



The University of Montana Western Campus Report

DATE: March 2025

TO: Board of Regents

FROM: Michael Reid, Chancellor

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

- **Montana Western Scholarship Established in Memory of Sarah Pelletier**

- The University of Montana Western has established the Sarah Pelletier Special Education Scholarship to honor Sarah Pelletier's legacy and support future educators in Special Education.

Starting in the 2025-2026 academic year, two \$2,000 scholarships will be awarded annually to full-time Montana Western students majoring in Education with a minor in Special Education. Applicants must maintain a minimum GPA of 2.8 and can receive the scholarship for multiple years. The scholarship was created by Sarah's family to recognize the exceptional care she received from Special Education teachers throughout her life.

- **UMW Alumni Thrive in Speridian Technologies New Wave Program**

Montana Western graduates Wesley Korpi and Trinity Bushnell have successfully transitioned into full-time roles at Speridian Technologies after completing the company's New Wave Accelerator Program. This six-month training program, launched in 2022, prepares recent graduates for careers in technology and consulting through hands-on learning, job shadowing, and real-world projects.

Korpi, a Dillon native, credits UMW's small class sizes and experiential learning for equipping him with essential business and technical skills. He now works as a Business Analyst in Speridian's Public Sector division. Bushnell, a former UMW rodeo team member from Helena, highlighted the program's structured training and collaborative environment as key factors in her career growth. She now serves as a hybrid Business Analyst and Project Manager.

UMW celebrates their success and values partnerships like Speridian's New Wave program, which provides graduates with meaningful career opportunities in business and technology.

- **UMW Student Selected as MAS Student Lobbyist & George M. Dennison Scholarship Recipient**

UMW senior Emmett Jeschke has been recognized for his leadership and commitment to civic engagement through two prestigious honors. He was selected as the Montana Associated Students (MAS) Student Lobbyist for the 2025 Montana Legislative Session, where he will advocate for student interests statewide.

Additionally, Jeschke received the George M. Dennison Civic Engagement Scholarship, awarded to students who demonstrate outstanding public service and leadership.

A secondary education major from Helena, Jeschke has been actively involved in student government and various advocacy efforts at UMW. His selection for both roles highlight his dedication to representing and supporting Montana students in policy discussions and community initiatives.

- **Night of Stars Education Hall of Fame Ceremony**

The University of Montana Western's Education Department and Alumni Office, in partnership with Stockman Bank, will host the 12th Annual Night of Stars Education Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony on Saturday, April 26, 2025. The

event will take place in the Lewis & Clark Room in Mathews Hall, beginning with no-host cocktails at 5:30 p.m., followed by an Italian buffet dinner at 6:00 p.m. and the induction ceremony at 7:00 p.m.

Four UMW alumni—Eileen Lane Haugen, Jimi Lunak Champ, Ken Carver, and Sara Decker—will be inducted into the Education Hall of Fame for their contributions to education. Additionally, twelve current education students will be recognized as Outstanding Teacher Candidates.

- **UMW's Business Idea Pitch Competition Opens Doors for Student Opportunity**

The University of Montana Western hosted its first campus-wide Business Idea Pitch Competition on December 5, 2024, as part of a pilot capstone course led by business students Brody Connelly, Emma Day, Haylee Grytdal, and Rylie Halsell. The competition featured 17 UMW students and two Montana Youth Challenge teams presenting business ideas in a "Shark Tank"-style format.

Winners included Cady Brown (Best Overall Pitch for Grow Ag), James Carter (Most Creative Idea for Zynding Machine), Brody Connelly (Most Charismatic for Powerland Equipment and Repair), and Emma Day (Audience Favorite for Rooted Table). Participants gained hands-on experience in entrepreneurship, supported by faculty mentorship and funding from the UMW Foundation.

The capstone students have already secured \$3,000 in funding from state competitions and will compete in larger events this spring. They aim to expand the competition, involving local businesses and fostering cross-disciplinary collaboration at UMW.

- **Montana Western Announces 55th Annual Rodeo Banquet**

The University of Montana Western Rodeo Team is excited to host the 55th Annual Montana Western Rodeo Banquet on Friday, March 28, 2025, in the Keltz Arena. This annual fundraising event supports scholarships, travel expenses, practice facilities, and the Montana Western College Rodeo.

The evening kicks off at 5:00 p.m. with no-host cocktails, followed by a prime rib dinner at 5:30 p.m. Attendees can participate in silent and live auctions, meet the rodeo team, and enjoy live music and dancing featuring King Friday and Morgan Seymour.

“This banquet is more than just a fundraiser—it’s a chance to celebrate the dedication of our student-athletes,” said UMW Rodeo Coach JT Robbins.

- **2024 Fall Semester Dean’s List**

The University of Montana Western is proud to announce that 547 students have been named to the Dean’s List for the 2024 fall semester. To earn this distinction, students must be enrolled full-time (a minimum of 12 semester credits) and achieve a grade point average of 3.33 or higher.

- **UMW and MCH Host 2025 Colt Challenge & Sale**

The Annual Colt Challenge and Sale, hosted by the University of Montana Western and the Montana Center for Horsemanship, will take place March 28-29, 2025, in Dillon, Montana. This two-day event showcases UMW Natural Horsemanship students as they demonstrate their training skills before auctioning off the colts they have worked with. Proceeds support scholarships for Natural Horsemanship majors.

New this year, the Alumni Horse Sale will feature six older horses trained by past students, offering buyers an opportunity to purchase experienced horses.

Each colt receives 90 days of Natural Horsemanship training under expert guidance, preparing them for ranch work and recreational riding. The sale will be available in person, online, and by phone.

- **UMW Student Completes Internship at Snettisham Hatchery**

University of Montana Western senior Colton Folts spent six months at the Snettisham Hatchery in Alaska, gaining hands-on experience in sockeye salmon population management. The hatchery, managed by Douglas Island Pink and Chum (DIPAC), is located deep in the Alaskan backcountry and is only accessible by bush plane.

Colton’s internship included hatchery maintenance, fish feeding, and working at a remote fish trap at Speel Lake, where he counted and logged salmon migration data for Alaska Fish and Game. This work helps determine fishing regulations and supports sustainable fisheries.

Living in a remote camp, Colton adapted to the challenges of backcountry life, balancing work with maintaining camp facilities. His experience solidified his passion for Alaska, and after graduating in May 2025 with a B.S. in Ecology, he plans to become a state wildlife trooper.

- **“On the Rocks” Series Hosts Speaker Brian Wheeler**

The University of Montana Western Environmental Sciences Department hosted Brian Wheeler for the *On the Rocks* lecture series on Wednesday, February 19, in the Lucy Carson Library. Wheeler, Executive Director of the Big Hole River Foundation (BHRF) since 2019, presented *Beneath the Surface: Water Quality Monitoring on the Big Hole*.

BHRF’s Water Quality Monitoring Program, the only consistent annual monitoring effort on the Big Hole, aimed to address critical data gaps and support state water managers. Wheeler, a longtime fishing and whitewater guide, emphasized the importance of water quality for both ranching and recreation.

Before the lecture, students from the Environmental Remote Sensing and GIS course showcased final project posters on topics such as water levels, land use, climate, and natural disasters. The event highlighted the significance of environmental research and conservation efforts in southwest Montana.