



MONTANA UNIVERSITY SYSTEM
OFFICE OF COMMISSIONER OF HIGHER EDUCATION

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TO: Members of the UM community

FROM: Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education

DATE: April 17, 2018

RE: Student data protection

The University of Montana and the Montana University System stand firmly in support of Dr. Chelsea Bodnar, spouse of University of Montana President Seth Bodnar, for her efforts to assist the university in enhancing its recruiting efforts.

“We were delighted to know Chelsea would be a strong advocate for the University of Montana alongside of Seth when we hired him as President of the University,” Board of Regents Chair Fran Albrecht said. “The University has always had active spouses who contribute in a multitude of ways. Chelsea’s excitement and enthusiasm for increasing enrollment is to be celebrated and commended. She is contributing her time and resources to helping the University of Montana and I am grateful for her commitment and support.”

While we value the press and the pillar it holds in our society, we simply want our perspective to be shared. The unequivocal truth is that universities across the country are safely and securely using broad data trends (not specific student information) to help attract and recruit students.

Chelsea never received student data, nor has any unauthorized person or entity used student data. Lucy France, Legal Counsel at UM, confirms that UM has not shared any data with The Messina Group to date. “Of course, before we shared anything we would ensure that every protection was in place regarding privacy and compliance with all applicable state and federal laws,” France said. “Chelsea followed the right steps in connecting the appropriate people at the university to explore TMG’s generous offer of assistance.”

The Messina Group is a communications and marketing consultant to Airbnb, ESPN, Google, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and many more clients. Thanks to Chelsea’s friendship with Jim Messina (UM Class of ’93; UM Distinguished Alum Award ’09; UM Commencement Speaker ’13), UM is in a unique position to receive top consulting services at little to no cost. This service will allow the university to recruit more competitively, save money, and reach more potential students. All are needed for UM to thrive.

“The Montana University System is fully-aware of how campuses are using broad generic data to help provide better services and experiences,” Commissioner of Higher Education Clayton Christian said. “Our System goes to great lengths to protect all student data according to state and federal law. We will continue to look for innovative ways to increase enrollment, support students, faculty, alumni and our extended UM family, and most importantly continue to tell our story.”