in 2015. This amended legislation allows modern DNA testing to qualify as new evidence of innocence. With this change in the law, MTIP saw an opportunity to move forward with Pease’s case.

“There is a ton of legwork needed to overturn a wrongful conviction,” said Carpenter. “Not only did we need to prove Bernard’s innocence with scientific data, but we needed to prove to the Board of Pardons and Parole that people wanted him back in the community.”

This is where Keesee and Smith came in, focusing on work that would otherwise not have funding to sustain.

“An email here, a phone call there. At first, it felt like these efforts weren’t leading to a successful outcome,” said Keesee.

Students interviewed family members, researched letters from the 1980s and ’90s, wrote letters on Bernard’s behalf, did legal research and helped file appeals.

“One thing that came into focus for me is the prejudices people who were incarcerated face,” said Smith, who eventually wants to work as a prosecutor. “This experience has given me more perspective on what the accused are facing.”

“There is very little sympathy or empathy for the accused. It can be very isolating,” said Keesee.

Working through these challenges ultimately paid off for Pease. He was granted release in November and lives in a prerelease center for the time being.

“We just kept doing the work that needed to be done,” said Keesee. “It was incremental and systematic.”

Some cases can take decades and not lead to anything. For MTIP and the UM law students, Bernard’s case was very satisfying.

“It’s not very often we see such fantastic results at MTIP,” Smith said. “This is amazing,”

To learn more about Pease’s transfer to pre-release, check out the podcast “Unpacking Injustice” from the Montana Innocence Project.

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**Contact:** Phil Stempin, director of events, marketing and communication at the Alexander Blewett III School of Law, 406-243-6509, phil.stempin@umontana.edu.

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406-243-0211

Contact Us

32 Campus Drive
Missoula, MT 59812




COLLEGE OF FORESTRY AND CONSERVATION

# UM STUDY: MONTANANS SHARE COMMON LOVE TOWARD GRIZZLY BEARS

06 FEBRUARY 2023

*A highway billboard in Missoula reminds motorists that grizzly bears are a reality of life in the Treasure State.*

**MISSOULA** – For an animal whose population barely tops 2,000, Montana's grizzly bears hold an outsized presence in the psyche and politics of the Treasure State.

Small wonder, then, that Montanans, though likely never to have seen a grizzly, hold strong opinions about the legendary bruins – opinions they readily shared for a study by the University of Montana and Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, which was just published in the journal Conservation Science and Practice.

“We got about a 40% response rate from the 5,350 surveys we sent across the state, which was huge,” said study author Holly Nesbitt, a Ph.D. student in UM’s Human Dimensions Lab of the W.A. Franke College of Forestry & Conservation. “We received responses from every corner of Montana, allowing us to make estimates about how all Montanans feel about grizzly bear management, which is pretty important to the state.”

And, it turns out, timely.

This month, FWP wraps up public comment on its draft management plan for Montana’s growing grizzly population, a plan that could have enormous implications should the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service delist grizzly bears and turn bear management over to the state. Grizzly bears have been under federal oversight since 1975, when they were listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act.

The survey results will be factored into the FWP’s final recommendations to the state.

And what do Montanans think about the official state animal?

“It was surprising. We found overwhelming support for grizzly bears,” said Alex Metcalf, a co-author of the study and associate professor of human dimensions at UM. “We found 80% to 90% of respondents think bears have a right to exist – that they make Montana special and that we need to learn to live with them. But also, that over 80% want to see some form of grizzly hunting allowed.

“Those are crazy numbers,” he added. “You can’t get 80% to 90% of people to agree on anything.”

But beyond documenting these current sentiments, the study’s analysis allowed Nesbitt and her co-authors to identify what factors helped shape those attitudes.

“We often hear about a rural-urban divide, or that direct, negative experiences with grizzlies

cause people to hate bears," Nesbitt explained. "However, when we controlled for multiple possible factors, we see these old assumptions don't hold up and that other, more important factors emerge.".

For example, the researchers found that hunters, and those who believed hunting should be used to control grizzly bear conflict, were most likely to believe that grizzly populations were too high. And rather than direct experience, it was "vicarious experience" or hearing about others' property damage that led folks to believe there were too many grizzlies in the state. On the other hand, those who most trusted FWP and held positive attitudes toward grizzlies were most likely to say grizzly populations were too low.

Delving into these sometimes-tricky interactions between humans and the natural world is at the heart of research conducted by UM's Human Dimensions Lab, which conducts studies on such wide-ranging subjects as climate data and its relevance for ranchers, as well as community responses to environmental restoration projects.

Emotions play a key role in many of the results they see and never more so than for grizzlies, said study co-author Libby Metcalf, the Joel Meier Distinguished Professor of Wildland Management and associate dean of the UM forestry college.

"It's important to remember that people have emotions attached to these animals," Libby Metcalf said. "You can't divorce management of the species from that emotional component."

These results, Nesbitt added, hold true regardless of respondent's education, location in the state, gender and profession – ranchers included – and start to define a happy medium or middle ground.

"We call it the 'Goldilocks Zone,' where those who said there are too few or too many bears tended to be less satisfied with management of the population," Nesbitt said. "This wasn't terribly surprising to us, but it's a good reminder that when people have a comfort level with the way grizzly bears are being managed, the better they can tolerate bears on the landscape.

"So, the trick facing Montana is to find that sweet spot where grizzly populations are 'just right' – where bear populations are healthy and the people of Montana are happy in their coexistence with those grizzlies," she added.

Alex Metcalf agreed: "We hope these results will help bolster people's satisfaction with grizzlies

in parallel with conservation efforts because ultimately successful grizzly bear recovery will depend on Montanans' continued support."

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**Contact:** Alex Metcalf, UM associate professor of human dimensions, W.A. Franke College of Forestry & Conservation, 814-574-6128, alex.metcalf@umontana.edu.

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COLLEGE OF BUSINESS

# LEADING OUT WEST WORKSHOP FOR LBGTQ STUDENTS RETURNS TO MISSOULA

03 FEBRUARY 2023

*UM's Main Hall illuminated for Pride Month.*

**MISSOULA** – The 2nd Annual Leading Out West Leadership Development Program kicks off April 14-16 at the University of Montana.

This first-of-its-kind program is designed for students in the Mountain West who are part of the LGBTQIA+ community and is focused on building leadership skills, professional networks and personal brands. The program is open to all undergraduates, graduate students and recent graduates.

“We are interested in helping young people from Montana and Mountain West communities leverage their authentic selves to become better leaders,” said Bob Boyce, co-founder of the program. “We want to empower participants through the Leading Out West Workshop to build their own table, rather than asking for a seat at someone else’s.”

Because Montana can be a tough place to grow up for someone who identifies as LGBTQIA+, the Leading Out West Workshop is designed with these students and communities in mind.

*UM President Seth Bodnar spoke to the inaugural cohort of the Leading Out West Leadership Development Program in 2022.*

“Leading Out West allows UM to leap forward in its commitment to provide a safe and welcoming space for LGBTQIA+ undergraduate and graduate students from across the region,” said Jason Triche, program coordinator and a UM associate professor of management information systems. “This intensive program will launch diverse and effective leaders who are confident in who they are.”

The program’s small cohort provides students with opportunities to learn directly from industry leaders and business professionals. The inaugural cohort in 2022 heard from Denise Juneau, chief government and community affairs officer on the Bozeman Health executive leadership team; Kelly Elder, the 2017 Montana Teacher of the Year; Mary Rezek, a leading global executive coach based in Silicon Valley and Shanghai; and founders Boyce, a Western business trailblazer in China, and Joe Whittinghill, a corporate vice president at Microsoft.

While learning to amplify strengths and personal leadership styles, students also will expand their network of business professionals and mentors who can share ideas and experiences.

Financial assistance and scholarships for fees and travel expenses are available for those who qualify.

The program has a March 1 priority deadline, and qualified candidates will be notified by March 13. For more information on the program and how to apply, visit the Leading Out West webpage.

For all inquiries, please email Triche at jason.triche@umontana.edu.

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**Contact:** Jason Triche, Ruff Family MSBA Faculty Fellow, jason.triche@umontana.edu; Garrett Finke, UM College of Business director of marketing and communications, 406-243-4436, garrett.finke@umontana.edu.

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ALUMNI

# UM ALUM FEATURED IN SHOWTIME SERIES ON MISSING AND MURDERED INDIGENOUS WOMEN

03 FEBRUARY 2023

*UM journalism alumna Luella Brien shares her personal and professional insights on missing and murdered Native women on the Showtime docuseries "Murder in Big Horn." Photo courtesy of Showtime.*

**MISSOULA** – “Being a Native journalist, you know you’re going to cover those kinds of stories,” said University of Montana alumna Luella Brien, “You just know.”

Brien, a member of the Apsáalooke tribe, has experienced the challenges and pain that often come with covering the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Persons crisis in Montana, but she’s never been afraid of pushing for the truth.

With strong ties to the community and journalistic expertise, Brien serves as a key voice in the docuseries “Murder in Big Horn,” now streaming on Showtime.

Growing up in Big Horn County, Brien developed an interest in journalism during high school, but it wasn’t until she won an essay contest that the profession started to look like a viable career path.

Former UM journalism Professor Denny McAuliffe presented her with the award.

“He said it was a hard choice between first and second place,” she said with a chuckle. “I had won first, and my friend won second, and I actually wrote her essay. So they gave me her prize as well.”

Brien made the decision to pursue a bachelor’s degree in journalism at UM while building experience as an editor for Reznet, a site that gathered Native news from across the country.

“You take a very broad range of everything, so you get kind of a sampling of the world,” Brien said of her time at UM. “It really opens up your perspective.”

After graduating, Brien spent time at the Ravalli Republic and the Billings Gazette. She took a step back from news for a few years, working as a media consultant, teacher and in community outreach.

In 2019, she put her journalist hat on again, this time for the Big Horn County News.

Throughout these experiences, Brien wanted more freedom to pursue the stories that mattered to her community, including stories about missing and murdered Indigenous women. The best way to accomplish that she decided was to create her own platform called Four Points Press

Media.

“I always wanted my own website. It’s something I’d been toying with for years,” Brien said. “I resigned, and by the end of the week, I had my domain name. Two weeks later I was publishing.”

Four Points Press provides meaningful stories and vital information to the communities it serves. For Brien, that mission is as personal as it is powerful. That’s why she was initially hesitant when she was approached by “Murder in Big Horn” director Matthew Galkin to participate in the docuseries.

“We had a lot of national media coming in looking for background information,” she said. “It’s never my cup of tea to provide that information, because a lot of times they come in, write their headline, they don’t get the nuances of the community. They just get their headline and they head out.”

Brien avoided Galkin and his team’s advances until he showed up in town hoping for a meeting. She did some background research of her own, watching Galkin’s previous work “Murder in the Bayou.”

“The interviews he got from people were not the kind of interviews you get when you just parachute in,” she said. “So, I thought ‘OK, well maybe this is someone I could at least meet with.’”

They built a rapport slowly over a few separate meetings. The crew continued to make visits to Montana and each time met with Brien to get another glimpse into her life and process as a journalist.

“It just kind of organically grew into what it became with me in the vast majority of the series,” Brien said.

The three-episode series looks at the cases of several Indigenous women who went missing or were found dead on or near the Crow and Northern Cheyenne Reservations in Big Horn County. Brien provides context to the media coverage and community response to those cases.

She believes her role as a journalist is to inform and not sensationalize – something she feels the series accomplishes.

“It really does capture the emotion of the time,” she said, “but I think the community will feel validated in that it goes into the explanation of all of the factors that come together to create this perfect storm that creates the opportunity for women and girls to be exploited the way they are.”

Brien hopes viewers will approach the series with an open mind, and for those who feel called to take action, she encourages support of Independent Indigenous media and Indigenous resource organizations, as well as calls for state and federal policy change. She’s hopeful about the results of these stories being seen on the national stage, but ultimately, she’s telling these stories for her own community.

“It’s definitely a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to team up with Showtime to tell these kinds of stories,” she said. “I really do hope that my community is proud of the work that I do in the series. I want them to know the work that I do as a journalist is not for me, it’s for them.”

“Murder in Big Horn” premieres on Showtime on Sunday, Feb. 5. It is available to stream online Feb. 3.

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

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406-243-0211

Contact Us

32 Campus Drive
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COLLEGE OF FORESTRY AND CONSERVATION, UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA

# UM STUDENTS REVIVE FORESTERS' BALL

02 FEBRUARY 2023

By Kyle Spurr, UM News Service

*UM forestry students worked this week to transform Schreiber Gym into a century-old logging town for the 104th Foresters' Ball.*

**MISSOULA** – Forestry students and volunteers have spent the week transforming the University of Montana's Schreiber Gym into a century-

old logging town for the 104th Foresters' Ball.

The work started Monday with the students placing pieces of wood flooring across the empty gymnasium. Then came the freshly cut logs and chainsaws, which were used to support false fronts of a saloon, chapel, jail and other buildings. In the midst of the commotion, UM forestry student Jaiden Stansberry took a moment to appreciate the transformation and return of the revered campus tradition.

Stansberry, a junior who grew up in Yosemite National Park, had no idea what to expect since the Foresters' Ball was canceled the past two years due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Only the senior class remembers having the 103rd ball in February 2020.

"Most of us haven't gone to one before so it's just this idea of a ball," Stansberry said. "But now to actually put it together, it's been super exciting to see it come into place."

This year's ball is open to the public and will be held at 7 p.m. Friday and Saturday, Feb. 3-4. Tickets are available online. The theme is "Burnin' Ground and Swingin' Around!" and the attire is sure to include flannels, jeans, boots, overalls and cowboy hats.

Mason Banks, a senior forestry student and "chief push" of the Foresters' Ball committee, said he felt a sense of responsibility to bring back the ball. If it wasn't for all the hard work this year, the tradition could have died, he said. The Foresters' Ball dates back to 1915 and has only been canceled for two years during World War II and the past two years for the pandemic.

"I don't think there's any other school that has this kind of tradition," Banks said. "We really do owe it to those who came before us to put it on right and have this celebration."

The Foresters' Ball also is a fundraiser for students in the W.A. Franke College of Forestry and Conservation. Money raised goes toward scholarships for forestry students.

"As a freshman, I helped out and I was awarded a scholarship that helped me stay at the University," Banks said. "That's the goal for each individual ball is to reward those who helped build it."

Eric Hoberg, a UM forestry alumnus and UM Woodman Team coach, knows first-hand how hard students work to create the ball each year. Hoberg served on the Foresters' Ball committee as a student until graduating in 2006, and he's stayed involved ever since.

Hoberg has been in Schreiber Gym each day this week assisting with construction. He has shared his two decades of experience and reminds students how their effort will all be worth it once the doors open Friday night. Hoberg hopes the forestry students find some time to enjoy it themselves.

"It's quite common to work right up until the ball is done in order to get things completed," Hoberg said. "Often you just walk out to your truck, have a snack, change your shirt and walk back in again. But at the same time, there's still something about when all the lights are down and the band is tuning up and everything is ready."

The Foresters' Ball is put on by forestry students, but it is meant for the general public and entire UM community. Leading up to this year's ball, UM alumni from all majors have reached out to student organizers about how much the event means to them. Some have shared stories about meeting their future spouses at the ball, or now having their own children attend.

Sonny Capece, a UM alumnus who graduated in 2019 with a political science degree, said he will never forget the first time he walked into the ball as a freshman. He had just moved to Montana from Tallahassee, Florida.

"I went and fell in love with the whole thing," Capece said. "It was probably the most unique event in a university setting I had ever encountered."

After that night, Capece decided to join the UM Forestry Club and eventually became the treasurer on the Foresters' Ball committee. The experience of enlisting donations and

organizing the ball was an incredible experiential learning experience, he said. Capece uses those skills today as the state director for Montana Congressman Ryan Zinke.

"It was really good training," Capece said. "That's all I do now is organize large, high-profile events with the government."

By the end of the first construction day on Monday, Stansberry and her forestry classmates started visualizing the ball coming to life. They could see where people would get fake married or divorced in the chapel, have a drink in the beer garden or explore past balls in a museum.

To create the ball this year, the students relied on black and white photos and historic notes written decades ago. Now that the ball is returning, they hope to write their own chapter.

"To be able to make a tradition happen that has happened for 100 years is something spectacular," Stansberry said. "I'm excited to see how people change it over the next few years and what they do to make it bigger and better."

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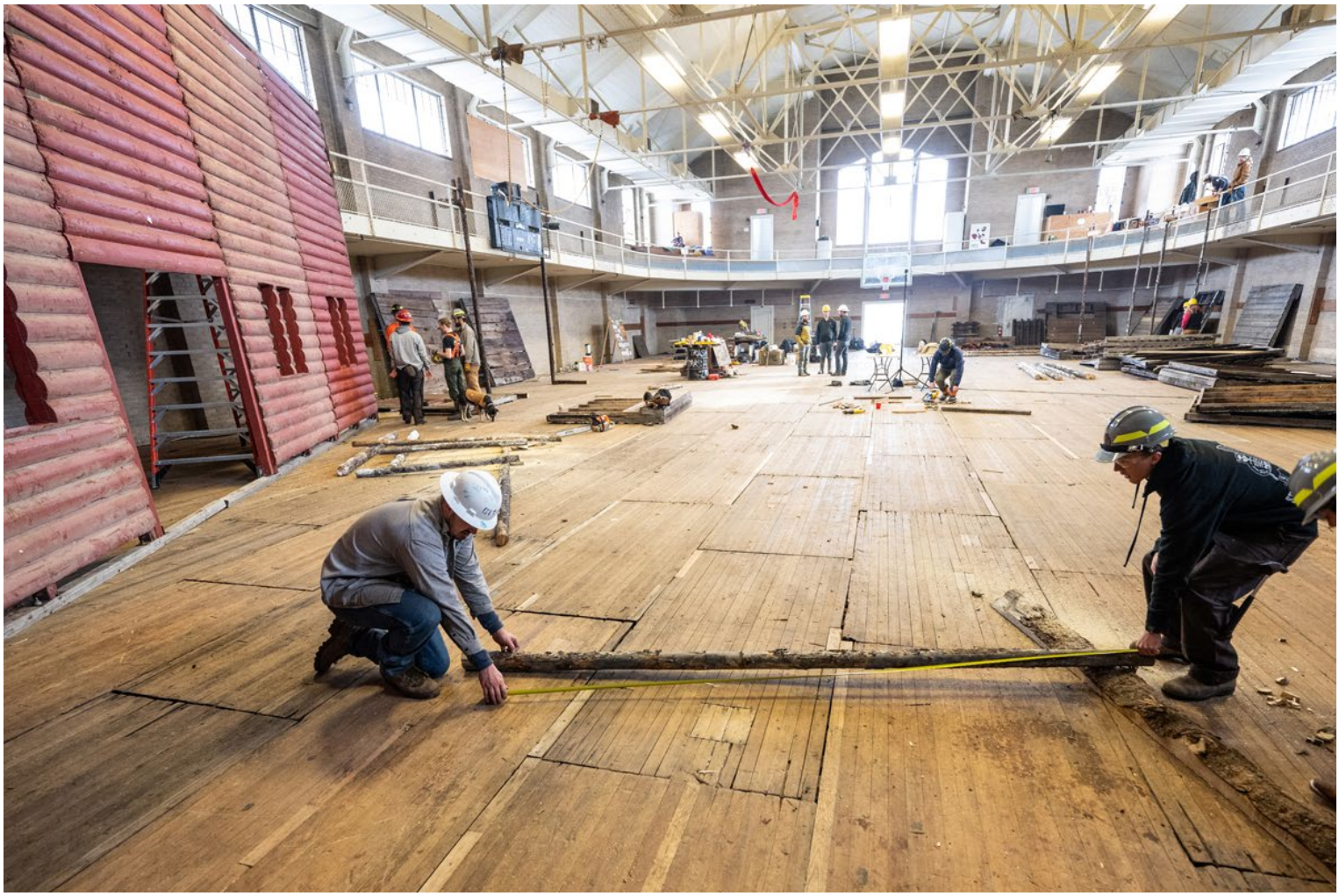
**Contact:** Dave Kuntz, UM director of strategic communications, 406-243-5659, dave.kuntz@umontana.edu



*UM forestry students hauled in freshly cut logs and used chainsaws to build the 104th Foresters' Ball.*

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32 Campus Drive
Missoula, MT 59812



COLLEGE OF FORESTRY AND CONSERVATION

# NEW STUDY FINDS HUMANS CAUSE MORE DESTRUCTIVE WILDFIRES IN THE WEST

01 FEBRUARY 2023

*In August 2021, the human-caused Boulder 2700 Fire near Flathead Lake burned 2,230 acres and destroyed 31 structures, leaving debris along Highway 35 and threatening power lines and traffic.*

**MISSOULA** – More than three times as many houses and other structures burned in Western wildfires from 2010 to 2020 than in the previous decade, and that wasn't only because more

acreage burned, according to a new analysis from the University of Montana and its partners.

Human ignitions started 76% of the wildfires that destroyed structures, and those fires tended to be in flammable areas where homes, commercial structures and outbuildings are increasingly common.

“Humans are driving the negative impacts from wildfire,” said lead author Philip Higuera, a UM fire ecologist and professor, who wrote the assessment during a sabbatical at the Cooperative Institute for Research in Environmental Sciences (CIRES) at the University of Colorado Boulder. “Human fingerprints are all over this. We influence the when, the where and the why.”

Most measures of wildfire’s impact – for example, expansion of wildfire season into new months and the number of structures in flammable vegetation – are going in the wrong direction, Higuera said. But the new finding, published Feb. 1 in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences-Nexus, also means that human action can lessen the risks of wildfire damage.

“We have levers,” he said. “As climate change makes vegetation more flammable, we advise carefully considering if and how we build in flammable vegetation, for example.”

During Higuera’s visiting fellowship at CIRES, he worked with several researchers to dig into the details of 15,001 Western wildfires between 1999 and 2020.

Burned area increased 30% across the West, the team found, but structure loss increased much more, by nearly 250%. Many factors contributed, including climate change, our tendency to build more homes in flammable ecosystems and a history of suppressing wildfire.

Ph.D. student Maxwell Cook, a co-author from CIRES/CU Boulder, said the forcible removal of Indigenous people from landscapes played a role by all-but-eliminating intentional burning, which can lessen the risk of more destructive fires.

“Prescribed fire is an incredibly important tool, and we have a lot to learn about how people have been using fire for centuries,” Cook said.

In the new assessment, the team found some horrible years for wildfires. Sixty-two percent of all structures lost in those two decades were lost in just three years: 2017, 2018 and 2020,

Cook said.

And some states had it much worse than others. California, for example, accounted for more than 77% of all 85,014 structures destroyed during 1999-2020.

Across the West, 1.3 structures were destroyed for every 1,000 hectares of land scorched by wildfire between 1999 and 2009. Between 2010 and 2020, that ratio increased to 3.4.

Importantly, Higuera and his colleagues also found variability among states in how much burning occurred and how many structures were lost in wildfires. Montana sees less structure loss relative to the West as a whole, and most burning is from lightning ignitions. California, on the other hand, sees high losses from wildfires and burns much more overall.

The paper concluded that all states could benefit from policies that address human-related ignitions, especially during late summer and fall and near developments, as well as policies that address fire-resistant building materials and consideration of nearby vegetation.

Finally, the authors said climate change mitigation is also essential. Longer fire seasons – a result of climate change – mean that human-related ignitions are more consequential, leading to more destructive wildfires in the fall and early winter when they were once rare.

The article, "Shifting social-ecological fire regimes explain increasing structure loss from Western wildfires," was co-authored by Higuera, Cook, Jennifer Balch, Natasha Stavros and Lise St. Dennis from CIRES Earth Lab, as well as Adam Mahood, now an ecologist with the Agricultural Research Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture in Fort Collins.

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**Note:** Higuera and co-authors published a companion article in the Conversation on Feb. 1 titled "Western wildfires destroyed 246% more homes and buildings over past decade – fire scientists explain what's changing."

**Contact:** Philip Higuera, UM professor of fire ecology, philip.higuera@umontana.edu; Maxwell Cook, CU Boulder doctoral student, maxwell.cook@colorado.edu.

Read the CU Bolder news release about this topic.

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406-243-0211

Contact Us

32 Campus Drive
Missoula, MT 59812