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**Subject:** A New Year and New Chapter for UM  
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January 3, 2018

## **To the UM community:**

Welcome to 2018! I'm reaching out to you during this, my first official week at the University of Montana, to share a few thoughts at the outset of this new chapter.

Let me begin by expressing my gratitude for the opportunity to serve and my excitement for our collective future. As has occurred often throughout its 125-year history, our university faces a defining moment. We have significant challenges to address, many of which have persisted for several years. Yet I remain inspired and encouraged for our future because, at its core, this university is helping to shape citizens and leaders who will address the world's most compelling and complex issues.

The role of our university has arguably never been more important. A UM education has the ability to transform the lives of our students and empower them to create substantive and positive impact in our state, our nation, and the world. Our excellent sciences, arts and humanities, and renowned professional schools prepare students not only for success in their first job, but also for the challenges and opportunities that will arise over the course of a career in a dynamic world.

When I consider the most important issues facing society today, it's clear that addressing these challenges requires an interdisciplinary approach, where scientists and scholars who have dedicated their lives to the study of policy, expression, and human understanding come together to examine a problem holistically. This is where I see the greatest hope for our future, and this is exactly where the University of Montana excels. I am eager to work with you to continue to hone our strengths, and I will work tirelessly to communicate the tremendous value of a UM education.

For those whom I've had the pleasure to meet, you've already seen that I'm

unabashedly optimistic and energized about the future of this great university. I come to UM with a wide range of experiences and a strong work ethic. I'm ready to work alongside you to realize the full potential of our institution. In the coming weeks and months, I plan to connect with as many members of the UM community as I can to listen and learn about our challenges and opportunities.

During my first months in office, I will work with academic and administrative leaders to focus on several initial priorities. First, I'll ask us to explore ways we can make UM a model of excellence and innovation. This requires clearly understanding our strengths and how we can apply those strengths to the greatest opportunities. Second, we need to ensure that we run a tight ship. With limited resources, we must be as efficient and focused as possible. Third, I believe deeply in the principle of "mission first, people always" to guide our work and our decision-making. We keep our student-centered mission at the core of all we do, first and foremost, and we never lose sight of building a supportive community for all and making our campus a great place to work and to live. We must cherish diversity, help all of our staff and faculty to reach their full potential, and continue our hard work to create a safe environment for everyone. Finally, we must energetically recruit great students, retain those students and ensure that they graduate, and prepare them for success beyond UM.

As I continue to build upon my own understanding of our community, I look forward to meeting many of you on campus and across the state. As you get to know me, you'll see that I value transparency and frequent communication. To that end, I will engage our community not only through in-person meetings, but also via [social media on Twitter](#) and will periodically share [blog posts](#). I look forward to your thoughts and feedback.

Thank you to everyone who has offered my family and me such a warm welcome in our first days here in Missoula. I hope you will continue to share your advice and assistance as we move forward. I learned an important lesson in my West Point and military experience that I have taken with me over the past two decades: We are strongest when we share a mission, work closely together, and recognize the contributions of every member of the organization. We all have an equal stake in the future of the University of Montana. It is my tremendous honor to work together with you to build an incredible future for this great institution.

Up with Montana!



Seth Bodnar

