



The University of Montana Western Campus Report

DATE: January 2025

TO: Board of Regents

FROM: Michael Reid, Chancellor

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

- **UMW Foundation Establishes Ronald J. Woods Charitable Trust Annual Scholarship**

The University of Montana Western Foundation is proud to announce the Ronald J. Woods Charitable Trust Annual Scholarship, designed to support students pursuing degrees in education at Montana Western. This scholarship honors the legacy of Ronald J. Woods, a Notre Dame graduate and pioneer in injection molding technology, who later dedicated his life to philanthropy.

After retiring, Mr. Woods founded a nonprofit high school in Montana to assist students needing extra support. Though the school has since closed, its impact continues through the Woods Scholarship, which has supported over 34 students since its establishment in 2015.

This year, the Ronald J. Woods Charitable Trust Annual Scholarship will award four \$5,000 scholarships to first-time, full-time teacher education students who are Montana high school graduates. This scholarship upholds Mr. Woods's vision

of empowering hardworking students dedicated to education and creating a better future.

- **UMW Announces Free On-Campus Housing for Graduating Seniors in Beaverhead County**

Montana Western is excited to announce the Beaverhead Bulldog Bundle, a special offer for high school seniors graduating in Spring 2025 who are residents of Beaverhead County. The bundle provides free on-campus housing for these students who choose to attend Montana Western, helping local students save significantly as they begin their college journey.

Graduates eligible for the Beaverhead Bulldog Bundle will receive complimentary accommodations in either JDC, a savings of \$3,424, or Mathews Hall, a savings of \$3,506, for their freshman year. All Beaverhead County students graduating in Spring 2025 are eligible, including homeschooled students.

- **UMW Hosts Community Water Conversations Panel with Trout Unlimited**

The University of Montana Western and Trout Unlimited hosted the 3rd annual Community Water Conversations event, “What’s Happening on the Ground: Restoration Efforts and Landscape Health,” on Tuesday, December 3, 2024.

This free public event featured a panel of experts who discussed local water issues and restoration efforts. Panelists included representatives from the Bureau of Land Management, Big Hole Watershed Committee, Trout Unlimited, and more.

Led by UMW students and Dr. Arica Crootof, the event provided an opportunity to learn about water challenges, partnerships, and the role everyone plays in improving local water resources. Community members attended and actively engaged in the conversation.

- **Kaylee Fritz Receives Montana Athletes in Service Award**

The Montana Campus Network for Civic Engagement (MCNCE) has recognized twelve student-athletes with the Montana Athletes in Service Award (MAIS), including Montana Western’s Kaylee Fritz.

Kaylee Fritz, the President of Montana Western's Association of Student-Athletes (ASA), has been a tireless advocate for the needs of student-athletes, fostering unity and support within the athletic community. Beyond her leadership on campus, she volunteers her time coaching youth volleyball, making a positive impact on younger players.

As a student-athlete, ASA President, and team captain, Kaylee exemplifies a commitment to service both on and off the court. Her dedication to helping others, whether through supporting her teammates or mentoring young athletes, makes her an inspiring role model for her peers and the broader community.

- **Lindsey Branch Named to CSC 30 Under 30 Class for 2024**

Montana Western is proud to announce that Assistant Athletic Director Lindsey Branch has been named to the prestigious College Sports Communicators (CSC) 30 Under 30 Class for 2024. In just its third year, this national recognition has quickly become one of the most meaningful honors for young communications and creative professionals in college sports.

"Lindsey's hard work and passion have elevated Montana Western Athletics," said Michael Feuling, Montana Western's Athletic Director. "Her selection in the CSC 30 Under 30 Class highlights not only her exceptional talent but also her dedication to our student-athletes, programs, and the entire Bulldog community. We are so fortunate to have her on our team."

- **UMW Glass Program Hosts Artists Karen Willenbrink-Johnsen and Jasen Johnsen**

The University of Montana Western hosted acclaimed glass artists Karen Willenbrink-Johnsen and Jasen Johnsen as artists-in-residence from November 19-23. Known for her intricate, nature-inspired sculptures and her appearance on Netflix's "Blown Away", Karen brought extensive experience, including work with the renowned Pilchuck Glass School. Jasen, a master toolmaker and glass artist, showcased his unique handcrafted tools refined by his own sculpting expertise.

During their residency, the artists shared their skills and creative process with UMW students and the community. The week concluded with a free public presentation in UMW's Emerick Art Studio, followed by a live glassblowing demonstration. This event offered a unique opportunity to witness masterful

artistry and explore the captivating world of glass sculpture.

- **Bulldogs Football Win First Playoff Game Since 1994**

After a 30-year playoff win drought, the no. 4 ranked Montana Western football team picked up their first NAIA Football Championship Series (FCS) win in Bulldog Stadium with a 41-14 rout of the no. 14-seeded Dickinson State Blue Hawks. The Bulldogs were led by Michael Palandri, who threw for 388 passing yards and five touchdowns.

- **Iola “Olie” Else Receives MFBF Distinguished Service Award**

Iola “Olie” Else, a long-time member of the University of Montana Western community, received the prestigious Montana Farm Bureau Distinguished Service Award on November 19 during a luncheon at the Montana Farm Bureau Annual Convention in Billings.

Else, who served as UMW's Rodeo Coach and Faculty Advisor for over three decades, was named the National Intercollegiate Rodeo Association Coach of the Year in 2004 and 2018. She continues to serve as the faculty advisor for UMW's Young Farmers and Ranchers club.

In her acceptance speech, Else emphasized the importance of engaging the next generation in agriculture. “We need to attract and retain young people in agriculture,” she said. “Montana Farm Bureau’s Young Farmers and Ranchers Program plays a vital role in keeping young people connected to agriculture. Despite the challenges, many of my students have returned to contribute significantly to their family farms and ranches.”

- **UMW Hosts Business Idea Pitch Competition**

The University of Montana Western's Business Department hosted a campus-wide Business Idea Pitch Competition on Thursday, December 5, in the Small Auditorium. Students from various disciplines competed, presenting their innovative business ideas in a "Shark Tank"-style competition. They vied for prizes, showcasing their creativity and entrepreneurial spirit. The inaugural event was made possible by the Foundation's X1 funds, and attendees had the opportunity to support the students. The event offered a chance to witness the

next generation of business leaders in action.

- **UMW Hosts Community FAFSA Completion Workshops**

The University of Montana Western hosted free FAFSA Completion Workshops for high school seniors, community members, and UMW students in December and January at the Lucy Carson Library. These workshops were open to everyone, regardless of which college they planned to attend, and aimed to help participants successfully complete the FAFSA application, which is essential for applying for grants, scholarships, work-study, and student loans. The last workshop will take place on January 21, 2025.