

September 18, 2025

ITEM 220-1601-R0925

Request for Authorization to Confer the Title of Professor Emeritus of Biology on Dr. Wendy Ridenour; The University of Montana Western

THAT

Upon the occasion of the retirement of Dr. Wendy Ridenour from the faculty of The University of Montana Western, the faculty wishes to express its appreciation for her 16 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 her by the Board of Regents of the Montana University System.

EXPLANATION

Professor Ridenour received her B.A. in Ecology from the University of California, Santa Cruz and then worked in the private sector as an ecologist for an engineering firm before deciding to attend graduate school. Dr. Ridenour earned an M.S. and Ph.D. in Organismal Biology and Ecology from the University of Montana. While there, she had a robust research career working with her graduate mentor Dr. Ragan Callaway, co-authoring six publications before completing her graduate studies. Dr. Ridenour continued her collaboration with Dr. Callaway for well over a decade producing numerous other publications including a 2023 publication on sagebrush steppe ecology in the journal *Nature Scientific Reports*. Dr. Ridenour's extensive post-doctoral experiences were an integral part of her continued education and include international studies in Peru, Chile and New Zealand.

Dr. Ridenour has served the University of Montana Western in a variety of roles beginning with being a visiting assistant professor of biology in 2009 and advancing to the rank of tenured professor of biology, serving a total of 16 years. Professor Ridenour was a very successful and popular teacher at Montana Western. She was well known by students as a passionate and caring educator. She creatively used Experience One to integrate lecture and field experiences into the courses she designed for the Biology and Ecology degrees at Western (i.e., botany, plant systematics and alpine ecology). Dr. Ridenour was also a campus leader in offering international courses to Montana Western students. She led arctic ecology classes to Iceland in 2019 and 2024 and a coral reef ecology class to Belize in 2019. She also taught alpine ecology at the Khumbu Climbing Center in Phortse, Nepal in 2017, and spent many summers (2009-2021) teaching an alpine ecology course at the University of Montana's Flathead Lake Biological Field Station.

Dr. Ridenour was very engaged in campus service as well. In addition to serving as an academic advisor, she served on numerous committees at Western over the years including: assessment (2015-2017), unit standards (2022-2025), honors (2024-2025) and international (2018-2025) committees. She also served on the general education committee (2016-2025) where she made significant contributions by developing the assessment rubric used for our natural science general education courses and, for the last 9 years, has produced the yearly general education reports for the natural sciences. Dr. Ridenour also served as the curator of the University of Montana Western Herbarium collection from 2014-2025. She worked tirelessly to expand the collection and improve the phylogenetic classification, organization and storage conditions of the existing specimens. Dr. Ridenour's off campus service is equally impressive. For example, during the last decade she has worked closely with the Beaverhead Trails Coalition and the local NRCS. She has spent numerous hours collecting data that informed the selection of appropriate seed mixes for restoring native plants to disturbed sites near community trails and directing native plant restoration at local parks and these efforts have greatly benefited the local community.

The Biology Department enthusiastically provides its highest recommendation to grant Dr. Wendy Ridenour Professor Emeritus status.

ATTACHMENTS

No Attachments