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MEDIA RELEASE

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UM APPLIES FOR PATENT ON CHEMICAL PROCESS

MISSOULA--

For the first time in its 89-year history, the University of Montana has applied for a patent.

Ken Watson, UM professor of chemistry, has developed a process for simultaneously isolating three enzymes from one cell source that can modify RNA molecules. The modified RNA, together with a DNA-forming enzyme, can be used to produce gene copies that can then be cloned.

The process, which was developed through Watson's work in cancer research, has many health-related benefits. For example, the process can be used to produce viral gene products that can be used as a substitute for viral vaccines.

"Dr. Watson's discovery is extremely exciting and this represents the first time that the University of Montana itself has applied for a patent," Raymond Murray, associate vice president for research and dean of the graduate school, said.

Other organizations have applied for patents in the name of the University, he added.

Obtaining the patent may take more than two years, Watson said, but now that the patent is filed, the University has claim to the process. Watson said he plans to publish a manuscript about the process. A Florida firm has already expressed strong interest in marketing the enzymes, he said.

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