



The University of Montana Western Campus Report

DATE: November 2025

TO: Board of Regents

FROM: Michael Reid, Chancellor

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

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

The University of Montana Western has been ranked #5 in Top Public Schools – Regional Colleges (West) and #15 in Best Regional Colleges (West) by *U.S. News & World Report* in its 2025–26 Best Colleges rankings.

The report evaluated over 1,700 U.S. colleges using up to 17 factors measuring academic quality and student success, including graduation and retention rates, social mobility, and faculty resources. Montana Western also ranked #22 in Top Performers on Social Mobility. For more than four decades, *U.S. News* has provided data-driven rankings to help students and families identify colleges that fit their academic and personal goals.

- **TEDx University of Montana Western**

The University of Montana Western's Theatre and Environmental Sciences programs will host TEDx University of Montana Western on March 21, 2026—a full-day event featuring speakers, workshops, and discussions focused on

building resilience in rural communities. Sponsored by the Fund for Experience One, the conference promotes interdisciplinary collaboration and critical thinking, aligning with Montana Western's mission and values. TEDx University of Montana Western highlights local voices and research while connecting participants to a global network of ideas worth sharing.

TEDx events are independently organized gatherings licensed by TED, a nonprofit dedicated to spreading innovative ideas through short talks by thought leaders worldwide. TEDx events combine live speakers and TED Talks videos to inspire dialogue and connection. Through initiatives like TED Countdown, TED engages communities in tackling global challenges such as the climate crisis, encouraging collaboration and action toward a more sustainable and equitable future.

- **Bulldog Athletics Hall of Fame**

The University of Montana Western honored its 2025 Bulldog Athletics Hall of Fame inductees on November 1 as part of Alumni Weekend. This year's ceremony recognized Kyle Rausch (Football), Jack Filcher (Track), Jenny Peterson (Coach), and the 2002 Bulldog Volleyball Team for their outstanding contributions to UMW athletics.

The weekend also featured athletic events, alumni gatherings, and tailgating to celebrate the Bulldog community. UMW Athletics, the Foundation, and the Alumni Office expressed gratitude to alumni and supporters for their continued commitment to Montana Western and its student-athletes.

- **Montana Western Ranked #3 College in Montana for 2026**

The University of Montana Western has been ranked the #3 best college in Montana for 2026 by Niche. This recognition highlights the university's commitment to academic excellence, affordability, and student satisfaction.

Known for its unique Experience One program, Montana Western offers students the opportunity to focus on one course at a time, fostering deeper learning and engagement. With a strong emphasis on individualized attention and a supportive campus community, the university continues to provide a high-quality education that prepares students for success in their careers and beyond.

- **Montana Western Fine Arts Gallery: “The Series of Christ”**

The University of Montana Western Fine Arts Gallery presented “*The Series of Christ*” by the late Jim Corr, a UMW alumnus, educator, artist, and coach. The exhibition opened on October 30 with a public reception in the Fine Arts Gallery.

Created during a time of personal hardship, Corr’s paintings depict his spiritual and emotional journey through themes of hope, sorrow, and healing. The series was generously donated to UMW by the Corr family and now resides in the Corr Gallery, named in his honor. The exhibition ran from October 30 to November 21, celebrating Corr’s lasting artistic and educational legacy.

- **Montana Western Presents Montana Repertory Theatre’s “Jabberdoggy: And Other Made-Up Words”**

The University of Montana Western hosted Montana Repertory Theatre’s production of *Jabberdoggy: And Other Made-Up Words* on Friday, October 24, 2025, in Beier Auditorium. Written by JM Christiansen, the play followed the Spruce Creek High School theatre club as they staged an adaptation of Lewis Carroll’s Alice stories.

When AJ was cast as the fearsome Jabberwock, memorizing Carroll’s poem stirred long-buried memories of fear and challenge. As opening night approached, AJ navigated old hardships and unexpected friendships, exploring how stories shape our fears. The imaginative, heartfelt, and family-friendly production blended humor and Carrollian wonder, engaging audiences of all ages.

- **Victoria Pehlke Awarded Sigma Tau Delta Scholarship**

University of Montana Western student Victoria Pehlke has been awarded a Sigma Tau Delta scholarship recognizing her academic excellence and dedication to writing. A double major in English and Business with minors in Pop Culture Studies and Professional Writing, Pehlke is also active on campus as a TRIO Advisor and peer tutor.

She credits Montana Western’s block schedule for helping her grow as a writer and student. Faculty advisor Dr. Laura Wright praised her initiative and commitment, noting her confidence and careful academic planning. Pehlke plans

to pursue a career in publishing, with aspirations of becoming an editor or literary agent.

- **33rd Annual Bulldog Bash**

The University of Montana Western hosted the 33rd Annual Bulldog Bash on Saturday, October 11, 2025, in the Keltz Arena. The day began with a community tailgate and the Montana Western vs. Carroll College football game, followed by an evening celebration featuring dinner, a student-athlete speaker, and a special video highlighting football player Jack Kirkley and volleyball player Jordan Olson.

Guests enjoyed both silent and live auctions, with proceeds supporting scholarships and program enhancements for UMW's student-athletes. The event brought together alumni, boosters, families, and community members in a spirited show of Bulldog pride and support for athletics.

- **Montana Western Presents Missoula Children's Theatre "Red Riding Hood"**

The University of Montana Western's Fine Arts Department and the Bank of Commerce Performing Arts Series hosted the Missoula Children's Theatre production of "Red Riding Hood" on Saturday, September 27, 2025, in Beier Auditorium.

This lively, family-friendly adaptation by Michael McGill followed Red Riding Hood as she navigated adventures, distractions, and surprises on her way to Grandmother's house, encountering a Big Bad Wolf, a Forest Ranger, mischievous young wolves, the Three Little Pigs, and more. The production introduced children to storytelling, music, and theater. Tour directors Cady Epperson and Sarah Lindsay Merriman led the performance, sharing their passion for live theater with young performers.

- **Life: Inside and Out 2025–2026 Season**

The University of Montana Western's Biology Department continues its Life: Inside and Out (LIO) speaker series for 2025–2026, inviting scientists nationwide to share accessible research with students and the Dillon community.

Presentations highlight diverse biological topics and potential career paths, from plant ecophysiology and insect evolution to paleontology, forensic anthropology, and ethics in environmental science. The series offers opportunities to learn from experts and explore student research, which spans projects on local waterways, parasites, shark and horse anatomy, and chronic wasting disease studies funded by the NSF. LIO talks occur on the first Wednesday of each block at 4:00 p.m. in UMW's Lucy Carson Library, and all are welcome to attend.

- **UMW's "On the Rocks" Series: Dr. Will Munger**

The University of Montana Western's History and Environmental Science Departments hosted Dr. Will Munger as part of the "On the Rocks" lecture series on Friday, September 5, 2025, in the Lucy Carson Library. Dr. Munger, a rangeland scientist and range rider, presented "Working Across the High Divide: Learning from the Histories of Sheep Herders, Range Riders, and Indigenous Elders About the Future of Conservation."

He shared insights from his research and work at the U.S. Sheep Experiment Station and the J Bar L Ranch in Montana. The "On the Rocks" series highlighted expert talks connecting people, history, and the natural world, and was free and open to the public.