

January 2026

James Straw, a UM student, former farm kid and trained Marine sniper, **earned a highly prestigious Marshall Scholarship.**

The University's **Backcountry Hunters & Anglers club** is boosting campus interest in hunting, fishing, fly-fishing and essential Montana culture.

Julia Galloway, a UM director of ceramics, was **named Regents Professor** by the Montana Board of Regents. The honor is the highest professor rank in the Montana University System.

UM's new Brain, Ear and Aging Research (**BEAR) Lab** studies the connection between hearing loss and brain function as people age.

More than **800 UM students graduated** after fall semester 2025. **Commencement was held Dec. 12,** and the University presented an honorary doctorate to alumna speaker **Lana Batts.**

Graduate student Mikaela Balkind created a training to inspire **more women to become wildland firefighters.**

UM students participated in a **60-second business pitch competition.**

ROTC cadet Buddy Wilson, the University's student body president, was a **finalist for the Rhodes Scholarship.**

Justin Willis, a world-class mountaineer attending UM, **overcame a near-death experience** to climb toward graduation.

Brittany Westlund, a UM **graduate student in game design,** has made some winning moves with a short-form video game, a publication and awards.

UM doctoral students are **advancing research in speech language pathology.**

UM **won the Can the Cats food drive competition** with the most successful fundraising effort in the program's history.

Anthropology Regents Professor Anna Prentiss will lead an international **\$12 million grant to study pre-farming hunter-gatherer societies.**

The University and Missoula County Public Schools created a new partnership to **improve early childhood programming for students with disabilities.**

UM's **law school launched an effort** to support veterans via peer mentorship. A new student group also is helping vets **transition from combat to the courtroom.** Also, law alumnus Alex Butler is finding success as a **JAG officer** with the U.S. military.