

The University of Montana Western Campus Report

DATE: Wednesday, February 13, 2019

TO: Board of Regents

FROM: Beth Weatherby, Chancellor

RE: Campus Report for the March 2019 Board of Regents' Meeting

- **UMW Announces Donation Pledge of Land from John and Phyllis Erb**

The University of Montana Western announced the pledge to donate 14 acres of land by John and Phyllis Erb adjacent to the UMW campus for the creation of a new stadium. The Erb family, whose donations have been the catalysts for numerous community enhancement projects in the Dillon area, including the Jaycee Park Renovation, have generously pledged to donate the plot.

The donation stipulates that UMW will raise \$2 million in the next two years, approximately one-third of the estimated cost of building the stadium. State funding will not be used for this project. The new facility will be available to community teams, just as Vigilante Field has been.

“We are grateful to the Erb family for their vision, leadership, and continual support of the University of Montana Western. They have provided scholarships to numerous students over the years and have been instrumental in ensuring the health and welfare of our community,” said Chancellor Beth Weatherby.

- **UMW Ranked Among Best Value in Early Childhood Education**

Montana Western was ranked third on the list of 10 most affordable online bachelor's degrees in Early Childhood Education by the Bachelor's Degree Center (BDC).

The BDC is an online guide that strives to help prospective students find an educational program most suited to their needs. The ranking was based solely on tuition costs.

U.S. News & World Report has also bestowed the University of Montana Western, a public institution founded in 1893, with several impressive rankings in the Western region. The rankings include #9 in Best Regional Colleges, #4 in Top Public Schools and #7 in Best Colleges for Veterans.

- **Montana Western Alumnus Justin Olson to Publish First Novel**

Justin Olson, a 2008 graduate from Montana Western, will be releasing his first book on April 16, 2019 through Simon & Schuster publishing. Titled “Earth to Charlie,” the young adult fiction novel is set in Whitehall, Mont.

“Earth to Charlie” is about a high school outcast who spends his life hoping to be abducted by aliens. The quirky novel focuses on finding footing in a world that sometimes feels like Mars.

“I’m constantly inspired to write because it allows me to discover more about myself and life in general. It’s a way to never stop learning,” said Olson.

- **Montana Western Glass Program Featured on NBC Montana**

Assistant Professor Michael Hengler and his class were recently featured as part of the “Montana Moment” series produced by NBC Montana.

Students at the University of Montana Western learn the intricacies of creating glass objects as artistic pieces and scientific tools.

“You’ve got to play with the gravity, centrifugal force and timing,” said Hengler. “It’s very much analogous to a dance.”

Montana Western is the only four-year institution in the country that offers a bachelor’s degree with a scientific glass specialization.

- **Montana Western Student Receives Civic Engagement Scholarship**

Montana Campus Compact (MTCC), an eighteen campus higher education network, announced the inaugural class of the George M. Dennison Civic Engagement Scholarship winners in December 2018.

The award recognizes students pursuing a degree or certificate at MTCC affiliate campuses who have volunteered significant time, energy and resources to projects that make a meaningful difference in the lives of others.

UMW senior and elementary education major Shayla McGregor, was one of ten scholarship recipients from across the state. Her community service efforts include volunteering as a member of Peers Advocating Towards Health, an advocacy group that aids college students in making healthy and informed choices.

- **UMW Alumnus Finishes Strong at National Finals Rodeo**

Bridger Chambers, originally from Stevensville, Mont., was a basketball and rodeo standout at Montana Western. He graduated with a degree in Secondary Education P.E. and Health in 2013.

In December 2018, Chambers qualified for the 60th National Finals Rodeo held in Las Vegas in steer wrestling.

Chambers placed in five out of the ten go-rounds, placing second in the average. Earning over \$135,000 at the event, he was honored with the title of Reserve World Champion steer wrestler.

- **Professor John Hajduk Releases New Book**

John Hajduk, History Professor at UMW, recently published "Music Wars: Money, Politics, and Race in the Construction of Rock and Roll Culture, 1940-1960."

He spent over 25 years collecting research, stating "I wanted to share the origins of rock and roll that were never told. This music was something that was very innocuous and trivial in a lot of ways, but it got pushed to the front as something important in shaping our culture."

Released in October 2018, the book examines disputes in the music industry and how the complex symbiotic relationship between culture and music impacted Americans from 1940-1960.

- **Fine Arts Gallery Hosts Faculty Exhibition**

Montana Western's Fine Arts Gallery concluded the fall semester with a faculty art show titled "Make No Mistake." The reception for the exhibit was held on Dec. 13, 2018 and included live music by UMW Professor Brent McCabe.

The show featured full-time UMW Fine Arts faculty members Eva Mastandrea, Michael Hengler and Aja Mujinga Sherrard in addition to visiting faculty including Crista Ann Ames, Karl Schwiesow, Nathaniel Freeman, Suzy Kitman and Tyler Nansen.

Gallery coordinator Aja Mujinga Sherrard hopes that "students and aspiring artists who attended the exhibit were able to gather a broader range for creative inspiration."

- **Montana Western Men's Basketball Team Volunteers in the Community**

The Montana Western men's basketball team has logged over 120 volunteer hours since Mike Larsen took over as head men's basketball coach in May 2018.

Coach Larsen keeps team members engaged with various ongoing projects on campus and in the community of Dillon. The team assisted with the Jaycee Park renovation, volunteered at the campus move-in day to help incoming freshmen move into the residence halls and they continually volunteer at Stepping Stones Preschool once each week.

Larsen's goal is that the men's basketball team can lead by example and "encourage others to give back to their community."

- **UMW Alumnus Receives Education Award**

Chris Fisk, a 1992 graduate of UMW, was recognized as the Butte Elevated 2018 Educator of the Year.

This award recognizes an individual who has excelled in the education sector of Butte, Mont., and has developed innovative educational programs to motivate students beyond the classroom.

As a history teacher, Fisk wants his students to understand that "history is not just a story out of a book, but rather an experience."

- **Dances with Words Series brings Variety of Authors to UMW**

Montana Western's "Dances with Words" series offers students and community members the opportunity to listen to authors reading their own works. UMW held multiple performances during the fall semester.

Cara Chamberlain and Bernard Quetchenbach read poetry and nonfiction works in October followed by Amy Pearson sharing her experience as a fire lookout, reciting original poems from her book "100 Days of Solitude" in November.

Doug Ammons shared research behind his nonfiction book, "A Darkness Lit by Heroes," to conclude the fall series in December. The book details the Butte Great Speculator Mine fire, the worst hard-rock mining disaster in American history.

The spring semester series will begin starting in February.