



Recommendation of  
Jim Scott for  
Honorary Doctorate



## **UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA – THIS IS MONTANA COMMUNITY VITALITY PROGRAM**

Office of Research & Creative Scholarship and The O'Connor Center for the Rocky Mountain West

Greetings President Bodnar,

Please accept this missive as my nomination for awarding Jim Scott an Honorary Doctorate Degree from the University of Montana at the Spring 2022 Commencement Ceremony.

Born in Sheridan, Wyoming, Jim completed his baccalaureate studies at the University of Denver and the University of Wyoming. He and his wife Chris moved to Billings, Montana in 1976, where Jim commenced a banking career. From that time forward, he took the reins in growing the First Interstate BancSystem into the most expansive banking group in Montana and one of the largest in the Pacific Northwest.

Along the way, he dedicated his life to making Montana a better place for all of its citizens. In recognition of this, in 2021, Jim was the recipient of the Governor's Humanitarian Award.

Jim Scott's contributions to Montana and our university of time, wisdom, and philanthropy have now spanned more than 46 years. His involvement in leadership positions touches our state from border-to-border... the Montana Community Foundation, The Nature Conservancy of Montana, Northwest Area Foundation, Rocky Mountain Technology Group, Montana Ambassadors, and the First Interstate BancSystem Foundation, to name a few.

For Montana's Native American population, community and economic development have long been a focus of Jim's, most notably, with the Crow, Northern Cheyenne, and Blackfoot nations. He also served nine years with the American Indian College Fund as a Board Member, Chair of the Governance Committee, and member of the Executive Committee.

The University of Montana has significantly benefitted from his engagement, guidance, and generosity. Specifically, UM's O'Connor Center for the Rocky Mountain West, the Flathead Lake Biological Station, Payne Family Native American Center, the University of Montana Foundation, UM's Crown of the Continent & Greater Yellowstone Initiative, and the This is Montana-Community Vitality program.

Above all, the lifeblood of our university – its students, has been the recipient of Jim Scott's belief in the UM's mission to create a better state and world by sending educated citizens into society to lend their expertise to this task. One of those scholars was Jim's daughter Dana, who, in 2017, received a master's degree in Education from UM.

I look forward to attending the Spring 2022 University of Montana graduation ceremony and watching Jim Scott receive this much-deserved honor!

Rick Graetz  
UM Geographer etc.  
Honors College  
[rick.graetz@umontana.edu](mailto:rick.graetz@umontana.edu)  
mobile: 406 439 - 9277



United States District Court  
District of Montana

CHAMBERS OF  
DANA L. CHRISTENSEN  
UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE

RUSSELL E. SMITH COURTHOUSE  
201 E. BROADWAY/P.O. BOX 8899  
MISSOULA, MONTANA 59807  
406-829-7140

December 27, 2021

Seth Bodnar, President  
University of Montana  
University Hall 109  
32 Campus Drive  
Missoula, MT 59812

Re: Recommendation for James R. Scott, Honorary Doctorate Degree

Dear President Bodnar:

It is my privilege to submit this letter of recommendation on behalf of Jim Scott for an Honorary Doctorate Degree from the University of Montana. I have known Jim for close to 45 years, and am one of his closest friends. I first met Jim in 1977 when I was a young lawyer in Billings and he was a young banker. Jim has always possessed a steadfast commitment to public service, and I have marveled at his ability to balance his professional, family and public service commitments, which he has maintained in equal measure, throughout his life. I am confident that others have provided you with a biography of Jim's good deeds. I want to emphasize his life-long commitment to two general causes. One, being his support of economic and educational opportunity for Montana's Native American communities; the second being his support for Montana's clean water and wild and public lands. Of course, these two causes are central to the mission and excellence of the University of Montana. His support is more than financial, although he certainly is a significant philanthropist. His support also manifests itself by serving on countless boards, and in organizing grassroots efforts. Although Jim is not an alumni, every time I see him he speaks fondly of the university, and of your leadership. An Honorary Doctorate would mean more to him than any of us can fully appreciate, and would represent a recognition by Montana's flagship university of Jim's enduring contribution to the state we all love.

Thank you for your consideration of this letter.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Dana L. Christensen".

Dana L. Christensen  
United States District Court Judge



December 28, 2021

Dear President Bodnar,

I am pleased to write this letter supporting the nomination of Jim Scott for an Honorary Doctorate from the University of Montana. I have known Jim for a dozen or more years and believe him to be completely worthy of this recognition.

Jim is distinctive in his contributions because, while they include important benefits to the University, his impact is truly statewide and regional, if not national. As you know, Jim is responsible for nurturing and growing the First Interstate Bank system into a major enterprise across several western states. The bank and its foundation have positively affected the lives of countless individuals, families, and businesses in Montana and beyond. His specific contributions to the University include many of our finest programs, including the O'Connor Center for the Rocky Mountain West, the Payne Family Native American Center and its programs, and the Flathead Lake Biological Station. Jim has an intense interest in the culture and natural resources of Montana, so he has made impactful contributions to promote those interests as well, such as to the Nature Conservancy.

I have had the opportunity to spend personal time with Jim at his home and in Montana's outdoors. I treasure those times, because I found Jim to be one of the wisest and kindest people I know. Although he has accomplished far more than most people, he is always attentive and interested in what others have to say and what they think. His gentle spirit is a wonderful complement to his tremendous business acumen, a combination that is key to his success. It quickly becomes clear that family is an essential part of his life and that he promotes Montana values in everything he does.

The University of Montana will be privileged to have Jim among the distinguished recipients of the Honorary Doctorate. I am pleased to have the opportunity to support his nomination and I look forward to seeing him receive this recognition.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Royce C. Engstrom".

Royce C. Engstrom  
Past-President and Professor Emeritus  
University of Montana

**Subject:** Jim Scott--nomination for an Honorary Doctorate degree--University of Montana

**Date:** Sunday, December 26, 2021 at 10:29:58 AM Mountain Standard Time

**From:** Terry Payne

**To:** Webster, Kelly

**CC:** rick.graetz@mso.umt

Dear Kelly—I am eager to write this letter supporting the nomination of Jim Scott, retired Chairman and continuing member of the Board of Directors, First Interstate Bancsystem for an Honorary Doctorate degree in Business from the University of Montana.

Jim has been a business leader for decades and a strong supporter of the University of Montana. In addition, he has been a huge advocate for the Native American community and has exhibited extraordinary philanthropic endeavors for many years, including contributions to the University of Montana. In 2021, Jim was the recipient of the Governor's Humanitarian Award.

It is my honor to recommend my friend and colleague, Jim Scott, for an Honorary doctorate Degree from the University of Montana.

Thank you—Terry Payne

**Subject:** Letter of Support - Jim Scott - University of Montana Honorary Doctorate

**Date:** Friday, December 24, 2021 at 5:31:24 PM Mountain Standard Time

**From:** Larry Simkins

**To:** Webster, Kelly

**CC:** Graetz, Rick

Kelly,

It is my pleasure to provide a letter of support for the nomination of Jim Scott for a University of Montana Honorary Doctorate.

Jim's contributions to the State of Montana for decades is immeasurable. While his business success is well known, his philanthropy that has impacted lives will pay dividends for many years. He has been a tireless supporter of the Montana University System and the University of Montana.

Jim exhibits all of the attributes to proudly bestow an honorary doctorate from the University of Montana.

Please email or call me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,  
Larry Simkins

Jim Scott was born in 1949, the youngest of five siblings in Sheridan, WY. He grew up in Sheridan, attending grade school and Jr High School and in the summers lived near Dayton, WY on the Padlock Ranch. Jim attended Fountain Valley School in Colorado Springs for high school and then the University of Denver and the University of WY. His strongest academic interests were the humanities related subjects, history, political science, sociology, literature, and music.

Jim married Christine Matheson in 1972. Chris had grown up in Lexington, MA and shared many of Jim's interests. They moved to MT in 1976 where Jim began his 45-year career as a banker, had three children and began lives of community engagement.

In the 80's, Jim was involved in Billings Centennial, downtown urban planning, the Great Montana Centennial Cattle Drive, and the MT Tax Reform Coalition (inspired by Dorothy Bradley). He began a long-term commitment to the performing arts participating in the early days of transforming Billing's Fox Theatre into the Alberta Bair Theatre, an institution he continues to support as it continues to transform. Among other interests, Chris loved historical preservation and participated in the significant renovation of the Yellowstone Art Museum.

In the 80's, Jim and Chris began a lifelong commitment to science-based conservation through their involvement with the Nature Conservancy. Jim and Chris co-chaired the MT Chapter of TNC. Chris then went on the TNC Global Board and then affiliate Boards in Argentina and California.

In the 90's Jim became heavily involved in philanthropy, founding the First Interstate Foundation and chairing the Homer and Mildred Scott Foundation upon the death of his father. He chaired the Board of the Northwest Area Foundation in St. Paul and was an early board member of the board of the Montana Community Foundation.

Jim was greatly influenced by growing up on and near the Crow Indian Reservation. In the late 80's he met his close friend Harvey Stewart who was minister in Lodge Grass. Jim and Harvey began working with Janine Pease who was then the president of Little Big Horn College. In addition to working together on community and economic development, Janine encouraged Jim to serve on the board of the American Indian College Fund, which he did for nine years.

It was on the board of the Montana Community Foundation that Jim met Elouise Cobell. Elouise was a Blackfeet leader responsible for her tribe chartering the first tribal owned bank in the country. Elouise and Jim had common interests. Elouise joined the board of First Interstate Bank and The Nature Conservancy Montana board. Elouise was also a fighter, filing the largest class action suit in history against the US Government for mismanagement of individual Indian trust assets. Elouise' suit was finally successful gaining over four billion dollars for wronged Native people, shortly after she died from cancer in 2011.

"I have had the gift of meeting some amazing Native people and families. I am deeply moved by their ancestor's stories in the development of our country, by their economic and cultural reality today and their commitment to achieve a more just future."

The Foundation that Jim, Harvey and Chris began in the 90's called the Foundation for Community Vitality (FCV) has been the primary vehicle for supporting leaders and communities on the Crow, Northern Cheyenne and Blackfeet Reservations. Jim and Chris' daughter, Courtney Scott, became the Chair and Program Director for FCV in 2020. FCV has many friends and partners making a positive

difference for the future. Those partners include, Peoples Partners for Community Development in Lame Deer, Plenty Doors Community Development in Crow Agency, Little Big Horn College, the City of Lodge Grass, Wyola Public School, Blackfeet Indian Conservation Land Trust, Hopa Mountain, and more.

Jim and Chris Scott are leaving a lasting impact on the legacy of public humanities throughout Montana.

### **Jim Biography 12-2-20**

Jim Scott is the past Chair of First Interstate BancSystem which the Scott Family founded in 1968 and has grown to be the largest bank in Montana, Wyoming and Western South Dakota. The Company expanded into Oregon, Idaho and Washington in 2017. He is also a Board member for the First Interstate Foundation, Foundation for Community Vitality, Blackfeet Indian Land Trust and Fountain Valley School. Jim is also a Board member of the Padlock Ranch, a cattle ranch the Scott Family founded in 1943.

Jim's many non-profit roles have included Chairing the Boards of Northwest Area Foundation (St. Paul, MN), the Homer & Mildred Scott Foundation (Sheridan, WY), First Interstate BancSystem Foundation (Billings, MT), and Fountain Valley School (Colorado Springs, CO) and Board Treasurer of American Indian College Fund in Denver, CO.

Jim is the youngest of five second generation siblings and retired Chairman of the Scott Family Council which governs a growing family now into the fifth generation.

# **JAMES R. SCOTT**

**401 N. 31<sup>st</sup> Street STE 700 Billings, MT 59101 406.698.8553**

## **Current Professional Activities:**

- First Interstate BancSystem Board Member, Member of Executive Committee & Compensation Committee
- Padlock Ranch, Dayton, Wyoming – Board Member
- First Interstate BancSystem Foundation – Board Member
- J.S. Investments - Managing Partner
- Foundation for Community Vitality – Chair
- Fountain Valley School – Board Member, President

## **Previous Public Involvement:**

- Homer and Mildred Scott Foundation – Board Member
- Montana Nature Conservancy - Co-Chair and Trustee
- Northwest Area Foundation – Past Chair of Board
- Rocky Mountain Technology Group-Board Member
- Montana Community Foundation – Board Member & Exec. Committee
- Montana Ambassadors – Board Member
- Billings Chamber of Commerce – Board Chair
- University of Montana Foundation – Board member
- Center for Rocky Mountain West, University of Montana - Chair of Advisory Board
- American Indian College Fund –Board Member, Chair of Governance Committee and member of the Executive Committee

## **Personal:**

- Born and raised in Sheridan, Wyoming (DOB 10/8/49)
- Education - Fountain Valley School, University of Denver, University of Wyoming
- Married to Christine M. Scott
- Children; James Jr., Courtney, Dana