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AUGUST

RECENT NEWS



**COLLEGE OF HEALTH,
UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA**

UM Awarded Grant to Recruit and Support Native Pharmacy Students

30 AUGUST 2023



RESEARCH

UM Researchers Prep Fentanyl, Heroin Vaccines for Human Trials

29 AUGUST 2023



SCHOOL OF LAW

UM Law Student Helps Coordinate Mining Between Nation States

28 AUGUST 2023



UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA

UM Reopens Historic Knowles Hall

24 AUGUST 2023



**COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES AND
SCIENCES**

UM Research: National Parks Support Wildlife Inside and Outside Their Borders

23 AUGUST 2023



UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA

UM Education College Receives A+ for Elementary School Teacher Prep

18 AUGUST 2023



UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA

UM Invites the Community to Show Griz Pride

17 AUGUST 2023



UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA

UM Receives \$8M grant to benefit the L.S. Skaggs Institute for Health Innovation

16 AUGUST 2023



UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA

UM Researchers Find 1 in 6 Toddlers Don't Finish Multidose Vaccine Series

11 AUGUST 2023



SCHOOL OF LAW

UM Four Plus One Program Fast Tracks Students to Careers

10 AUGUST 2023



UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA

UM Students Seek Adventures Abroad as Gilman Scholars

09 AUGUST 2023



**COLLEGE OF THE ARTS AND
MEDIA**

Community of Curators Selects Works for New UM Museum Opening

08 AUGUST 2023



UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA

UM Earns \$7.1M to Improve Young American Indian Health in Three States

04 AUGUST 2023



ALUMNI

Standing Out: UM Names 2023 Distinguished Alumni

03 AUGUST 2023



UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA

Two UM Students Receive Nationally Recognized Scholarships for Women

01 AUGUST 2023

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Accessibility

A to Z

Directory

Campus Map

Campus Safety

Employment

Refer A Griz



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UM / News / UM Awarded Grant to Recruit and Support Native Pharmacy Students

COLLEGE OF HEALTH, UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA

UM AWARDED GRANT TO RECRUIT AND SUPPORT NATIVE PHARMACY STUDENTS

30 AUGUST 2023

Nano Stiffarm, a UM Doctor of Pharmacy and MBA student, is nearing the completion of his degrees and credits NACOE support for helping him get there.

By Abigail Lauten-Scrivner, UM News Service

MISSOULA – The University of Montana Skaggs School of Pharmacy recently was awarded over \$2.4 million in grant funding by the Health Resources and Service Administration. The award will help Montana’s only pharmacy school recruit and support Indigenous pharmacy students through the University’s **Native American Center of Excellence**.

NACOE, a HRSA-funded grant program housed at UM, aims to grow the number of Native American health care providers statewide and increase overall health care providers in rural areas across Montana. A majority of pharmacists practicing at the Indian Health Service, Tribal Health and other facilities across Montana are Skaggs School of Pharmacy alumni.

“Graduating that many Native pharmacists is really impactful,” said NACOE Program Coordinator Wilena Old Person.

The four-year grant will bolster continued efforts to increase Native clinical and campus-based faculty, support research to help alleviate health disparities, and provide cultural trainings relevant to health care and behavioral health. The grant is directed by **Skaggs School of Pharmacy** faculty members Lori Morin, Mark Pershouse and Cherith Smith.

With the support of federal grants, the school has graduated 85 Native American pharmacists. It ranks among the top five schools nationally for the highest number of American Indian and Alaska Native Doctor of Pharmacy students, including 11 students enrolled this academic year.

While the numbers are impressive, Old Person credits the program’s success to the supportive, student-centered environment cultivated within NACOE. The center works with Native UM pharmacy or pre-pharmacy students and connects them with services like tutoring and mentorship, as well as a community of University staff and peers who share a spectrum of Indigenous identities.

“I think having Native people in Native-focused grants is really important,” said Old Person, who grew up on the Blackfeet Indian Reservation in **Browning** before graduating from UM with a history degree. “I work with students who look like me. I can help advocate for them.”

Nano Stiffarm, a Gros Ventre tribal member and descendent of the Blackfeet, Cree and Little Shell tribes, transferred to UM after a year at Montana State University initially to pursue his dream of becoming a pharmacist. He also found connection and community on campus through NACOE mentorship and **UM’s Health Careers Opportunity Program**.

“One thing I noticed throughout my time at UM is there are a lot of programs for Native students,” Stiffarm said. “That was always really attractive to me, that support system.”

Also hailing from Browning, Stiffarm said the support system helped his transition from a small town to living in an urban area where his entire high school class could fit into a single anatomy classroom. Finding connection, community and support helped him feel like he wasn’t just a number.

Now in his last year of the Doctor of Pharmacy program, Stiffarm is doing a pharmacy rotation in **Hardin** in addition to completing an MBA. He’ll apply to residency programs in the fall, bringing him one step closer to his end goal of returning home to Browning and serve his community as a pharmacist.

Pharmacy graduates often return to work in their Native communities, Old Person said. Each improves the level of health care access and lessen health disparities while providing care with the cultural needs and norms of Tribal or rural communities in mind.

“In rural areas, we know access to health care is just not the greatest. Pharmacists are, a lot of the time, the most accessible health care providers.” Stiffarm said. “I’ve always just wanted to have an effect on the people in my community.”

###

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A to Z

Directory

Campus Map

Campus Safety

Employment

Refer A Griz



UM / News / UM Researchers Prep Fentanyl, Heroin Vaccines for Human Trials



Jay Evans, director of the UM Center for Translational Medicine, and his team expect to start Phase 1 human trials for fentanyl and heroin vaccines in 2024. (UM photo by Tommy Martino)

By Cary Shimek, UM News Service

MISSOULA – Researchers at the University of Montana and their partners are nearing human trials for vaccines to prevent fentanyl and heroin drug overdoses.

The vaccines would protect people struggling with drug addiction or those at risk of accidental overdose. According to the National Institutes of Health, more than 106,000 U.S. drug overdose deaths were reported in 2021. Of those, 71,000 can be attributed to synthetic opioids like fentanyl.

Researcher Jay Evans directs the [UM Center for Translational Medicine](#), which is working on the vaccines. He also is co-founder of [Inimmune](#), the corporate partner charged with scaling up the vaccine components for manufacture. Inimmune is based in MonTEC, UM's Missoula-based business incubator.

"We anticipate testing our vaccines in humans in early 2024," Dr. Evans said. "The first vaccine will target heroin, followed shortly thereafter with a fentanyl vaccine in Phase I clinical trials. Once we establish safety and early efficacy in these first clinical trials, we hope to advance a combined multivalent vaccine targeting both heroin and fentanyl."

He said the vaccines start with Dr. Marco Pravetoni, a professor of psychiatry and behavioral sciences at the University of Washington who directs the Center for Medication Development for Substance Use Disorders. His research team designs haptens and drug conjugate vaccines that can elicit the production of antibodies against target opioids.

Pravetoni has worked on vaccines against opioids for over a decade, bringing one candidate oxycodone vaccine to human testing in Phase I clinical trials with collaborator Dr. Sandra Comer of Columbia University.

"Our vaccines are designed to neutralize the target opioid, while sparing critical medications such as methadone, buprenorphine, naltrexone and naloxone, which are used in treatment of opioid addiction and reversal of overdose," he said.

The UM team contributes a patented adjuvant called INI-4001 to the vaccine cocktails. Adjuvants are substances that boost the effectiveness of vaccines.

"Our adjuvants improve the vaccine response, providing a stronger and more durable immunity," Evans said. "We have worked closely with researchers from Inimmune, the University of Minnesota, the University of Washington, Hennepin Healthcare Research Institute and Columbia University over the past few years to design and optimize anti-opioid vaccines for advancement to human clinical trials."

Evans said the work is 100% funded by the National Institutes of Health. A few years ago, UM earned a \$33.4 million contract to develop and advance two candidate anti-opioid vaccines through Phase 1 clinical trials. This work is supported by the [NIH Helping to End Addiction Long-Term \(HEAL\) initiative](#).

The vaccines were tested with animal models to support their advancement to human clinical trials. Mice were tested at UM and rats and pigs at the University of Minnesota. Papers demonstrating how the TLR7/8 adjuvant increased the effectiveness of the fentanyl vaccine among animals were [published recently in the journal NPJ Vaccines](#). Publications on the success of the heroin vaccine are forthcoming.

There are many moving pieces in vaccine development, and Evans expects the heroin vaccine human trials to begin before the fentanyl, even though the fentanyl papers published first. The team expects to finalize their Investigational New Drug applications to the FDA later this year.

“The human clinical trials will include a drug challenge to evaluate both safety and efficacy of the vaccines in early clinical development,” he said. “We will also follow the patients to evaluate how long the antibodies against opioids will last.”

The Phase 1 human trials will be conducted with Dr. Comer at Columbia University in New York City. Evans said it could take six months or longer to recruit and enroll the required subjects: people who are using fentanyl or heroin. According to DrugAbuse.com, the relapse rate for heroin and opioid users hovers around 90%. Evans said the vaccines could save lives and help people seeking treatment.

He said the Phase 1 trials involve gradual dose escalation.

“We start with the lowest dose – a dose that may not be effective,” Evans said. “Phase I clinical trials are focused on safety. When the first dose cohort is complete, a data safety monitoring board reviews the data and approves testing at the next dose level if the vaccine is safe. The process takes time until you reach dose levels that are both safe and effective.”

After that, Phase 2 human trials determine things like the number of doses needed to be effective and the amount of time required between doses. Phase 3 is the all-important efficacy study that involves many participants that the FDA uses to determine whether the benefits of the vaccine outweigh potential risks.

“It takes a long time – years – to get to a final approved product,” Evans said. “Based on the efficacy data we see in our preclinical data and the established safety profile in animal models, we are very hopeful these vaccines will be successful. But there is still a lot of work to be done.”

He said Inimmune and the University of Washington are working on the process development and scale-up manufacturing of “GMP” – good manufacturing practices – to produce the volumes and quality of vaccine products necessary for Phase 1 human trials.

Together, the UM Center for Translational Medicine and Inimmune employ about 70 people on campus and across the river at MonTEC. Evans believes they offer one of the largest university-based academic research teams for vaccine discovery and development in the U.S., and they were a major reason UM landed on a 2020 list titled “**Best Universities Solving the Coronavirus Pandemic.**”

In addition to the anti-opioid vaccines, the UM team is working on vaccines targeting SARS-CoV-2, the influenza virus, tuberculosis, monkeypox, pertussis, pseudomonas, Lyme disease, valley fever, malaria, E. coli, allergy and cancer.

“We expect to see other vaccine candidates advance to Phase I clinical trials in the coming years,” Evans said. “Some are new vaccines, and others are improved versions of current vaccines with adjuvants added to increase vaccine safety, durability and efficacy in vulnerable populations.”

Evans said UM students have become an incredible asset for his center and Inimmune. Undergraduate interns, graduate students and postdocs work in all their labs.

“We are a university campus, and training students has become a big part of our process,” he said. “I think they are part of the reason our group has grown like it has.

“Doing what we do can be a grind, and students bring a fresh level of energy and enthusiasm,” Evans said. “They get excited: ‘Oh, my gosh, I’m working on a fentanyl vaccine, or I’m working on a COVID or flu or monkeypox vaccine!’ They bring a different level of enthusiasm and excitement because it’s new to them.

“So our only goal isn’t just to come up with new drugs and treatments, it’s also to educate

students.”

###

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Accessibility

A to Z

Directory

Campus Map

Campus Safety

Employment

Refer A Griz





UM / News / UM Law Student Helps Coordinate Mining Between Nation States



UM law student Noah Gipson spent his summer at an internship with the International Energy Agency in Paris.

MISSOULA – Within three days of taking his final test as a University of Montana first-year law student, Noah Gipson found himself sitting in a brasserie in Paris, about to start an internship with the International Energy Agency. He was there to work for the Office of the Legal Counsel, drafting energy policy around mining of critical minerals for countries around the world.

“I was looking for a job for the summer and came across this interesting internship through the Baucus Institute,” said Gipson. “They helped me with the connection, and I was set for a summer of adventure.”

Gipson was selected as a **Baucus Climate Scholar**, part of the Baucus Leaders program. This program furthers the **Max S. Baucus Institute’s** mission of bipartisan environmental and natural resource policy. The institute is affiliated with **UM’s Alexander Blewett III School of Law**.

Although he was nervous about only having completed one year of law school, the energy agency put Gipson to work right away.

“I spent the first week learning about mining throughout the world,” Gipson said. “Within two weeks, I was writing briefs and recommendations for IEA’s member countries, helping them come to an agreement around their mining policies.”

This sort of hands-on learning was exactly what Gipson hoped for.

“I quickly realized that the skills I’m learning, in just my first year at law school, were enough to be useful,” said Gipson. “The IEA put their trust in me right away, something I credit to my studies and professors at the law school.”

The IEA has a Montana connection in Rebecca Gaghen, head of Division for Europe, Middle East, Africa and Latin America. Gaghen is originally from Billings and still considers Montana home. She has worked internationally for over 30 years, including as a U.S. diplomat, and encourages Montanans to become more involved with international policy.

“I feel that it is vital to understand perspectives beyond the U.S.,” said Gaghen. “Every country and region – including Montana – will need to make decisions about its energy and climate future. The more we can learn from each other and work together to overcome these challenges, the better.”

Gipson is still exploring the type of law he would like to practice once he graduates from law school. The experience of spending the summer in Paris has opened up his options.

“I am now interested in water law, which is adjacent to oil and gas law,” he said. “You have to be part of the conversation if you want to make meaningful change in the world. My law school

education is already getting me a seat at the table.”

###

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Accessibility

A to Z

Directory

Campus Map

Campus Safety

Employment

Refer A Griz





Student Resident Assistant Reese Phillips, UM President Seth Bodnar and Executive Director of UM Housing Sandy Curtis cut the Ribbon at the Knowles Hall grand reopening.

MISSOULA – After a year-long renovation, the University of Montana has reopened historic Knowles Hall.

“The newly-renovated Knowles Hall will provide generations of Grizzlies with a strong sense of community to ensures their college journey gets off to a successful start,” said UM President Seth Bodnar. “We are thrilled that Knowles Hall represents the first major project completed in UM’s more than \$150 million student-facing infrastructure renewal.”

Students began moving into the 252-bed residence hall this week, which is also home to the Honors Living Learning Community. This unique, on-campus residential experience merges classroom learning with out-of-class experiences.

“With new mechanical, plumbing, electrical and information technology, this investment will ensure Knowles Hall continues to serve students at a quality level for years to come,” said Sandy Curtis, executive director of UM Housing. “We are grateful to continue to make critical improvements that are needed to expand affordable housing options for our students.”

The renovation of Knowles Hall cost \$18 million, and was paid for through the issuance of debt bonds. No taxpayer dollars or student tuition dollars were used for the renovation.

Other improvements to the building include the addition of exterior balconies that are enclosed for year-around use, as well as a reconfigured first floor to accommodate lounge and study spaces, a community kitchen, classroom and office space.

Originally constructed in 1962, Knowles Hall is named for Eloise Knowles, one of the first two graduates of the University of Montana.

###

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Accessibility

A to Z

Directory

Campus Map

Campus Safety

Employment

Refer A Griz



UM / News / UM Research: National Parks Support Wildlife Inside and Outside Their Borders

COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES AND SCIENCES

UM RESEARCH: NATIONAL PARKS SUPPORT WILDLIFE INSIDE AND OUTSIDE THEIR BORDERS

23 AUGUST 2023

Across megadiverse Southeast Asia, protected areas like national parks increase the diversity of birds and mammals such as this orangutan, both inside their boundaries and in the surrounding landscape. (UM photos by Jedediah Brodie)



Protected areas like the Danum Valley Conservation Area in Malaysia increase biodiversity.

MISSOULA – Scientists have long assumed that national parks help conserve wildlife and protect biodiversity. But is that truly the case?

Fresh research from the University of Montana, international partners and NASA-affiliated scientists suggests that parks do indeed enhance bird diversity inside their borders. Large parks also support higher diversity of both birds and mammals in nearby unprotected areas.

The research was published Aug. 23 in *Nature*.

“We knew that protected areas can reduce logging – you can see that from satellite imagery – but you can’t see the animals in the forest from space,” said the study’s lead author Dr. Jedediah Brodie, the UM Craighead Chair of Conservation. “Our new analysis shows that parks benefit forest wildlife, too.”

Brodie also is a Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (Malaysia) research fellow. He said that some

scientists have argued that conservation success inside some parks can come at the expense of neighbouring unprotected habitats – that parks displace extractive impacts like hunting, fishing and logging to other nearby areas.

But on the other hand, marine parks often report biodiversity “spillover,” meaning that species protected within park boundaries produce an abundance of eggs, larvae and adults that then disperse and increase the biodiversity in surrounding habitats.

“So the question is, ‘Do terrestrial land parks displace biodiversity losses or provide biodiversity spillover?’” Brodie said.

The new study recruited scientists from 10 countries to conduct a comprehensive analysis of bird and mammal diversity inside and outside of parks across Southeast Asia, one of the most biodiverse regions on Earth. The scientists compiled a massive database of bird and mammal observations across the region that demonstrated the protective features of national parks.

Brodie said the findings are especially timely for the United Nations, which recently announced ambitious biodiversity conservation targets that include significant expansions of global protected areas. The UN strategy is to conserve 30% of Earth’s lands and waters by 2030, the so-called “30 by 30 goal.”

“Massive expansions to global protected area coverage will be difficult and expensive, but our results show that it’s worth it,” Brodie said.

Indeed, the work provides clear justification to designate protected areas that are as large as possible, as larger parks had significantly stronger influence on mammal diversity in the surrounding landscape. Recent work in the region suggests that some wildlife species are persisting in small parks, but this apparently doesn’t scale up to such areas having landscape-scale “spillover” effects.

The time to move forward with protected area expansion is now, said co-author Professor Mohd-Azlan Jayasilan of the Universiti Malaysia Sarawak.

“If governments responsible for gazetted protected areas think that it is difficult to protect large areas now, it’s simply going to get more difficult with exasperating socio-political setbacks in the future,” Jayasilan said.

“Not all parks are equal,” said co-author Dr. Mairin Deith of the University of British Columbia, Canada. “Larger parks routinely had higher bird diversity. Considering the UN’s goal of increasing protected area to 30% of the world’s surface, these findings support the creation of fewer larger parks compared to many smaller ones, where it is possible to do so.”

At the same time, she said, there might be other invisible social forces researchers couldn’t see from their dataset that may be related to park size, such as differences in funding, enforcement and local buy-in to protections.

Hunting is a key concern for Southeast Asian wildlife conservation and a prime suspect for why diversity has often been assumed to decline outside of parks. Hunters are mobile, so hunting bans within park boundaries may only displace these activities to nearby unprotected areas and undermine their net benefit.

“To be honest, I was surprised that mammal diversity was higher outside large parks,” said co-author Dr. Matthew Luskin of the University of Queensland, Australia. “It’s common to see hunters inside and outside of parks in many countries. I expected that hunters’ selectively removing game animals would reduce diversity. However, it appears parks limit hunting so it does not drive complete extirpations in most cases.”

NASA’s Global Ecosystem Dynamics Investigation operates a near-infrared laser instrument on the International Space Station, providing vertical information on forest structure that the study used in its analysis. Co-author Scott Goetz of Northern Arizona University noted that “while satellite monitoring of forest cover is essential for tracking deforestation, the unique data provided by GEDI allows us to go beyond cover and get at the structural diversity and habitat heterogeneity of forests, which is important for biodiversity.”

Co-author James Ball of the University of Cambridge said, “Integrating NASA’s GEDI data into this analysis allowed us to control for 3D forest structure in a way that simply wasn’t possible a few years ago. This reassures us that the results hold across different forest types.”

###

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Accessibility

A to Z

Directory

Campus Map

Campus Safety

Employment

Refer A Griz



UM / News / UM Education College Receives A+ for Elementary School Teacher Prep

UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA

UM EDUCATION COLLEGE RECEIVES A+ FOR ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHER PREP

18 AUGUST 2023

MISSOULA – The University of Montana Phyllis J. Washington College of Education received exemplary grades for preparing future elementary school teachers for the classroom.

The National Council on Teacher Quality, a nationwide think tank, provided the College with an “A+” for preparing elementary school teachers in the field of mathematics and an “A” for reading foundations.

“We certainly agree with their finding that our preparation of teachers in reading and math is of high quality,” said Dan Lee, dean of the UM Phyllis J. Washington College of Education. “Of course, the measure of success we are most interested in is the quality of the teachers we prepare and their positive impact on their students.”

NCTQ issued the grades after reviewing the syllabi and course descriptions for several of the colleges classes in mathematics and reading for both the undergraduate and graduate level. The organization found the **programs provide the content and pedagogical knowledge that elementary schools need for effective instruction**. NCTQ reviews programs and makes recommendations to ensure that institutions across the nation provide future teachers with the most effective methods of preparing elementary school teachers.

These grades build on the momentum the College has garnered in recent years, which includes the entire 2022 class of counseling graduates **passing their National Counselor Exam last year**.

In addition to excelling in elementary school and counseling preparation, the College is a **leader in early childhood education** for students ages three to five, helping to set the foundation for a life of learning.

###

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Accessibility

A to Z

Directory

Campus Map

Campus Safety

Employment

Refer A Griz





UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA

UM INVITES THE COMMUNITY TO SHOW GRIZ PRIDE

17 AUGUST 2023

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

MISSOULA – It’s that time of year again: The University of Montana invites Missoula’s residents and businesses to “Paint Missoula Maroon” to welcome UM students to campus for a new academic year.

A longtime tradition, “Paint Missoula Maroon” also celebrates and fosters the deep connection between the campus and community.

Beginning today, University staff and students will distribute Griz Kits to area businesses and neighborhoods to help “Paint Missoula Maroon.” The kits include UM stickers, yard signs, flags and window decals for display on cars, in windows and on sidewalks.

Community members displaying Griz gear are encouraged to share photos on social media with the hashtag #PaintMissoulaMaroon.

On Monday, Aug. 21, UM students will move into residence halls. Monday, Aug. 28, is the first day of classes. Additionally, the first home Grizzly football game will be held Sept. 2, and UM will host Homecoming Sept. 25-30.

“The start of a new academic year is always a perfect time to celebrate the close relationship between UM and Missoula,” said UM President Seth Bodnar. “As we prepare to welcome more than 10,000 students back to school next week, the community’s effort to Paint Missoula Maroon shows that our Grizzly pride runs deep.”

Members of the public interested in a Griz Kit are invited to drop by the Grizzly Scholarship Association Office located on the first floor of the Adams Center.

###

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Accessibility

A to Z

Directory

Campus Map

Campus Safety

Employment

Refer A Griz





UM's SIHI Team

MISSOULA – Only three years after its creation, the University of Montana and University of Montana Foundation today announced a significant investment to benefit the L.S. Skaggs Institute for Health Innovation.

Known as SIHI, the institute will use this investment to expand its influence as a statewide hub for health education, research and outreach — with a goal of improving access to emerging health innovations for all Montanans. The \$8 million grant to the University of Montana Foundation from The ALSAM Foundation will allow the UM to engage a wide variety of stakeholders who are committed to improving health outcomes of Montanans, as well as construct a community facing high-tech space to house SIHI programs.

“SIHI is a driving force that is bringing the UM College of Health together to solve some of the most pressing health care challenges facing our state,” said Donna Beall, interim dean of the UM Skaggs School of Pharmacy. “Without the generosity of key stakeholders, alumni and philanthropists, UM and the College of Health would not be in the position to build a healthier and more equitable world where every individual has access to quality health care services and the opportunity to live a fulfilling life. We are grateful for all those who contributed to enabling us to improve the overall well-being of our communities.”

The community of support for SIHI includes the numerous donors who collaborated with the UM Foundation to unlock the ALSAM grant by donating \$2 million in challenge gifts.

SIHI is led by Dr. Erica Woodahl and Dr. Hayley Blackburn — UM professors in the Skaggs School of Pharmacy — who focus on addressing health disparities in Montana through an interdisciplinary approach. Leveraging the pharmacy expertise based on UM’s campus and the Skaggs School of Pharmacy’s longstanding efforts to promote rural health, SIHI’s programs use pharmacist-led and team-based care approaches to increase access to health care services and support partners in rural and tribal communities across the state.

SIHI also includes innovative research programs — including those in precision medicine and pharmacogenomics — to ensure that benefits resulting from research are realized for underserved communities who have largely been left behind. These programs provide unique training opportunities for pharmacy and graduate students in the Skaggs School of Pharmacy as well as learners in other disciplines, preparing the next generation of health professionals and researchers to use innovative approaches and emerging health technologies to promote health and serve communities across Montana.

“Through this investment in SIHI, we can develop programs and infrastructure to address health equity for rural and tribal Montana communities,” said Woodahl. “Through access to research, education and clinical services, SIHI’s pharmacy faculty and other partners within the College of Health can help fill the gaps in some of Montana’s medically underserved areas.”

“SIHI can creatively partner with communities and fellow health professionals to improve access to care across Montana, while simultaneously training our students to practice effectively in interprofessional teams,” said Blackburn. “We have the opportunity to be a national leader by providing a blueprint for pharmacists to expand their traditional roles in an effort to reduce the health disparities that exist across our country.”

“Approximately half of the patients enrolled in our remote disease management program are from Primary Care Health Professional Shortage Areas,” added Lonnie Murphy, a pharmacist within SIHI. “We are grateful that we will be able to grow our program to help fill the primary care gaps in Montana.”

Launched in 2020, the L.S. Skaggs Institute for Health Innovation was jumpstarted by a donation from The ALSAM Foundation to accelerate the adoption of telehealth and precision medicine training in Montana.

The ALSAM Foundation is a Utah-based organization founded by L.S. Skaggs and his wife, Aline W. Skaggs. From his time living in Great Falls, through his establishment of a chain of pharmacies in the West and Midwest, business pioneer L.S. Skaggs had a long association with Montana. Since the early 1990s, Skaggs, the companies he owned and The ALSAM Foundation have made significant grants to the University of Montana Foundation in support of UM’s School of Pharmacy. In 2005, the University of Montana named the program the Skaggs School of Pharmacy to honor Skaggs’ generosity.

“The generosity and vision of The ALSAM Foundation and UM donors are enabling the College of Health and SIHI to help improve access to health care for all Montanans, particularly those living in underserved communities,” said Cindy Williams, president and CEO of the UM Foundation. “These gifts demonstrate the life-changing power of philanthropy.”

The UM Foundation is an independent nonprofit organization that has inspired philanthropic support to enhance excellence and opportunity at UM since 1950.

###

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Accessibility

A to Z

Directory

Campus Map

Campus Safety

Employment

Refer A Griz



UM / News / UM Researchers Find 1 in 6 Toddlers Don't Finish Multidose Vaccine Series



UM researchers Alexandria Albers, Dr. Sophia Newcomer and Sarah Michels. (L-R)

MISSOULA – University of Montana researchers have found that 17% of U.S. toddlers start, but do not complete, common and recommended vaccine series.

UM's Alexandria Albers, Sarah Michels and Sophia Newcomer published their findings in *Pediatrics* this summer, highlighting the primary cause of not completing a vaccine series is due to logistical barriers and not vaccine hesitancy. When publishing the study, the researchers urged action to address this public health shortcoming.

"For most vaccines, children need three or four doses in the first two years of life for optimal protection against diseases that can be quite dangerous," said Michels, an epidemiology specialist with the UM *Center for Population Health Research* and lead author of the study. "Completing all doses of multidose vaccine series is important for long-lasting immunity."

The researchers analyzed data collected in the CDC's National Immunization Survey from 16,365 children ages 19 to 35 months. In addition to finding that 17% of U.S. children started but did not finish their vaccine series, the researchers found that 10% did not start one or more vaccine series, including 1% of toddlers who did not receive any vaccines. About 73% of toddlers did complete all seven recommended vaccine series analyzed in the study.

The vaccines the researchers specifically evaluated were four doses of diphtheria, tetanus and acellular pertussis; four doses of pneumococcal conjugate; three or four doses of *Haemophilus influenzae* type b; three doses of hepatitis B; three doses of polio; one dose of measles, mumps and rubella; and one dose of varicella vaccines.

The researchers found that children who moved across state lines, children who did not have health insurance and families with multiple children in the household, were more likely to have started, but not completed, multidose vaccine series. Socioeconomic and racial and ethnic disparities were also observed, which indicate that effective strategies for supporting vaccine series completion are not reaching all communities.

"Concerted efforts are needed to close these gaps," said Newcomer, an associate professor of epidemiology at UM and the study's senior author. "Clinics can proactively reach out to families to let them know when their kids are due for vaccines, offer flexible scheduling and appointment options, and make sure eligible children are getting free vaccines through the federal Vaccines for Children program. We need to make getting vaccinated as easy as possible."

The study was led by UM researchers through a collaboration with the UM Center for Population Health Research, Yale School of Public Health and Kaiser Permanente.

“Having the opportunity to work within a national research collaboration has been a significant learning experience for me,” said Albers, a UM Public Health Ph.D. student who was a co-author of the study. “Our study’s results offer insight into how we can more effectively deliver immunization services to children across the country.”

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A to Z



Directory

Campus Map

Campus Safety

Employment

Refer A Griz



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SCHOOL OF LAW

UM FOUR PLUS ONE PROGRAM FAST TRACKS STUDENTS TO CAREERS

10 AUGUST 2023

UM student Sebastian Driver is enrolled in UM's "Four Plus One" program designed for students to complete an undergraduate degree in wildlife biology and a Master of Public Administration (MPA) in five years instead of six.

YELLOW BAY, FLATHEAD LAKE – With a few seductive chords plucked on her web, the female Sierra Dome spider (*Nerienne litigiosa*) hijacks the neuro response of potential suitors and makes them go into a trance. As she strums her love song, potential partners start battling to be her next groupie.

This exotic arachnid courtship never fails to intrigue University of Montana student Sebastian Driver, who has spent the past two summers at UM's **Flathead Lake Biological Station** studying an array of different species.

"I've always been interested in behavioral ecology," Driver said while observing the Sierra Dome dance. "I enjoy studying the natural behaviors of animals. You really get to know them."

The mating dance of Sierra Dome spiders is full of intrigue and broken hearts.

The biological station is an ecological research and education center in Northwest Montana. For over 100 years, students from a variety of academic backgrounds have come to the station to conduct research and take courses focused on the Crown of the Continent ecosystem. This ecosystem encompasses the Rocky Mountain region of Montana, British Columbia and Alberta.

Driver is enrolled in UM's "**Four Plus One**" program, which is designed for students to complete an undergraduate degree in wildlife biology and a Master of Public Administration in five years instead of six.



"An MPA is a practical and flexible graduate degree that is relevant for individuals with a wide range of career interests," said Dr. Shannon Vaughan, director of the **Department of Public Administration and Policy** at UM. "Earning an MPA through UM's Four Plus One program helps students like Sebastian combine the specialized knowledge of their undergraduate major with the organizational management skills learned throughout the MPA program, in an accelerated timeframe.

"This reduces tuition costs and gives them a head start toward achieving successful careers in the public and nonprofit sectors," she added.

For students like Driver, the program is a fast track to the workforce.

“I want to make an impact in the wildlife biology realm and saw the Four Plus One program as the quickest way to achieve this,” he said.

By pairing a hard science with an MPA from the Department of Public Administration and Policy, Driver feels he is becoming a more rounded person.

“I have learned how to interface with the public to better explain complex scientific datasets in ways more people can relate to,” he said. “This is a key skill in getting study results to the public in a way that is tangible.”

Driver finds that studying the behaviors of different species also helps him reflect on his own life.

“There is a lot of time for you to sit and think,” said Driver. “You get plenty of opportunity to sit in a calm place and be in nature.”

As he resumes watching a Sierra Dome spiderweb, Driver sees a bright future as a scientist and looks forward to a long career of sharing his love of the natural world.

“There she goes,” Driver marks another note in his observation book as he sits front row to the courtship dance. “Those guys don’t have a chance.”

###

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Accessibility

A to Z

Directory

Campus Map

Campus Safety

Employment

Refer A Griz





From left-to-right and top-to-bottom: Shelby Bauman, Stephan Cardella, Hannah Davis, Maggie Gibbons, Molly Lagasse and Brandon Smith.

MISSOULA – Seven University of Montana students have been awarded the prestigious Gilman Scholarship to study abroad.

The UM recipients of the 2022-23 Gilman Scholarship are Shelby Bauman, Stephan Cardella, Hannah Davis, Maggie Gibbons, Molly Lagasse, Emily Ramirez and Brandon Smith.

“All of this year’s awardees are extraordinarily passionate about their interests and clearly communicated in their applications that passion, interest in study abroad and their ability to represent the U.S. while abroad,” said Dr. Kylla Benes, director of UM’s Office of External Scholarships and Fellowships.

Funded by the U.S. Department of State, the Gilman Scholarship aims to increase the number of U.S. citizens who study abroad and foster mutual understanding between the people of the United States and other countries. The scholarship enables undergraduate students to study or intern abroad and often funds applicants who may not historically seek international educational opportunities.

Bauman, from **Missoula, Montana**, will head to Charles Stuart University in Australia in spring 2024 to study environmental science. Bauman is an environmental science and sustainability major and wilderness studies minor who is interested in sustainable agricultural practices and science communication. She has numerous experiences abroad and in agriculture, including interning on a free-range pig farm in New Zealand and volunteering on a permaculture farm in Peru. At Charles Stuart, Bauman plans to focus on global climate change issues and their impact on Australian ecosystems while also exploring the country.

Cardella, a junior majoring in business management and entrepreneurship, went to Romania in May 2023 on a trip co-sponsored by UM’s College of Business and the Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu. In Sibiu, Cardella worked with local businesses to learn about international business practices and lend his expertise. He chose to work with UNIMAT Company, assisting them with their e-commerce platform, web marketing and internationalization efforts through English language translation of marketing tools. Originally from Montana, Cardella wants to work in sustainable business practice long-term, particularly in the area of affordable and sustainable housing in the state.

“My hope is this experience provides a deeper examination of business practices and additional insights into these industries that could be applied to sustainable construction concepts at home to help lower costs and create more energy-efficient buildings,” Cardella said.

Davis, a theater major, spent her spring semester at the American University in Athens, Greece. A junior from **Missoula, Montana**, Davis continued music and theater classes alongside general education courses while in Greece. This was the first time abroad for Davis.

“Greece is rich in theater and history,” Davis said. “I am excited for the chance to explore a new place, understand a new culture and expand my understanding of theater and meet new people from a different country.”

Gibbons, a freshman from **Missoula, Montana**, will spend the 2023-24 academic year at the University of Almeria in Spain with a focus in psychology. Gibbons got to travel to Spain in spring 2022 and knew she wanted to go back for study abroad. She ultimately wants to become an art therapist to support people on their journeys towards healing and growth. With her interest in art, she is particularly interested in exploring Almeria’s art and architecture.

“I am so grateful to have received the Gilman Scholarship to fund my study abroad experience and pursue my academic and personal interests in Spain,” Gibbons said. “I am so excited to see what this next year brings into my life.”

Lagasse, a wildlife biology major, is working for the Laos Conservation Trust for Wildlife this summer to support its mission to care for, educate about and protect Laos’ diverse wildlife. Originally from New Hampshire, Lagasse came to UM for the wildlife biology program. She plans to pursue a career in international conservation.

“I want to see how wildlife is managed in a different country and give me an advantage at future wildlife jobs,” Lagasse said. “This opportunity will give me a different perspective to bring to my new jobs or help me brainstorm new ideas.”

Ramirez, a sophomore from **Billings, Montana**, will attend the University of Sunderland in the United Kingdom in the spring to study art and animation. Ramirez recently was intrigued by shows like “Don’t Hug Me I’m Scared” and “The Amazing World of Gumball,” which are produced in the U.K. So she sought to study in the country to learn mixed media use in animation and experience the place and culture that has inspired her artistic interests.

“I have a desire to experience the world of art from a new viewpoint and grow a better understanding of how living in different areas causes changes in art,” Ramirez said. “I want to learn about what changes I can make to myself to help enhance my own skills in the creative field and to limit the potential for tunnel vision.”

Smith, a sophomore studying international relations and comparative politics and history, will spend the 2023-24 academic year in Denmark at Aarhus University. While there he will focus

his studies on political science while also exploring the history and rich culture of the Scandinavian and Baltic regions. Since coming to UM, Smith has engaged in the campus and local community through participation in Model UN, MontPIRG and Soft Landing. He aspires to work in international relations and diplomacy.

“My time abroad will allow me to gain invaluable skills, including new ways of communication and cooperation,” Smith said. “The unique perspectives on the world, life and culture will inevitably be invaluable to my future endeavors, as it will make me a better leader as well as a better future diplomat.”

###

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[A to Z](#)

[Directory](#)

[Campus Map](#)

Campus Safety

Employment

Refer A Griz



UM / News / Community of Curators Selects Works for New UM Museum Opening



UM graduate and MMAC staffer Dagny Walton joined a committee of Missoula community members curating works for the museum's first exhibition in its new building. (UM photo by Tommy Martino)

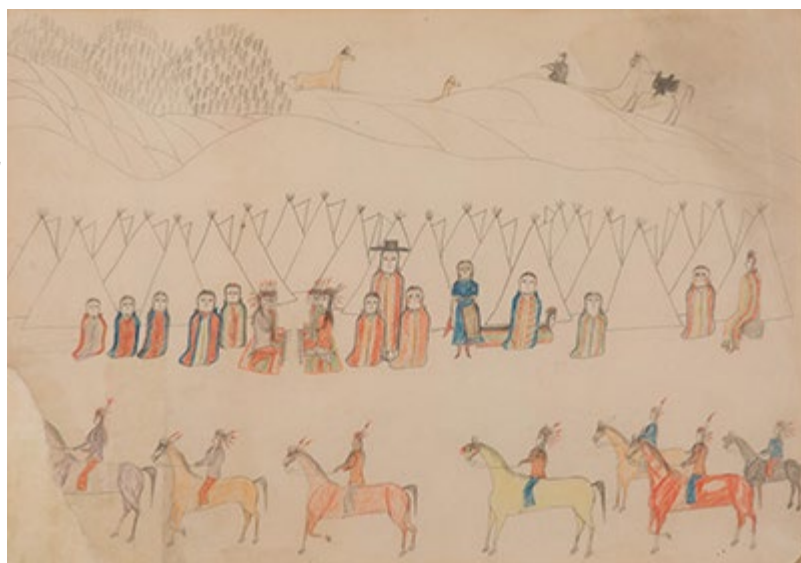
MISSOULA – Last summer, with construction in full swing for the new Montana Museum of Art and Culture building, a group of volunteers gathered on the University of Montana campus to

start selecting pieces for the very first exhibition.

It was a Herculean task by any measure. Not only did their final selection need to represent the breadth and depth of the MMAC's Permanent Collection, it also needed to be considerably smaller – 350 to 400 pieces pulled from a 11,000-plus collection, the state's largest and most comprehensive, assembled over 128 years.

The group of community curators – dubbed “MoM” for MMAC on the Move – met weekly, and the discussions were “rich, free-wheeling and occasionally peppered with disagreements,” said MMAC Director, H. Rafael Chacón. “In the end we always agreed on the works we selected – both the masterpieces and the more obscure things.”

The first work of art in the MMAC's Permanent Collection – believed to have been acquired in 1902 and called “Hunting Party” – will be part of the opening exhibit. It was drawn in ledger art-style by a Nez Perce named Philip John.



Community curator programs are growing in popularity as museums strive to create exhibitions that resonate and reflect the people and regions that surround them.

“It’s not that museums today don’t value the voices of curators and traditional authorities, but it is a question of inclusivity and openness,” said Chacón. “As a public institution, it is incumbent on us to open up the curating process to the communities we serve. We benefit tremendously from the wisdom and knowledge that exists in our community, and folks, in turn, have greater stake in our collections and how we interpret them.”

The first exhibition for the new MMAC is structured along seven themes: “Beliefs,” “Origins,” “Conflict,” “Harmony,” “The People,” “The Land” and “Beauty.”

As part of their assignment, Chacón gave committee members the task of selecting 10 works for each theme. The 10 had to include at least one female artist, a work by either a UM student or faculty member, a piece from beyond the American and European traditions, and a work in ceramic because the MMAC has such a prominent collection in that medium.

MoM member Dagny Walton tackled the project by methodically going through the MMAC online database looking at countless images from the collection.

“I was new to the committee at the time and was probably the least knowledgeable about what we had,” said Walton, who graduated in May with a Master of Fine Arts and is now on the MMAC staff. “For me, it was definitely a crash course.”

Filling some of the themes, such as “Conflict,” was easy, but others like “Origins” got “a bit wobbly,” she added.

This Samurai suit will be one of some 400 pieces on the display when the museum opens in September.

“The Samurai suit that’s in the collection is one that touched on several themes,” Walton said. “Nominally, it’s for ‘Conflict,’ but it could also go easily in ‘Beliefs’ or ‘Beauty.’”

The first work of art in the MMAC’s Permanent Collection, “Hunting Party” – believed to have been acquired in 1902 – also crossed several themes. Drawn in the ledger art-style by a Nez Perce individual named Philip John, “Hunting Party” depicts scenes of Indigenous life at the end of the 19th century, including men playing a stick game, a village council, tipis, warriors and a hunter in uniform.

“Some of our community curators chose it for ‘Conflict’ because it could represent the cultural strife 100 years ago,” said Chacón. “Others chose ‘Origin’ because it’s the first piece of art in the collection, and one chose ‘Harmony’ because it shows the coexistence between place and nature.”



“The selection process certainly generated some deep discussions,” he added.

With close to 400 works now selected, the committee will continue lending input and muscle power as they and other volunteers move and install the MMAC’s Permanent Collection in the new building.

“This exhibit and our move are a community effort,” Walton said. “To see so many people involved is very special.”

Editor's note: The new 17,000 square-foot MMAC building will open to the public in September. The privately funded project is made possible by the generosity of many donors, including a commitment of \$12.5 million from longtime UM donors Patt and Terry Payne.

###

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A to Z

Directory

Campus Map

Campus Safety

Employment

Refer A Griz



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UM / News / UM Earns \$7.1M to Improve Young American Indian Health in Three States

UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA

UM EARNS \$7.1M TO IMPROVE YOUNG AMERICAN INDIAN HEALTH IN THREE STATES

04 AUGUST 2023

MISSOULA – A University of Montana center recently secured a \$7.1 million grant to help prevent unplanned pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases among young American Indian populations.

The five-year grant was earned by UM's **Center for Children, Families and Workforce**

Development. It was funded by the U.S. Office of the Assistant Secretary of Health and Office of Population Affairs.

The UM center will provide evidence-based programs for young Natives in Montana, Arizona and New Mexico. The Johns Hopkins University's Center for Indigenous Health is a key partner on the grant.

"This multiyear, multistate prevention grant will provide transformative and foundational infrastructure from which American Indian youth will be supported, served and valued within their tribal culture," said Dr. Kristen Rogers, the center's principal investigator on the grant, which will create a new program titled Native Youth POWER.

She said the multistate project will focus on reducing teen birth and sexually transmitted infection rates among Native youth, which consistently are the highest rates of any ethnic minority group.

"We will provide training on pregnancy prevention, spacing and delay, including sexually transmitted infection prevention and intervention," Rogers said. "A main goal of this project is to reduce pregnancies in Native youth while respecting cultural norms of family and tribal connectedness."

In Montana, Native youth who access health and mental health care at All Nations Health Center in **Missoula** or Rocky Boy Health Center on the **Rocky Boy's Indian Reservation** will receive targeted, culturally appropriate interventions in regards to pregnancy and STD prevention.

"We are committed to advancing health equity across the state," said Kate Chapin, executive director of the UM center. "This new partnership with Johns Hopkins University will provide Montana with the tools and expertise to better serve one of the most vulnerable populations in Montana – American Indian youth. We are honored to receive this five-year award."

With the Navajo Nation in **Arizona** and **New Mexico**, the new prevention programs will be implemented at summer camps and in reservation school districts.

"Focused education for this high-risk group is going to benefit their families and our entire community," said Sandra Friede, a public health nurse at the Rocky Boy Health Center, which provides health and mental health care to its tribal community.

Skye McGinty is executive director of the All Nations Health Center, which serves more than 18 tribes throughout Montana. She said, “We are thrilled to partner with the University of Montana, the Chippewa Cree Tribe of Montana and the Navajo Nation on culturally appropriate reproductive education. Decolonizing our bodies starts with the kind of empowerment this grant will provide for Native youth and their families.”

Rogers said the efforts will employ a community-engaged, participatory approach to program implementation. The program will have a foundational methodology in trauma-informed care and positive youth development. Community and youth advisory boards within each setting will assist UM and Johns Hopkins staff in overseeing, implementing and monitoring all project activities.

###

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A to Z

Directory

Campus Map

Campus Safety

Employment

Refer A Griz





ALUMNI

STANDING OUT: UM
NAMES 2023
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ALUMNI

03 AUGUST 2023

MISSOULA – The University of Montana Alumni Association has selected six recipients for this year’s Distinguished Alumni Awards.

Recipients of the award are individuals who have distinguished themselves in a particular field, bringing honor to the University, the state or the nation. The recipients are respected in their careers and communities. Distinguished Alumni Award recipients are selected by a committee of UMAA members.

The award winners are:

Adams

Dr. Susan B. Adams, Ph.D. '99, of Oxford, Mississippi, is an international expert on fish and crayfish ecology. Her research has ranged from cold water fish and amphibian ecology in Montana's mountain streams to discoveries about crayfish on the Gulf of Mexico coast.

She is a recognized local, regional, national and international expert on crayfish and is regularly invited to speak and collaborate on international projects. She has described new crayfish species, documented the effects of land management on crayfish and authored more than 70 scientific papers.



Described as the “Jane Goodall of crayfish,” Adams has made science accessible to a variety of audiences. She was elected to serve as president of the International Association of Astacology [study of crayfish]. The state of Montana turned to her when they needed an expert to lead their recent statewide crayfish investigations.

Carpino

Paul Carpino, BA '54, of Spokane Valley, Washington, is a social work graduate but describes himself as “more a social justice and peace activist than a traditional social worker.” He worked for decades on behalf of underrepresented and underserved populations in Montana, Colorado, Utah, Nevada and across the country.

He preferred systemic changes that addressed the root causes of hunger and homelessness and viewed direct service programs as ineffective. He taught low-income people how to speak up for themselves and press their issues with those in power at the local and statewide levels. He was instrumental in organizing the Montana State Low Income Organization (MSLIO) that became a force in changing laws so that programs to assist the



poor became more accommodating to them.

He and two other runners founded the “Run for Peace,” a relay from New York City to Seattle. Their mission was to promote nuclear disarmament. Carpino believed the nuclear weapons industry unfairly affected low-income residents of the manufacturing and testing sites.

Elser

Arnold “Smoke” Elser, BA ’64, of Missoula is a legendary packer, author, teacher, conservationist and UM education grad. For 60 years, Elser ran an outfitting business from his historic barn in Missoula’s Rattlesnake Valley and became an important voice in the U.S. conservation movement.

He testified in the U.S. Senate for the Lincoln-Sagebrush Wilderness in 1972 and was instrumental in the designation of the Great Bear Wilderness in 1976 and the Wild and Scenic River Act in 1968. He literally wrote the book on horse and mule packing (“Packin’ In On Mules and Horses,” Mountain Press, 10th edition). He is author of many handbooks and informational materials on light-on-the-land backcountry travel with horses and mules – all of which became standards for the recreationist and the outfitting industry and the basis for the Montana accreditation exam for professional outfitters.



Munson

Dr. Michael Marie Munson, BA ’04, MEd ’08, of Polson is an expert in the field of Indian education, not only in Montana but nationwide and around the world. Her vast knowledge and expertise were invaluable resources for the state of Montana with the Office of Public Instruction’s Indian Education efforts. She assisted with the development and publication of high-quality Indian Education for All model lesson plans and curriculum resources that are still being used throughout Montana classrooms.

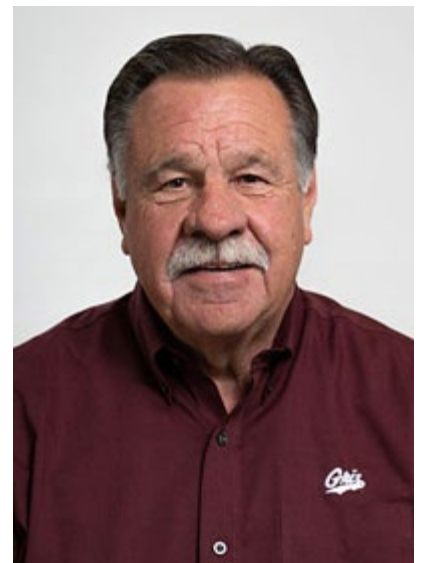


Munson has provided highly engaging, effective and culturally relevant professional development for educators in Montana. She brings an insider perspective to the unique issues facing American Indian students and is committed to the goal of providing all students, both on and off the reservation, a high-quality education. Munson plays an integral role in the historic work of Salish language revitalization efforts, and her nominators wrote that her influence will be felt hundreds of years from now.

Nelson

Steve Nelson, BA '70, of Missoula is a driving force in business development in Missoula. After graduating from UM, Nelson joined the army. In his military career, he reached the rank of major before retiring.

He took on a second career, owning and operating several small businesses in Missoula, as well as purchasing and developing the Bonner Mill Industrial Park, which now houses several locally owned businesses that are mainstays of Missoula's economy. Additionally, Nelson gives back to his community and alma mater through service.



He is a member of the National Board of Grizzly Athletics and serves as the co-chair of the YMCA's Capital Campaign board.

Pettit

Dr. Lawrence Pettit, BA '59, of Helena served as the first commissioner of higher education in the Montana University System after the position was created in the 1972 Montana Constitution. During his time as commissioner, his accomplishments include curriculum development and reform and implementation of uniform fiscal policies.



Under his leadership, the Board of Regents approved a partnership with the University of Washington School of Medicine that allowed Montana students opportunities to attend medical school. Pettit also worked to develop better relationships with Montana's Native American community.

He has served in a number of academic positions, including president of Indiana University of Pennsylvania. He served in various positions at Southern Illinois University, American Council on Education, Southern Illinois University and the University System of South Texas, as well as the Texas College and University System.

He was both a student and professor of political science and worked in the Montana administrations of Gov. Tom Judge, Sen. Lee Metcalf and Sen. James Murray. He has mentored dozens of political science students and candidates.

UMAA and UM will welcome these outstanding alumni to campus during Homecoming week for an awards banquet. To learn more about the award or this year's recipients, please visit [UMAA's website](#).

For questions or additional information, email alumni@umontana.edu, call Jodi Moreau at 406-243-6124 or email jodi.moreau@umontana.edu.

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Accessibility

A to Z

Directory

Campus Map

Campus Safety

Employment

Refer A Griz



UM / News / Two UM Students Receive Nationally Recognized Scholarships for Women

UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA

TWO UM STUDENTS RECEIVE NATIONALLY RECOGNIZED SCHOLARSHIPS FOR WOMEN

01 AUGUST 2023

Angela Mishler

MISSOULA – Two University of Montana

students have received nationally recognized scholarships that seek to support women students making contributions to their fields of study and communities.

Angela Mishler, an undergraduate student from **Park Rapids, Minnesota**, was awarded the Jeannette Rankin Emerge Grant. The Emerge Grant supports women and nonbinary students from Montana and Georgia who show a strong commitment to their educational and career goals and work to have positive impacts on their families and communities. The Jeanette Rankin Foundation aims to “transform futures through education” with their Scholar, Emerge and Montana Tribal College Scholar Grants.

Adyasha Nayak, a graduate student from Sambalpur, in Odisha state, India, received the Philanthropic Educational Organization International Peace Scholarship. The PEO is a more than 150-year-old “sisterhood of women helping women reach for the stars” through five different funding programs. The International Peace Scholarship supports international women graduate students as they pursue degrees in the U.S. or Canada.

Dually enrolled at Missoula College and UM, Mishler is pursuing certification in licensed addiction counseling and minoring in chemical addiction studies. She also plans to become a licensed clinical social worker to counsel those who experience co-occurring mental health and addiction disorders.

Mishler was inspired to become a counselor after witnessing family members battle mental health issues and seeking help from therapists herself. She has already served in this field, having previously worked at the Western Montana Mental Health Center. Mishler is also a mother to two daughters.



Adyasha Nayak

“Getting the courage to go back to school at an older age is a huge accomplishment for me, and I am equally proud of being a mother, a full-time student and a positive contributor to this society that I live in,” Mishler said.

Nayak is a doctoral student in UM’s Forest and Conservation Sciences program studying social science-based conservation. Her childhood trips to wilderness areas, as well as her parents' love of learning and encouragement to be independent, ultimately inspired Nayak to pursue science. She is also an artist and has used her talent to support conservation campaigns in India. Nayak plans to become a conservation practitioner focused on cultural preservation of traditional ecological practices. After completing her studies, Nayak aims to return to India.

“I want to promote equitable resource use around protected wilderness areas; generate sustainable livelihood streams, particularly for rural women; and assist wildlife managers in aligning their objectives with traditional socio-ecological systems,” said Nayak.

Both Mishler and Nayak worked with UM’s Office of External Scholarships and Fellowships to complete their applications.

“Both scholars have already made a difference in their communities and fields,” said Dr. Kylla Benes, director of the office. “They are prime examples of how UM students use their education to make real, positive impacts in the world and scholarship foundations recognize this potential.”

Mishler is UM’s fifth Jeannette Rankin Scholar, and Nayak is UM’s fourth PEO International Peace Scholarship awardee.



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Accessibility

A to Z

Directory

Campus Map

Campus Safety

Employment

Refer A Griz

