



The University of Montana Western Campus Report

DATE: Wednesday, October 20, 2021

TO: Board of Regents

FROM: Michael Reid, Chancellor

RE: Campus Report for the November 2021 Board of Regents' Meeting

- **UMW and Helena College Appoint Tricia Fiscus as Vice Chancellor & Assistant Dean**

The University of Montana Western and Helena College announced the hiring of Tricia Fiscus as the Vice Chancellor of Administration and Finance for UMW and the Assistant Dean of Administrative Affairs for Helena College.

Fiscus worked at Washington State University for 21 years, then at Klamath Community College (KCC) where she went on to become the Vice President of Administrative Services and CFO for KCC for two and a half years.

She will begin her new position at Montana Western and Helena College on October 25, 2021.

- **UMW Students Present NSF Funded Project at the Geological Society of America Conference**

UMW students, Mana Bryant and Will Larson, traveled to Portland, Oregon to present their results from a 2020 National Science Foundation funded research project at the Geological Society of America's *Connects 2021* Conference held October 10-13.

Led by Dr. Spruce Schoenemann of the Environmental Sciences Department, this collaborative student-driven research project was conducted in the Pioneer Mountains, near Dillon, Montana, with the goal to reconstruct the glacial retreat history of the region. The unique combination of block scheduling and the proximity to the once-glaciated mountains made UMW an ideal place for students to engage in this project.

- **Montana Western Appoints Michael Feuling as Athletic Director**

The University of Montana Western announced the appointment of Michael Feuling to the position of Athletic Director and Development Officer.

Feuling currently serves at Linn-Benton Community College in Albany, Oregon as their Annual Fund Development and Community Relations Officer. Prior to working at Linn-Benton, Feuling worked at Western Oregon University for over ten years, serving as Assistant Athletic Director for Development.

Feuling earned a Master of Arts in Sports Administration from Lasell University and a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration from Western Oregon University.

Feuling will begin his duties at Montana Western starting November 16, 2021.

- **Montana Western Regents Professor Wins High Plains Book Award**

Dr. Robert Thomas is a Regents Professor of Geology in the Environmental Sciences Department and co-author of “Roadside Geology of Montana.” The publication has been awarded the 2021 High Plains Book Award in the Medicine & Science category.

The High Plains Book Award was established in 2006 by the Billings Public Library Board to recognize regional literary works which examine and reflect life on the High Plains.

The 2021 winner, “Roadside Geology of Montana,” is a complete guide to the geological history of Montana designed to be utilized from the state’s many roadways by professionals and amateurs alike.

- **UMW and MCH Award 2021 Equine Icon and Lifetime Achievement Awards**

The Montana Center for Horsemanship, Equus International Film Festival, and the University of Montana Western awarded this year’s annual Equine Icon and Lifetime Achievement Awards to recipients Dr. Temple Grandin and Iola “Olie” Else during the 2021 “Of Horse, Human, and Nature” conference.

The 2021 recipient of the Equine Icon Award, Dr. Temple Grandin, is a professor of animal science at Colorado State University and a pioneer in improving the handling and welfare of farm animals. Dr. Grandin is a world-renowned animal behavior scientist and active consultant for the livestock and ranching industries.

Iola “Olie” Else, Chair of the Equine Studies Department at Montana Western, was presented with the 2021 Lifetime Achievement Award. Else has been a professor, rodeo coach, friend and mentor to thousands of young people – students and others, over many years. She is dedicated to horsemanship education and to the bond between horses and humans.

- **Dr. Tyler Seacrest Publishes Open Educational Resource**

UMW Associate Professor of Mathematics, Dr. Tyler Seacrest, recently demonstrated his commitment to producing quality and affordable education by publishing his first Open Educational Resource (OER), *Informal Calculus*.

Seacrest created a textbook students and faculty can access and use for free. Embracing the Open Educational model, Seacrest states that, "*Informal Calculus* is an approachable textbook for a survey calculus course. This book is shared under the creative commons with attribution license, and anyone is welcome to use or modify anything from the book for free."

Serving students in a new way, this textbook focuses calculus on applications in environmental and biological sciences.

- **UMW Named Rocky Mountain "Hidden Gem College" Two Years in a Row**

UMW has been selected as a "2022 Hidden Gem College" in a recent announcement by College Raptor for the second year running.

College Raptor recognizes Montana Western as one of the best colleges in the country, based on a combination of factors, including retention rates, graduation rates, student-to-faculty ratio, endowment per student, selectivity, and other key metrics.

"Finding hidden gem schools for students is core to how we help families discover great college choices. We take pride in making it easy for students to make those connections through our Hidden Gems Rankings lists by highlighting excellent schools like Montana Western," said Bill Staib, CEO of College Raptor.

- **Montana Western Nationally Ranked for Social Mobility, Research, Public Service and Best Value**

The University of Montana Western ranked #99 out of 244 colleges nationwide on Washington Monthly's "2021 Bachelor's Colleges Ranking" for meeting the criteria of awarding bachelor's degrees that focus on arts and sciences and based on their contribution to the public good in three broad categories: social mobility, research, and promoting public service.

UMW also ranked #127 out of 215 colleges for the "2021 Best Bang for the Buck Colleges: West" list for how well they help non-wealthy students attain marketable degrees at affordable prices. The list is made by isolating the social mobility metrics from the main rankings of four-year institutions.

- **Montana Western Names JT Robbins as Head Rodeo Coach**

During his time as a student, UMW alumnus and recently appointed Rodeo Coach, JT Robbins, served as a team captain for UMW rodeo and as Saddle Bronc Director for the Big Sky Region. Professionally, he earned a Montana Pro Rodeo circuit title and qualified twice for the Dodge National Circuit Finals.

“We are excited to welcome JT home to Montana Western Rodeo. His exceptional experience competing and coaching will serve all of our rodeo student-athletes well,” said Interim Director of Athletics, Janelle Handlos.

While working in agricultural management for the past two decades, Robbins has also been involved as a Director for the Montana Pro Rodeo Circuit, Montana High School Rodeo Association and youth rodeo associations. Though his collegiate and professional experience focused on saddle bronc, Robbins has also competed in timed events and has served as a coach and mentor for youth rodeo participants.

- **UMW Fine Arts Gallery Presents “This Gift I Still Have”**

"This Gift I Still Have," an exhibition of art and poetry, held an opening gallery reception on October 1, 2021 at the University of Montana Western's Fine Arts Gallery located in historic Main Hall.

These pieces were first published as a Zine series in collaboration with Free Verse and Youth Homes. They were scrawled, painted, and drawn during the pandemic by teenagers living in therapeutic group homes, jails, and prisons across Montana.

Free Verse empowers incarcerated youth across Montana to gain agency over their own narrative and to discover their capacity for creativity, empathy, and engagement in the classroom through lessons in literature and creative writing.

- **Montana Western Names Tara Jones as Director of Dining Services**

Recently appointed Director of Dining Services, Tara Jones, earned her Bachelor of Science Degree in Nutrition and Dietetics from Concordia College in Moorhead, Minnesota and is currently pursuing an MBA from the University of Montana. She holds certifications as a Registered Dietitian from the Commission on Dietetic Registration and as a Licensed Nutritionist from the Montana Board of Medical Examiners.

During her professional career, Jones has served as the Ravalli County High Risk Dietitian, the School Nutrition Specialist for the Montana Office of Public Instruction, and most recently as the Registered Dietitian Nutritionist for Montana State University.

Jones will begin her new position at Montana Western on October 27, 2021.

- **UMW TRIO Program Offers Guidance for New Students**

TRIO Student Support Services provide students with programs designed to help them be successful in their transition to college by providing the freshman Accelerator Program and support students throughout their first semester with First Year Experience classes.

The Accelerator Program allows new TRIO students to move in earlier at the beginning of the academic year to learn about the TRIO program and expectations from faculty during a block course at UMW. New TRIO students also participate in First Year Experience classes throughout the semester to help them gain the skills and knowledge needed to be successful throughout their college careers.

TRIO programs are federal outreach programs designed to provide services for students who are first-generation, have a disability, or fall below a certain income level. The program aims to increase college retention and graduation and currently serves around 160 UMW students each year.

- **Montana Western Holds Annual 10-Minute Play Festival**

The University of Montana Western's Theatre students presented Montana Western's 19th Annual Ten-Minute Play Festival October 7-11 as part of the Bank of Commerce Performing Arts Series. The performances were held in the Small Auditorium in Main Hall on the University of Montana Western campus.

Over twenty students and faculty performed as cast, crew, and directors for the twelve plays presented. This year's theme was "Celebrating Our Diversity" and featured original plays written by students, professors, and community members.

The directors of each play were all students from the play production course taught during Block Two by adjunct professor, Larry Brazill.