

March 13, 2025

ITEM 217-1008-R0325

Request for Authorization to Confer the Title of Professor Emeritus of the School of Journalism on Ray Ekness; University of Montana-Missoula

THAT

Upon the occasion of the retirement of Ray Ekness from The University of Montana, the faculty wishes to express its appreciation for his 34 years of dedicated and valued service to the University and the State of Montana by recommending that the rank of Professor Emeritus be conferred upon him by the Board of Regents of the Montana University System.

EXPLANATION

Ray Ekness earned his M.A. in Journalism from the University of Montana and joined the UM Broadcast Media Center as a producer in 1989. He started teaching as an adjunct for the School of Journalism in 1990. He became a visiting assistant professor in 1998 and was hired as an assistant professor in 2000. He was promoted to associate professor and served as Radio-Television Department chair beginning in 2004. He was promoted to full professor in 2010. He received a sabbatical during the 2010-2011 school year. He left the faculty in 2016 when he was named director of the Broadcast Media Center to oversee Montana Public Radio and Montana PBS-Missoula.

Ekness taught a wide variety of audio and video production classes at UM. Ekness helped create the long-running student-produced television program *Business: Made in Montana* that highlighted manufacturing across the state. Along with Prof. Denise Dowling, He continued the legacy of the award-winning student-produced *Student Documentary Unit* featuring in-depth reporting of important issues. He helped create other student produced programs such as *Montana Journal*, *UM News* and *Montana PBS Newsbrief*. Those programs aired on Montana PBS as well on a number of Montana television stations.

Ekness produced numerous programs of his own while on the faculty including the award-winning and popular *Backroads of Montana*. He was nominated for regional Emmy Awards more than a dozen times. Ekness' research includes producing many programs for Montana PBS including *Remembering the Columbia Gardens*, *To Helena and Back: The First Special Service Force*, *Building Bridges*, and many more. He contributed to many other Montana PBS productions, election coverage, and pledge drives. He wrote and received many grants to the Greater Montana Foundation that helped fund his personal productions and many student productions.

At UM, Ekness served on a variety of university committees including the University Research and Creativity Committee and the UM Sabbatical Committee. He was campus chair of the UM Foundation Faculty and Staff Giving Campaign and served on the steering committee of the UM Charitable Giving Campaign for many years. Ekness served for many years on the board of the Montana Broadcasters Association.

The University of Montana School of Journalism is pleased to nominate Professor Ray Ekness for emeritus status.

ATTACHMENTS

None