Dear Friends and Colleagues,

Today, I am pleased to tell you that the U.S. Department of Justice has announced that the UM Police Department has shown full and sustained compliance in improving our response to reports of sexual assault.

We can now mark the successful completion of one of the two cooperative agreements that we entered into in May 2013 with the U.S. Departments of Justice and Education. The other agreement, regarding Title IX, has a longer time frame and I assure you that we are well on our way to achieving our goals there.

This is a major step in our ongoing work to prevent sexual assault on our campus, to educate about sexual violence, and to respond effectively and fairly to reports of assault. You can find our final compliance report and matrix – and a summary of it – on the UMPD website, so I won’t go into details here.

Let me give you just one indication of the depth of this work: In the past two years, UMPD officers participated in more than 1,000 hours of training in sexual assault response, investigation, supervision and documentation. That amounts to an average of 79 hours per officer.

Just as important as the training has been the tremendous quality of work among so many campus and community partners across Missoula. All of these partners – from Missoula Police and victims’ advocates to UM staff and faculty members – are dedicated to a community-coordinated response to reports of sexual assault. That’s what makes Missoula different, and that’s what makes it worthy of attention. We are a caring community that will step up to face problems and to work together on them in a way that can become a model for others.

Many people on campus and off have worked countless hours on improving our collective response to reports of sexual assault. I thank those of you who continue this important work, and I thank all of you who continue to support these efforts as we move forward.

In today’s DOJ news release, Michael Cotter, U.S. Attorney of the District of Montana, had this to say about us:

“Today signals a true accomplishment by the University of Montana and its police department. They have worked tirelessly toward changes that are substantial, sustainable, and will benefit the community for generations to come. Thanks to this community effort, today the university is safer and is a place where students can learn and thrive.”

With our improvements and initiatives, we aim to increase public confidence and increase public awareness about this serious issue facing all communities and all campuses. The announcement today is additional evidence that the University of Montana is – most importantly – offering our students and employees a safe and caring environment where they can live and where they can learn.

Sincerely,

Royce C. Engstrom
President
University of Montana

Keep up with UM news on our website: www.umt.edu.