



The University of Montana Western Campus Report

DATE: February 13, 2024
TO: Board of Regents
FROM: Michael Reid, Chancellor
RE: Campus Report for the March Board of Regents' Meeting

- **Montana Western Biology Student Accepted into Dentistry School**

The University of Montana Western Department of Biology is proud to announce that senior Kylee Pittman has been accepted into the University of Utah School of Dentistry. Growing up in Glen, Montana, Pittman has aspired to become a dentist since she was four years old. Her academic accomplishments became more impressive upon recently receiving offers from each of the six dental schools across the country she applied to attend.

In addition to the time she dedicates to her studies, Pittman also works as a dental assistant at Dillon Family Dental and volunteers in multiple ways for her community. She also presented original research on equine clinical dental anatomy at a national meeting of the American Association for Anatomy in Washington, D.C. Pittman is the sixth UMW Biology student to recently be accepted into a professional school program.

- **University of Montana Western Hosts TEDx Event**

The University of Montana Western is pleased to announce the speakers and schedule for “TEDx: University of Montana Western” to be held in the Beier Auditorium on Saturday, March 23, 2024, from 10:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. on the UMW campus in Dillon, Montana. 17 speakers will present during four sessions on a wide range of topics throughout the day.

Montana Western will provide a multidisciplinary forum for academic minds to gather and exchange ideas worth sharing. Speakers selected to present at TEDx: University of Montana Western are directly connected to the local community or have topics that support Montana Western’s mission and values. The event showcases a diverse spectrum of academic perspectives while providing a venue for speakers to submit their research to the global TED network.

- **UMW Appoints Dr. Brian Elliott as Division Chair of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences**

The University of Montana Western is pleased to announce Dr. Brian Elliott as the next Division Chair of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences.

“I’m looking forward to working with Dr. Elliott as Division Chair of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences and as a member of the Academic Leadership Team at Montana Western. His thoughtful approach to leadership will be a great asset to the university community,” said UMW Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, Dr. Johnny MacLean.

Elliott earned a B.S. in Computer Science and English from Muskingum University and his M.A. and Ph.D. in English from Ohio University, where his research focused on nineteenth-century American literature and Transatlantic Romanticism. Starting at UMW in 2017, Elliott currently serves in the Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences Division at Montana Western as Professor of English and has taught courses in American literature, science fiction and fantasy, graphic novels, experimental narratives, and the Great American Novel. He has also been active in chairing the English Department and General Education Committee. Dr. Elliott started the duties of his new position at Montana Western on January 1, 2024.

- **UMW’s “On the Rocks” Series Hosts Speaker Dr. Don Penman**

The University of Montana Western Environmental Sciences Department will host Utah State Assistant Professor, Dr. Don Penman, as part of the “On the Rocks” lecture series. Dr. Penman will present “Carbon and Silica Cycle Coupling During Cenozoic Warm Periods” on February 14, 2024.

Dr. Penman holds a bachelor’s degree in Geology from Carleton College, and a Ph.D. from UC Santa Cruz where he studied the carbonate chemistry response to the Paleocene-Eocene Thermal Maximum with advisor Dr. James Zachos. He subsequently became a postdoctoral fellow at Yale University and in 2020 joined the Department of Geosciences at Utah State University as an Assistant Professor. Dr. Penman has sailed on three IODP expeditions as shipboard scientist (342, 371, and 392). His research uses the deep-sea sedimentary record to probe interactions between ancient Earth climate and geochemical cycling.

- **UMW and MCH to Host Annual Colt Challenge and Sale**

The Annual Colt Challenge and Sale, hosted by the University of Montana Western and the Montana Center for Horsemanship, will take place March 29 and 30, 2024, at the Montana Center for Horsemanship in Dillon, Montana.

Students and colts compete in a series of events that demonstrate their wide range of abilities on the first day, and the following day, a public auction features the colts for sale, with all proceeds reinvested in the program to provide scholarships to Natural Horsemanship majors at the University of Montana Western.

- **Polar Research Team Develops Virtual Field Experiences for Undergraduate Students**

Dr. Spruce Schoenemann from the University of Montana Western Environmental Sciences Department and a team of climate and polar scientists have recently developed an innovative place-based curriculum for undergraduate students to participate in virtual field experiences in Greenland to expand learning opportunities in the polar sciences.

PolarPASS was developed by a team of professional educators and polar scientists from Western Washington University (WWU), the University of Montana Western (UMW), and NSIDC and the Cooperative Institute for Research in Environmental Sciences (CIRES) at the University of Colorado Boulder. It uses authentic geographic information system (GIS) data and 360-degree interactive environments to allow students to conduct “field research” of Greenland from anywhere in the world. The goals for the program are to bring real polar data into the classroom, strengthen students’ knowledge of polar science, and build student connections to polar places.

- **Montana Western Fine Arts Gallery Presents Terran Last Gun: The New West**

The University of Montana Western Fine Arts Gallery is honored to present “The New West” by artist Terran Last Gun. An opening reception was held on January 26, 2024, in the Fine Arts Gallery in Main Hall.

Terran Last Gun, Saakwaynaamah’kaa (Last Gun) (b. 1989, Browning, MT) is a contemporary visual artist and citizen of the Piikani (Blackfeet) of Montana—Piikani is one of four nations that make up the Blackfoot Confederacy. Last Gun’s work focuses on color, shape, and the visual documentation of nature, cosmos, narratives, and recollections. Employing geometric aesthetics through various media, ledger drawing, printmaking, painting, and photography, Last Gun works with Piikani (Blackfeet) visual aesthetics, cultural narratives, and modern sensibilities.

- **UMW Hosts BrainFest Mathematical Modeling Competition**

The University of Montana Western Department of Mathematics is excited to host the Second Annual BrainFest Mathematical Modeling Competition on February 16, 2024, in the STC Great Room.

During the BrainFest competition, all interested Montana high school juniors and seniors will come to campus and work in small teams led by UMW math majors to model pterosaur hunting behaviors. A team of UMW mathematics professors will be present to pose questions and to offer guidance throughout the process. The competition will conclude with presentations by all groups, and the competitors with the most effective models will receive a \$500 scholarship to Montana Western.

- **Montana Western Announces 54th Annual Rodeo Banquet**

The University of Montana Western Rodeo Team is excited to announce that the 54th Annual Montana Western Rodeo Banquet will be held Friday, March 29, 2024, in the Keltz Arena.

The rodeo banquet serves as the primary fundraising event hosted by the rodeo team each year. The funds generated from this banquet play a pivotal role in sustaining the program and proceeds contribute to student scholarships, facilitating essential practice opportunities, offsetting travel expenses, covering hotel accommodations, and supporting the Montana Western college home rodeo in the fall. The event will also highlight the enduring legacy of Benny and Rooster Reynolds, two of Dillon's most iconic rodeo athletes. Their significant impact has played a crucial role in shaping Dillon's rich rodeo heritage.

- **UMW Hosts Presentation on "Reinventing an Ancient Cattle Culture"**

The University of Montana Western Terra Verde Club and Environmental Sciences Department is proud to present "Reinventing an Ancient Cattle Culture: How Humans and Livestock can Bring Healing to Western Rangeland" by guest speaker Glenn Elzinga on February 20 from 4:00 to 5:00 p.m. in UMW's Lewis & Clark Room.

The University of Montana Western is partnering with local ranchers and conservation organizations to explore conservation-focused range rider certifications and internship positions. As part of these conversations, students in the Terra Verde Club have invited Glenn Elzinga to campus to learn more about rotational grazing and regenerative agricultural practices.

- **Olivia and Brant Heiner Earn All-Academic Honors**

The Men's and Women's Scholar Athlete of the Year and All-Academic Athletes for the 2023 NAIA Cross Country season were recently announced by the U.S. Track & Field and Cross Country Coaches Association (USTFCCCA).

In order to qualify for All-Academic distinction, student-athletes must have a cumulative GPA of at least 3.25 on a 4.0 scale and qualify for the national championship meet. UMW student-athletes, Olivia Heiner and Brant Heiner, were named to the NAIA list. This is their first selection to the USTFCCCA All-Academic teams.