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### Great Falls residents benefit from UM's program at Malmstrom

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maribeth dwyer • news editor

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GREAT FALLS RESIDENTS BENEFIT  
FROM UM's PROGRAM AT MALMSTROM  
by William Scott Brown  
UM Publications and Media Relations

MISSOULA--

It can be somewhat disconcerting to dial a local Great Falls number and have the voice at the other end of the line answer, "University of Montana." But an important part of the University of Montana is, nonetheless, present in Great Falls, or more precisely, at Malmstrom Air Force Base.

That part is the AFIT/MBA program. The acronym stands for Air Force Institute of Technology/Master of Business Administration.

Created in 1963 for off-duty missile/launch control officers, this UM program has expanded steadily until today it enrolls members of the Great Falls community as well as other Air Force personnel. Through this program 25 to 30 people each year receive a master of business administration degree from the University of Montana.

The program now has more than 300 graduates in management positions within the Air Force and in private business. One is the controller of Hagar, the makers of men's slacks; 12 are with "big eight" accounting firms; several have gone on to earn doctorates.

(over)



"MALMSTROM" -- add one

It is not surprising that the Air Force, according to program administrator Bernard Bowlen, regards the 17-year-old program "as a long-term thing."

One sign of the program's maturity is the number of women who participate. Seven will be enrolled winter quarter, and while several are already active in the business world, most are former homemakers, both civilian and Air Force, who have decided to launch new careers.

Students with no previous graduate work in business can earn an M.B.A. in as little as two years. Civilian students generally take longer, however, since most are employed in Great Falls businesses, and classes are scheduled for the convenience of Air Force personnel.

Since civilians were first admitted to the program four years ago, some two dozen have earned an M.B.A. Presently about 100 civilians from the Great Falls area are working at different rates toward their degrees.

Says Bowlen, "This flexibility is one of the great things about the AFIT/MBA program for the Great Falls community. Thanks to the Air Force's generosity, business people who couldn't afford to leave their jobs or move their families to Missoula for two years are able to earn an M.B.A. without leaving home."

Bowlen emphasizes the important role Air Force good will has played in making civilian participation a successful part of the program. Although there is a quota on civilian enrollment, Bowlen says, "The Air Force has been extremely good about allowing us to exceed it from time to time.

Even though the AFIT/MBA program is located 165 miles from the University of Montana School of Business, its support facilities are excellent. The program has its own computer, and its 5,000-volume library features what Bowlen believes is the most complete collection of companys' annual reports in the state.



"MALMSTROM" -- add two

"We have the reports of the entire "Fortune 500" for the past 20 years," says Bowlen, adding that the periodical collection is comparable to that of a major university.

Yet these are not the things Bowlen is most proud of.

"If there is one thing we want to perpetuate," he says, "it is the spirit of cooperation that the program engenders among the Malmstrom and Great Falls communities. The AFIT/MBA program has been a very good thing for the Air Force, for the University of Montana and for Great Falls."

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