



The University of Montana Western Campus Report

DATE: October 2024

TO: Board of Regents

FROM: Michael Reid, Chancellor

RE: Campus Report for the November Board of Regents' Meeting

- **UMW Receives \$500,000 Donation to Launch Farm & Ranch Management Degree**

The University of Montana Western received a \$500,000 donation from AgWest Farm Credit to help launch its new Farm and Ranch Management degree. This program aims to train future agricultural professionals with skills in sustainable practices, financial management, and emerging technologies.

The donation is part of a \$2 million endowment goal to support faculty and ensure the program's success. The new degree builds on the growing interest in UMW's Farm and Ranch Operations minor and will serve local and regional agriculture by developing skilled leaders.

UMW Chancellor Michael Reid emphasized the importance of the program for the region, while AgWest Montana President Megan Shroyer highlighted its role in cultivating future agricultural leaders. UMW is currently seeking a professor to lead the new program.

- **Earn Your Elementary Education Degree Fully Online with UMW's Project REAL**

The University of Montana Western is excited to offer a path for paraprofessionals, emergency hires, and place-based Montana students to earn a Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education, fully online, through UMW's Project REAL (Rural Experience, Authentic Learning).

Project REAL is a program designed to give career opportunities to school employees in underserved rural communities by providing an accessible way to become licensed educators. The program brings UMW's Elementary Education curriculum directly to students, ensuring they have access to high-quality education without needing to relocate or commute to campus.

A key feature of the program is its emphasis on real-world application; students complete in-school lab hours, integrating coursework with hands-on experience in their own educational settings. This approach, combined with coaching from experienced educators, prepares students for successful teaching careers. Montana Western is currently accepting applications for Spring 2025.

- **Montana Western Ranked Among Top Colleges in the West by U.S. News & World Report**

The University of Montana Western has been ranked #6 in Top Public Schools and #21 in Best Regional Colleges in the Western region by U.S. News & World Report in their 2024-25 rankings.

U.S. News calculates each ranking based on a specific methodology, using factors including overall graduation rates, academic quality, Pell Grant recipient graduation rates, social mobility, first-generation graduation rates, student support services, financial support, and academic resources for faculty.

In addition to being ranked #21 in Regional Colleges (West) and #6 in Top Public Schools (West), UMW also ranked #44 in Top Performers on Social Mobility.

- **Engine 18 Recognized at 2024 Bulldog Bash**

Engine 18 was recognized at the 2024 Bulldog Bash for its extraordinary contributions to the University of Montana Western and the Dillon community.

Built in 2017 by UMW alumni and fans, Engine 18 began as a tailgating fire engine and evolved into a key fundraiser for athletic scholarships at Montana Western.

Named in honor of former Bulldog football player MJ Simkins, who wore the number 18, Engine 18 continues to support UMW student-athletes while preserving Simkins' legacy.

Engine 18's dedication to UMW athletics and the community is undeniable, and their efforts continue to make a lasting impact on both the university and the Dillon community. UMW is proud to honor Engine 18 for its incredible support and the meaningful legacy it continues to build in honor of past Bulldog players and coaches.

- **UMW Hosts Fall Preview Day**

The University of Montana Western held Experience Montana Western, a free fall preview day, on Friday, November 15, 2024, for prospective and incoming students and their families.

The event provided a comprehensive introduction to UMW's campus life and academic programs. Attendees toured the campus, learned about the innovative Experience One (X1) block scheduling system, and met with faculty, staff, and community members.

Participants also explored UMW's diverse range of courses and programs. As a special bonus, all attending students were entered into a drawing for a \$500 scholarship and received free admission to the UMW Women's Basketball game that evening.

- **Montana Western Fine Arts Gallery Features "Our Working Hands"**

The University of Montana Western Fine Arts Gallery presented "Our Working Hands," a group exhibition showcasing traditional western craftsmanship from Southwestern Montana. The featured artisans included Ross Miller, Freckers Saddlery, Schwarz Custom Boots, Justin Thorson, Terri Courtney, Mark Raffety, Loncey and Jessie Jo Johnson, Tony Panheiro, and George Holt.

The exhibition highlighted the artistry behind functional tools used in ranching and cowboy culture, blending utility and beauty. The exhibition will be open for viewing in UMW's Fine Arts Gallery until December 6, 2024.

- **Montana Western Homecoming 2024**

The University of Montana Western celebrated Homecoming from October 21-26, 2024. The week offered an exciting opportunity for alumni, friends, students, faculty, staff, and community members to come together and enjoy variety of events hosted by Montana Western Alumni & Friends, Bulldog Athletics, the Associated Students of UMW, and the Bulldog Life Office.

The week concluded with Montana Western Bulldog Football facing the Arizona Christian Firestorm, while Montana Western Volleyball competed against Rocky Mountain College.

- **UMW Holds 2nd Annual Job Expo**

The University of Montana Western held its 2nd Annual Job Expo on Tuesday, October 15, 2024, hosted by the Career Services Office. The event provided a platform for employers to connect with UMW students seeking internships, jobs, and career opportunities. All academic majors were represented, offering recruiters a chance to engage with students across various fields.

Students had the opportunity to network with potential employers and were encouraged to bring resumes and elevator pitches. The event aimed to support both students and employers, fostering connections for future career opportunities.

- **Montana Western and Bank of Commerce Performing Art Series Host “The Witching Time: Shadow Immersive”**

Montana Western and the Bank of Commerce Performing Arts Series presented “The Witching Time: Shadow Immersive,” an interactive theatrical experience on November 4 and 5, 2024, at UMW's Beier Auditorium.

The event explored the untold stories of nine women persecuted for witchcraft between 1657 and 1693. Through immersive shadow theatre, live performances, dance, and interactive media, the production brought these historical narratives to

life. Directed by Stephen Seder with historical input from Dr. Jessica Fowler, the show featured contributions from UMW students across several courses.

- **Life: Inside and Out Season Lineup**

The University of Montana Western's Biology Department is pleased to present Life: Inside and Out (LIO), a speaker series that features scientists from across the country, sharing their research in an accessible and engaging format.

The series began on August 21, showcasing UMW's Biology Faculty and student research opportunities, including projects on antibiotic-resistant bacteria, fish parasites, alpine ecology, and chronic wasting disease in deer. The second presentation on September 18 featured Dr. Diane Bimczok, who discussed stomach cancer's connection to stomach bacteria through organoids in her talk titled "Modeling Epithelial-Immune Cell Interactions in the Human Gastric Mucosa."

LIO will host more presentations throughout the school year, taking place on the first Wednesday of each block.