



Recommendation of Joe Whittinghill for Honorary Doctorate

2026 Spring Commencement

President Seth Bodnar
University of Montana President's Office
32 Campus Drive, UH109
Missoula, MT 59812

October 17, 2025

Dear President Bodnar,

It is my privilege to nominate Joe Whittinghill, an accomplished business leader, educator, and proud alumnus of the University of Montana, for recognition as a recipient of an Honorary Doctorate degree from the University of Montana. Joe's extraordinary professional accomplishments, lifelong dedication to education, and deep commitment to advancing learning opportunities make him an exceptional candidate for this prestigious honor.

Joe's career is a model of leadership, innovation, and service. Over a long and distinguished tenure at Microsoft, he held several senior leadership roles, including Managing Director of Mergers and Acquisitions and, later, Chief Talent and Learning Officer. In these positions, Joe played a pivotal role in guiding Microsoft through periods of significant transformation and growth. As Managing Director of Mergers and Acquisitions, he led teams responsible for identifying, negotiating, and integrating key acquisitions that helped shape Microsoft's strategic direction and global reach. Later, as Chief Talent and Learning Officer, Joe turned his focus to developing the company's most vital asset, its human capital. He built and championed world-class programs in leadership development, learning innovation, and executive culture that continue to influence the company and the broader technology industry.

Today, Joe continues to share his expertise as an independent director for D.A. Davidson & Co. and Gaia Ag, where he helps guide organizational vision and leadership development. Joe's leadership is characterized by a rare combination of strategic foresight and genuine care for people. His work advances corporate success while empowering hundreds of thousands of employees worldwide to grow their careers, embrace lifelong learning, and lead with purpose. He brings deep understanding of how business performance and human potential intersect, helping institutions cultivate a culture of innovation and inclusion.

Beyond corporate leadership, Joe demonstrates an unwavering commitment to education. Many learners worldwide have benefited from his wisdom and teaching, including through his LinkedIn Learning sessions. Through these classes and his mentorship, Joe has inspired countless individuals to grow, lead, and achieve. His influence across industries underscores his rare ability to bridge business acumen with a deep belief in people and education.

We are deeply grateful for Joe's enduring impact on the University of Montana and the College of Business, where his leadership and generosity have strengthened careers and expanded opportunities for students and recent graduates. His corporate experience and extensive professional networks enhance the connections and possibilities available to our students and alumni. Joe's philanthropic commitment reflects both his belief in the power of education and his dedication to the potential of future generations.

As Dean of the College of Business, I am fortunate to work closely with Joe on career and educational focused efforts. Personally, I frequently ask Joe for advice as I make strategic and leadership choices. He can see through to the heart of an issue, give great guidance, and do it all joyfully. He brings light and possibilities to me and so many others.

In summary, Joe's remarkable career achievements, his enduring commitment to education, and his generous contributions to the University of Montana make him a deserving candidate for an Honorary Doctorate. He represents the highest ideals of professional excellence, intellectual curiosity, and service to others that our institution seeks to honor.

It is my firm belief that Joe Whittinghill is deserving of an Honorary Doctorate from the University of Montana. Thank you for your consideration of this nomination.

Sincerely,



Suzanne Tilleman

Sprunk and Burnham Endowed Dean
University of Montana, College of Business



Frank Brod
Retired Microsoft Finance and Administration CVP
and Chief Accounting Officer
4642 Prairieview Way
Missoula MT 59802

President Seth Bodnar
University of Montana President's Office
32 Campus Drive, UH109
Missoula MT 59812

October 20, 2025

President Bodnar,

It is my honor to provide this letter as my full endorsement of the nomination of Joe Whittinghill to be recognized with an Honorary Doctorate from the University of Montana. Joe is a native Montanan and is not only a University of Montana alumni, but tirelessly serves as an advocate, ambassador, educator, and generous financial supporter of the university.

I can speak to Joe's tremendous business career at Microsoft. I have known Joe as both a business colleague and friend for 20 years. One of my first personnel decisions upon joining Microsoft was to elevate Joe to be the partner leading Microsoft's Mergers and Acquisitions group. Joe's expertise in leadership, organization development, training, and succession planning provided key in-organizational skills to my finance and administrative groups. Joe played a dual role as leader of the M&A people and process integration, while he served as both a mentor and development advisor across my entire organization, including the procurement, real estate, security, and finance functions. Joe is an innovator and creator. Joe transformed our groups into an incubator of leadership development programs that started in finance and grew to become company standards. These incubations included mentoring rings, Women in leadership, inclusive behavioral characteristics, and recognition programs. I have complete respect for Joe's capabilities and his ability to deliver results. Joe is my trusted advisor. Joe's impact to Microsoft grew even larger when he was named Corporate Vice President and chief talent and learning officer, and was the key Human Resources advisor to the CEO, Satya Nadella.

During our time working together, Joe also served as a Montana Ambassador to the State of Washington. It was through one of the Ambassador meetings in Seattle that Joe motivated Holly and I to take our first trip to Missoula to learn to fly fish. Well, Holly caught and released a trophy brown trout that week. From the photographs, Gray Taxidermy in Florida created a mounted replica of the monster fish. That led us to build a home in Missoula on the Clark Fork that provided an appropriate location to hang the fish. So Joe is given full credit for our home in Missoula and our love of the rivers and mountains.

Joe embodies the sharing of his knowledge and expertise, and his love of educational and interpersonal capabilities. He has been a huge supporter of University of Montana, not only in a financial advancement role, but also in supporting the educational process—strengthening career opportunities for students and alumni. He developed and funded the Leading Out West workshop, an endeavor that I have had the opportunity to personally assist in the networking aspects. Joe's financial and time

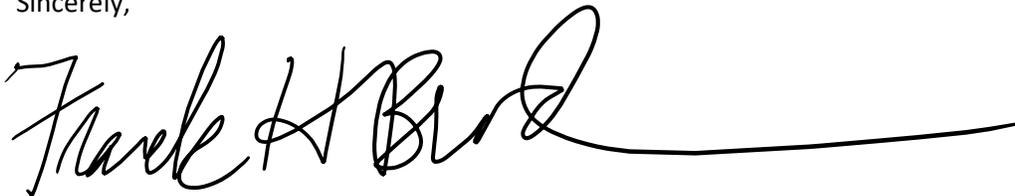
investments in the University are numerous and long-term, serving on the UM Foundation Board, the University Board, three University capital campaigns, spanning 17 years.

Joe Whittinghill is a dedicated strategic dynamic champion for the University of Montana. His work is aimed at providing a sustainable educational advantage for current and future students in both academic and social capabilities. Joe works tirelessly and fervently to champion the success and impact of the University of Montana through his influence, financial support, and his alignment with the values of the University. Joe taught me to always value those whom I work with, be grateful to those who have helped and supported me, and to pay forward to others so that they can develop, learn and deliver success for themselves and their community. And that is exactly what Joe has done and continues to do each day.

There is no greater or more influential contributor to the goals and values of the University of Montana and their staff and students than Joe Whittinghill. He is uniquely qualified and deserves the Honorary Doctorate from the University of Montana, recognizing his continuous support and contributions to the goals and values of the University.

Thank you for your consideration of Joe for this nomination. Joe represents the very best of what it means to be a champion of the University of Montana,

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Frank H Brod". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Frank Brod

October 16, 2025

President Seth Bodnar
University of Montana
Office of the President
32 Campus Drive
Missoula, MT 59812

President Bodnar:

We are pleased and honored to write this letter of recommendation on behalf of Joe Wittinghill, a lifelong friend for over forty-four years. Our journey of close friendship has taken us from our days together as young Grizzly students at the University of Montana, to bustling Seattle, and through his recent retirement.

During his outstanding career, Joe distinguished himself as a driven executive, thoughtful leader and wise counselor. Joe's path at Microsoft from consultant to a right-hand executive for Microsoft CEO's is legendary within the software industry. As a testament, Joe, in retirement, is in high demand and sought out for engagement by his former colleagues, academics and even competitors.

As a Grizzly, Joe, Montanan born and bred, bleeds Maroon and Silver, along with Gold and Copper. Joe's passion for the University of Montana speaks for itself. Joe can talk "Grizzly" among the best yet his numerous actions over many years supporting the University of Montana sets one of the highest bars of accomplishment. The Irish adage, which Joe noted when accepting the Neil S Bucklew Presidential Service Award at the UM Foundation 75 Anniversary Celebration in October of 2025, is apropos Joe, and reads "Nodding the head does not row the boat" and we as well as many others can attest, Joe rows the boat like few others.

While Joe excelled at this career and is the consummate Grizzly, Joe's greatest attribute is his steadfast commitment to his family and friends which has no equal. As one of twelve kids, Joe has and remains ever mindful of the importance of his inward impact on his immediate and extended family. Joe, along with husband Blake, are respective "Uncle's" and foundations of solid rock within their respective families. Likewise, Joe's outer family, as he refers to his friends, are equally important and applies a deft touch in maintaining and holding long lasting meaningful friendships. Personally, beyond a mere friend, Joe provided great guidance when our LGBTQ+ daughter encountered challenges on her journey. We, the Campbell family, hold Joe's friendship dear in our hearts.

Finally, Joe's is a living, breathing, walking with little talking, example of inclusive prosperity while serving as a beacon of Lux et Veritas – Light and Truth.

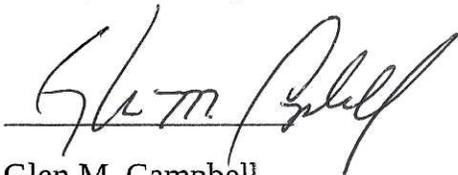
The Campbell's, without hesitation, loudly and proudly, concur in recommending a University of Montana Honorary Doctorate bestowed upon Montana's native son and Grizzly extraordinaire – Joseph R. Whittinghill.

Go Griz.

Sincerely,



Sharilyn A. Campbell



Glen M. Campbell



D | A | DAVIDSON
WEALTH MANAGEMENT

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October 16, 2025

Dear President Bodnar,

It is with great enthusiasm and respect that I endorse the nomination of Joe Whittinghill for an Honorary Doctorate degree from the University of Montana, his alma mater.

I first met Joe in the fall of 1986 at the University of Montana when we became brothers in the Sigma Phi Epsilon Fraternity. Since then, I've had the privilege of calling him a lifelong friend. During our time at UM, we served together as active members of the UM Advocates and Associated Students of the University of Montana. Even then, Joe stood out as a creative and strategic thinker, someone whose values of hard work, integrity, and collaboration inspired those around him.

Although our professional paths diverged for a time, we remained in touch over the years and reconnected more actively during his tenure at the University of Montana Foundation, where he served as associate executive director. This renewed engagement allowed me to observe his continued growth and leadership.

Joe's impact on the University of Montana extends far beyond his undergraduate years. His career accomplishments, including his role as corporate vice president and chief talent and learning officer for Microsoft, played a pivotal role in leading the company's leadership efforts. Yet, what makes Joe truly exceptional is his continued dedication to giving back to UM. Over the years, Joe has played an integral role in three of UM's capital campaigns, offering not only his leadership and vision, but also his enduring belief in the power of education to transform lives. His work has been and continues to be impactful for the continued success of our state's flagship University. His generosity, through both his time and financial support, has been deeply impactful to the campus community. Joe consistently makes the trip to Missoula to attend sporting events, campus functions, and speaking engagements, demonstrating his unwavering commitment to the University community. His dedication to being physically present, whether to support students, engage with colleagues, or teach his classes in person, reflects a truly exceptional level of involvement and passion. This kind of consistent, wholehearted engagement is both rare and deeply valued.

I'm grateful to have Joe on our board of directors at D.A. Davidson Companies. His leadership and experience, especially from his time at Microsoft, bring valuable insight to our firm. Joe's deep understanding of business transformation, talent and strategy continues to shape our growth and success in meaningful ways. As a side note, during my 30+ years at D. A. Davidson, Joe has been the only board member who took the initiative to schedule a one-on-one meeting with me, as a branch manager and financial advisor, to better understand our business at the ground level. His

willingness to listen, ask thoughtful questions, and learn firsthand about our operations speaks volumes about his dedication, humility, and genuine commitment to the organizations he serves.

Thank you for your consideration of his nomination. I believe Joe Whittinghill is a most deserving candidate for this honor. His impressive career achievements, philanthropy, and dedication to education align perfectly with the criteria for an honorary degree, and his recognition would bring great pride to the University of Montana.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "F. Angelo". The signature is stylized with a large, looped initial "F" and a cursive "Angelo".

Frank D'Angelo, CFP®, CWS®
Senior Vice President, Financial Advisor
Branch Manager

Monica Conrad Paoli
106 East Crestline Drive
Missoula, MT 59803

President Seth Bodnar
University of Montana President's Office
32 Campus Drive, UH109
Missoula, MT 59812

October 15, 2025

Dear President Bodnar,

Please accept my enthusiastic recommendation for Joe Whittinghill to be awarded an honorary doctorate from the University of Montana.

Joe was a UM student when I first met him in the late 1980's. I served as the director of the UM Foundation's first major capital campaign and later directed the Excellence Fund. Joe volunteered on the campaign and as an Excellence Fund phonathon caller. Even then, Joe's leadership abilities were evident. He was one of the few students capable of rallying others to volunteer as phonathon callers.

When I left Missoula in 1989, Joe joined the Foundation. I returned in 1993 to find that Joe had mastered the art of development work. The biggest part of fundraising success is establishing solid relationships. He had learned the basics of fundraising, but more importantly, he had the innate judgement and instincts to interact with staff, faculty, and donors alike. President Dennison, Phyllis Washington, Dean Gianchetta, and so many others, respected and trusted him as if he were a peer, and not a 27-year-old kid.

I expected Joe to have a successful career. What I didn't expect is the exceptional level of commitment Joe would make to our university as a volunteer during the last three decades. Joe's resume outlines the many volunteer positions he has filled over the years. But anyone can volunteer. Devoting the time and energy to a cause like it's your job takes the highest level of allegiance. Joe's dedication to UM is extraordinary, especially given he donated much of his time while pursuing and succeeding in a remarkably demanding career.

At the heart of Joe's volunteer efforts is his unwavering devotion to the University of Montana. He celebrates his gratitude for how this place, its people, and how a high-caliber UM education enhanced his life. His financial and emotional commitments to his beloved University are simply his way of ensuring the University of Montana's tradition of excellence continues.

Joe has touched the lives of so many students who will receive their college degrees from UM next May. It is fitting that he, too, should receive a degree honoring his devotion to our University of Montana.

Sincerely,

Monica Conrad Paoli
'80 Economics

October 15, 2025

President Seth Bodnar
University of Montana President's Office
32 Campus Drive, UH109
Missoula, MT 59812

Dear President Bodnar:

It is my honor to enthusiastically support a nomination for Joe Whittinghill to receive an Honorary Doctorate from the University of Montana. As a 1989 graduate from our Political Science program, Joe is an outstanding example of what a degree in the Humanities and Social Sciences prepares one for in life. Joe has used the leadership skills, policy education, debate experience and critical thinking that grounded his degree to launch himself into positions of extraordinary influence and impact.

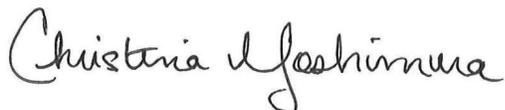
Joe's 25-year career with Microsoft highlights just one of the ways he has leveraged his education at UM to positively shape lives. His influence on global teams and industry environments began with a position at Microsoft in 1999 in change management and organization development, and by his retirement from the company in 2024 culminated in the prestigious role of Chief Talent and Learning Officer. His work in change management and talent development fundamentally elevated the experiences of at least a quarter of a million Microsoft employees a year. His focus on systems thinking, culture activation, adaptability, and inclusivity are hallmarks of a social sciences and humanities framework being applied to workplace challenges. We have reason to be quite proud of Joe's impact as a UM grad based upon this career trajectory alone.

However, Joe's utilization of his UM degree was not only focused outward. Joe is a notable graduate in part because he never forgot UM, and dedicated so much of his intellect and energy to building the institution that built him. During his time at UM he was involved with the UM Advocates, ASUM, and the Montana Model UN. Post graduation he served the University as the associate executive director of the UM Foundation, and then as chair of the Foundation Board of Trustees. Joe has been involved in three separate UM capital campaigns, including the most successful higher education fundraising campaign in state history: Campaign Montana. Post-retirement, Joe continues to serve as a strategic advisor to the UM Foundation and has been a part of the UM Alumni Association Board of Directors, as an External Advisory Board member of the Davidson Honors College, and on the Boards of D.A. Davidson, Gaia Ag, Grizzly Riders International and the Montana Ambassadors.

Joe gives back to UM through ongoing donations across campus, from his home department in Political Science to student scholarships and programs across the College. As a Billings native, his commitment to improving the job prospects for Montanans has been made material in his donations to create a Career Planning Center in the College of Humanities and Social Sciences and to his creation of the annual Leading OUT West workshop, a transformative weekend long leadership intensive for students from across Montana and other areas of the rural West. Joe not only built and funded this program with others, but continues to dedicate his time to teaching in it for a weekend every year. It has been an honor to work beside him in Leading OUT West, and I can personally attest to the personal investment Joe has in every aspect of the program and in every single student who attends.

Joe's impact in the Humanities and Social Sciences, at the University, and on the national and global business fields are a testament to his spirit, energy, and values. His application of the Montana Way that originated in his political science education has been carried forward to the way he has lived his life, and his tremendous success in positively impacting every arena in which he spends time. His executive leadership, organizational stewardship, and relentless dedication to uplifting others make Joe Whittinghill a highly deserving candidate for an Honorary Doctorate from the University of Montana. Please be in touch if there are any other details I can provide that would help in your decision-making, and thank you for the opportunity to speak on Joe's behalf.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Christina G. Yoshimura". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the typed name.

Dr. Christina G. Yoshimura

Interim Dean, Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of Montana