



The University of Montana Western Campus Report

DATE: December 13, 2023
TO: Board of Regents
FROM: Michael Reid, Chancellor
RE: Campus Report for the January Board of Regents' Meeting

- **UMW Reports Increase in Overall and Montana Resident Enrollment**

Officials at the University of Montana Western said current headcount for the fall semester shows the university's total enrollment is 1,406 students with a full-time equivalency of 1,220. 73% of Montana Western's total fall enrollment is comprised of Montana residents, with a 2% increase in overall headcount compared to last fall. Montana Western Director of Institutional Research, Charity Walters, said this year's incoming class increased in Montana residents by 11% in comparison with last fall (and grew 2% overall). This year's incoming class included 299 freshmen, 123 transfer students, and 17 readmits for a total of 439 incoming students.

"We are excited to see the continued growth of our overall enrollment and this fall's increase in Montana resident students. We are proud to serve students from Montana and across the country at UMW," said University of Montana Western Chancellor, Michael Reid.

- **UMW Appoints Tia Brown as Vice Chancellor for Administration & Finance**

UMW recently announced the hiring of Tia Brown as Vice Chancellor for Administration and Finance. Brown is currently serving at Montana State University as Assistant Dean of Academic Affairs and Assurance of Learning in the Jake Jabs College of Business and Entrepreneurship, a role she has held since 2019. She is also currently serving as Director of the Community Banking Program and was the College's Director of Operations from 2015-19. Brown will begin her new position at the University of Montana Western on February 5, 2024.

"Tia's extensive experience in higher education and accreditation and having served as both a faculty member and as a budget and operations manager will be a great asset for Montana Western," said Chancellor Michael Reid.

- **Student Wellness Center Breaks Ground at UMW**

The University of Montana Western has officially started construction of the campus's new Student Wellness Center. As part of UMW's Experience One Campaign, the Wellness Center will provide students with an upgraded facility to support their mental and physical health.

Contractor C.S. Structures, working with R.E. Miller, arrived on campus in early December to prepare the construction site for mobilization for the approximately 10-month project.

"Our three main objectives in managing the project's logistics are: ensuring the safety of our campus population and contractors, providing suitable access to the site for contractors to work as efficiently as possible, and minimizing disruption to the daily flow of campus operations," said Director of UMW Facility Services, Michael Brown.

- **UMW Announces Sprint Degree Partnership with Great Falls College & Public Schools**

The University of Montana Western was recently awarded nearly \$400,000 dollars by the Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education (OCHE) to implement a Sprint Degree in partnership with Great Falls College (GFC) and Great Falls Public Schools (GFPS).

The newly designed program will maintain all the courses currently required for a BS: Elementary Education but will compact the traditionally 4-year program into a 9-semester sequence, which includes summers. Students will be able to take their general education courses through GFC/UMW and will complete their teaching program through UMW. The Sprint Degree cohort will be housed at Morningside Elementary in Great Falls, which will be the site for the new CORE School that GFPS will open in the fall of 2024.

- **Tanner Harrell Receives Montana Athletes in Service Award**

Each year, Montana Campus Compact recognizes one student-athlete from each MTCC Affiliate Campus across the state who has dedicated their efforts to serving the community while also pursuing their college degrees and certificates while participating in college sports.

Tanner Harrell, current Association of Student-Athletes President (2023-24) and former Association of Student-Athletes representative (2021-23), actively contributes to the community by volunteering at the local elementary school and as a volunteer for UMW freshmen move-in day. He is also a generous volunteer with Engine 18—an organization established in memory of Bulldog football team member, M.J. Simkins.

Recognized as an excellent community member, Tanner lends a helping hand by assisting with moving people into homes, supporting the local elderly, and painting benches at the local special needs home.

- **UMW Announces Senior Director of Enrollment Management and Director of Admissions**

Montana Western is pleased to announce Jaime Ochoa as Registrar & Senior Director of Enrollment Management and Chrissy Stokes as Director of Admissions.

“With Jaime’s unwavering dedication in both these roles, I’m truly looking forward to what lies ahead, and I’m certain that her expertise and collaborative approach will empower Montana Western to excel in our enrollment and retention objectives,” said Dr. Johnny MacLean, Provost and Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs.

Stokes began working in the Admissions Office as an Admissions Representative in 2015. She previously served as the Associate Director of Admissions before serving as Interim Director of Admissions beginning this summer.

“We look forward to Chrissy serving in this new role and are excited for the enthusiasm and leadership that she will bring to this position,” said Senior Director of Enrollment Management, Jaime Ochoa.

- **Montana Western Ranked #1 in “Best Colleges in Montana”**

BestColleges.com, a leading online resource for students, and leading authority in higher education research and college planning, is pleased to announce that the University of Montana Western has secured the top spot as #1 in “Best Colleges in Montana” for 2023. UMW stands out in the state based on affordability, enrollment, retention, and graduation rates.

Best Colleges evaluate academic quality by examining the number of students graduating in specific majors, indicating a school’s commitment to those programs. Their affordability score considers program cost, student loan rates, and post-graduation loan repayment ability.

- **Montana Western Celebrates First Generation College Student Day**

To celebrate the seventh annual National First-Generation College Student Day, the University of Montana Western recognized its first-generation students, faculty, and staff. November 8th marked the 58th anniversary of the Higher Education Act of 1965, which increased funding for universities, scholarships, and student loans.

“First-generation” refers to students whose parents have not obtained a four-year college degree. The day recognizes the accomplishments these students have made and the barriers they have broken. The Montana Western TRIO program provides them with a support system to help navigate the landscape of higher education and to make a college degree attainable for everyone.

- **UMW Hosts Community Water Conversations Panel with Trout Unlimited**

The University of Montana Western and Trout Unlimited recently hosted the second annual “Community Water Conversations: Digging into Water Rights and Exempt Wells” event.

The discussion featured a panelist of experts and Q&A session for local community members to discuss important water rights challenges and opportunities in the region. This year’s panelists included: Andrew Gorder, Legal Director of the Clark Fork Coalition, Nate Ward, Water Rights Bureau Chief at Montana DNRC, Brooke Erb, Erb Livestock Company, and Race King, Ranch Manager at the Selkirk Division of Matador Ranch and Cattle Company.

- **UMW Volleyball, Football, and Cross Country Compete in National Tournaments**

The Bulldog Volleyball Team capped off a historic season after posting their highest win percentage since the 1996 season and made their first ever appearance in the NAIA Women’s Volleyball National Tournament in Sioux City, Iowa. They finished out the season 22-8 overall. The American Volleyball Coaches' Association also recognized two Montana Western student-athletes as award recipients: redshirt-junior middle blocker, Danyel Martin (AVCA All-Region First Team) and junior outside hitter, Jazi Smith (AVCA All-Region Honorable Mention).

The Montana Western Football Team (9-2) completed the 2023 season in the NAIA Football Championship Series second round hosted by Montana Western. Several student-athletes broke season records. Eli Nourse now holds the single season receiving yards record, the season passes caught record, and the yards per punt return average record. Coby Tanioka broke the single season kick return yards record. Tanner Harrell set a new Montana Western record of 41 tackles for loss.

The Bulldog Cross Country Team had two representatives competing at the NAIA National Cross Country Championships in Vancouver, Washington, this fall. Olivia Heiner ran in the women's 6k race and finished in 196th in the field of 333 runners. She finished the race in a time of 24:27.5. Brant Heiner ran in the men's 8k race and finished in 162nd of 331 runners with a race time of 26:43.2.

- **UMW Theatre Department and Bank of Commerce Performing Arts Series Present “SpongeBob the Musical” and “As You Like It”**

The University of Montana Western’s Theatre Department and Bank of Commerce Performing Arts Series is excited to present "The SpongeBob Musical" from December 8-17, 2023, in the Beier Auditorium and Shakespeare in the Schools' "As You Like It" on December 13 in the Small Auditorium in Main Hall.

“The purpose of the fun for all ages SpongeBob musical is to tell a story about community and the value of togetherness while in the face of calamity. Our cast and crew are comprised of

UMW students, faculty, staff, as well as Dillon locals and middle school and high school students,” said Director Stephen Seder. “A story of entangled romance and comedy, where all the world’s a stage, ‘As You Like It’ is a keep-you-on-your-toes production, sure to captivate audiences with its happily ever after.”

A poetry workshop will also be held between the “As You Like It” performances to teach participants through games, physical and vocal exploration, and personalization how to connect with complex written works in exciting ways.

- **Montana Western Fine Arts Gallery and Glass Club Host Annual Holiday Art Show & Sale**

The Montana Western Fine Arts Gallery, in partnership with the Glass Club, will present this year’s Holiday Art Show and Sale opening on December 13 from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m. and running through December 16.

The campus and community are invited to join in the celebration of the holiday season at the gallery to explore a variety of one-of-a-kind works of art made by UMW students, faculty, and staff. Items on display and for sale include photography, paintings, drawings, textiles, glass artwork, and crafts.

- **The Cantabileers Present Winter Choral Concert at Montana Western**

The Cantabileers, the University of Montana Western’s select choral ensemble, will host a free performance on December 19 at 7:30 p.m. in the Beier Auditorium.

This year’s winter concert performance will feature a variety of musical selections and student-led ensembles that showcase this talented and creative group. Accompanying the Cantabileers in their performance will be accomplished pianist, Susie Steadman.

“It’s such a pleasure to watch the Cantabileers continue to build this very unique musical community. The group has worked together to share ideas and utilize each person’s strengths and talents, which are showcased in this holiday concert,” said the group’s Director, Dr. Debbie Seacrest.