

CAMPUS REPORT TO THE BOARD OF REGENTS

UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA WESTERN

March 1, 2012

We are pleased to host the March meeting of the Montana Board of Regents and to welcome Angela Mclean as the new chair. She is one of our most distinguished and admired graduates.

Here are a few highlights from campus.

Montana Western business major Cory Birkenbuel, the 33-year old Dillon, Mont. native and self-proclaimed Maverick Mountain ski bum, recently completed a whirlwind, 16-day tour of all 16 Montana ski areas to create a documentary film about the state's diverse skiing industry and lifestyle.

The project, Montana's Sweet 16, is part of Birkenbuel's senior internship. He worked with MSU film student and Dillon native Kevin Hilston to not only ski every area in the state but also to shoot video of skiing, snowboarding and life at each of the areas. Birkenbuel ultimately plans to make a documentary to enter in film festivals across the region.

"The project has been demanding," Birkenbuel explains. "But this is experiential learning at its best." In addition to being featured on ski area websites, Birkenbuel and Hilston were featured in a Dec. 30 article in the Missoulian, in a television interview on KXLF News and on Montana Snow Sports online.

The diverse aspirations and abilities of the students served by our TRiO Student Support Services program represent the varied educational opportunities and challenges students face in pursuing a four-year degree. TRiO is part of a federal program aiming to increase the college retention and graduation rates of students. Student Support Services successfully provides support to first-generation college and low-income students as well as to students with physical and learning challenges. Christy Keyes is the current director of TRiO at Montana Western. She is also a UMW and TRiO alumna.

"The TRiO program literally found me at Montana Western's spring orientation," Keyes said. "I was a non-traditional, first-generation, low-income student. The director at that time...passed out applications. Once I learned I qualified and was enrolled in TRiO, the program folded me into their services." Graduating from Montana Western in 2005 with highest honors and a BA in Literature and Writing, Keyes then completed an M.F.A. program in creative writing. Her continued involvement as a work study tutor helped lead to her role as director of the newly established Montana Western Learning Center in 2005.

Regent Professor and 2009 U.S. Carnegie/Case Professor of the Year Rob Thomas accepted an invited position as a faculty member during the spring 2012 Semester at Sea.

Dr. Alan Weltzien, Professor of English, delivered a lecture on Thomas Savage's newly republished second novel, *Lona Hanson*, as part of the 2011 Helena Book Festival.

English professor, Danielle Jones, Ph.D., published an article titled, "*Teaching Tolstoy in Cow Town*" in the Fall 2011 issue of *The Montana Professor*.

Aaron Richmond, a 1999 Montana Western psychology graduate, is the 2011 recipient of the Jane S. Halonen Teaching Excellence Award and the newly elected president of the Northern Rocky Mountain Educational Research Association.