

# **State of the University Address**

**August 23, 2013**

## **Introduction**

Thank you Provost Brown. Welcome, everyone, to the beginning of the 2013-14 academic year! I regularly say, and firmly believe, that a great University is made of great people, so let me start with a story about some of our great people.

Last year at the Staff Senate holiday party, the topic of scholarships came up. Student recruitment relies increasingly on scholarships to attract the best and brightest student and to help these students pay for college. The Staff Senate fundraising team decided that they had a stake in student success, too. The result? Three weeks from now, on September 14<sup>th</sup>, the Staff Senate is hosting the first Diploma Dash 5K to raise money for student scholarships. Let's acknowledge the Staff Senate for their initiative, for their recognition of an opportunity, and for taking action to address it! Would each of the Staff Senators in the audience please stand so that we can thank you?

## **UM: A Place of Opportunity**

I want to begin by telling you how much I appreciate what you are doing for UM and for one another. I hope you have had a good summer and have had the opportunity to enjoy your friends and family and the wonderful

opportunities that Montana provides. Now, the excitement begins anew as we welcome our incoming and returning students to campus. The campus looks beautiful, thanks to our hard-working grounds and facilities crew, so please give them a word of thanks as you see them.

During the past several months, I've had the chance to meet with many graduates of UM – at alumni events and during discussions with policy-makers, employers, and community members. Regardless of when they received their education, or in what field, or what they are doing now, they all have similar things to say. They talk about the University of Montana as a place of opportunity. The classes they took, the activities they pursued – all of their time at UM – propelled them into a future of opportunity, unplanned in many cases, carefully orchestrated in others. For those of us who work here on a daily basis, UM is also a place of opportunity; each day brings new challenges, and each day brings new rewards.

I will tell you right now that today's message is going to be one of optimism and forward thinking. I want to use today to highlight the accomplishments of many people and programs and to describe the energetic efforts by countless individuals who make things happen at UM. The upcoming year is going to be one of progress and excitement.

## **Special Guests**

Let me introduce some special guests this morning.

Shannon O'Brien is Governor Bullock's Education Policy Advisor. Appointed last spring, she hit the ground running and brings to her job a high level of energy and dedication to improving education at all levels. I am proud to add that she is a UM alum. Last spring she received her doctorate from the Phyllis J. Washington College of Education and Human Sciences.

Zack Rogala is our new student regent, serving on the MT Board of Regents. This fall he begins Law School at UM after receiving his undergraduate degree from MSU. Our student regents have always been exceptional, and Zach is no different – he has already jumped in with enthusiasm and initiative. I look forward to working with him.

Neil Moisey is the Deputy Commissioner for Academics, Research and Student Affairs at the Commissioner's Office. You probably remember Neil from his many roles on campus – as a faculty member in our College of Forestry and Conservation, a former Faculty Senate President and the first Leadership Fellow at UM.

John Engen, the Mayor of Missoula, is a friend and colleague. Later, I will speak to community-university relations, many of which are happening because of Mayor Engen.

I want to also acknowledge Mary, my wife.

## **Introduction of New Administrators**

This year, we have attracted a group of exceptional people to campus to take on various administrative roles. I want to introduce them now. Please hold your applause until I've read all the names.

- Perry Brown, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs
- Scott Whittenburg, Vice President for Research and Creative Scholarship
- Michael Reid, Vice President for Administration and Finance
- Peggy Kuhr, Vice President for Integrated Communications
- Matthew Riley, Chief Information Office
- Lucy France, Legal Counsel
- Shane Giese, President and CEO, University of Montana Foundation
- Kent Haslam, Director of Athletics
- Eric Gutiérrez, Director, Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action
- Mario Schulzke, Assistant Vice President for Marketing
- Amy Capolupo, Director, Disability Services for Students
- Rick Curtis, Director, Curry Health Center
- Martin Blair, Director, The Rural Institute

- Paulo Zagalo-Melo, Director, International Programs
- Abraham Kim, Director, The Maureen and Mike Mansfield Center
- Stephen Thompson, Director, Campus Recreation
- Leonard Leibinger, Interim Director, Veteran's Education and Transition Services Office
- Joseph Hickman, Interim Registrar
- Nancy Hinman, Interim Associate Provost for Dynamic Learning
- Laurie Fisher, Interim Director, Career Services
- Jamie Pinkerton, Head Coach, Softball

## **Student Leadership**

I'd like to recognize our student leadership team:

- Asa Hohman, ASUM President
- Mariah Williams, ASUM Vice President
- Mike Hopkins, ASUM Business Manager

## **UM Minute**

Most of us spend a considerable amount of time in meetings. I have taken to starting meetings with what I call the "UM Minute", and I ask you to do the same. Take just a minute or two, to tell one another some good news about a colleague, a student, or a program, to remind ourselves of why we are here.

Sara Thane is my UM Minute today. Sara is a junior majoring in political science and has just returned from a summer in Washington, D.C., where she was an intern at the White House. She was placed in the Office of Presidential Correspondence, where she read and responded to letters from classrooms and young people on behalf of the President. She also took weekly shifts answering calls on the White House Comment Line. Part of her internship included a weekly speaker series at which senior staff talked and answered questions. The series brought in a wide variety of people, including the First Lady and the Vice President. Sara has joined us today. Sara, please stand and let us congratulate you on representing yourself and UM with distinction!

On September 13, UM will welcome an incredible woman when we host a special ceremony to award Justice Sandra Day O'Connor with an Honorary Doctorate of Laws. Justice O'Connor was approved for the degree by the Law School faculty, by the Faculty Senate, and by the Board of Regents. Because she couldn't attend commencement last May, we will recognize Justice O'Connor in September. In addition to the ceremony, she will meet with our GLI, DHC and Law Students.

Here's more good news: just two days ago, Professor Steve Running learned of his appointment to the NASA Science Committee, where he'll serve as the Chair of the NASA Earth Science Subcommittee. This is the highest advisory

committee at NASA for science, reporting directly to the NASA Administrator. This is probably the highest advisory post that a non-NASA employee can have.

## **UM2020: Reminder of Priorities**

This is an especially important time for higher education. The nation is looking increasingly for higher education to play a transformative role in the lives of individuals and in the growth of our society. The University of Montana has a special responsibility and challenge in this time of pragmatism and competition. I remind you of our strategic plan, *UM2020: Building a University for the Global Century*, which focuses on five areas appropriate for today's expectations and opportunities:

1. Partnering for Student Success, which seeks to increase the number of people who ultimately graduate with a college credential;
2. Education for the Global Century, which involves building our academic programming to meet the needs and interests of today's students;
3. Discovery and Creativity to Serve Montana and the World, which increases the impact of our research and creative scholarship;
4. The Dynamic Learning Environment, which establishes one of the most effective learning environments in public higher education;
5. The Planning-Assessment Continuum, which is an operating principle for our university designed to maximize our progress toward goals and objectives.

In the context of those directions, let me speak about some accomplishments, directions and challenges.

## **Academic Distinction**

At the core of UM is our quest for academic excellence and innovation. Let's look at a few indicators of progress.

Student success is paramount, so here are the latest numbers we have:

- Data from the Commissioner's Office for the entering class of fall 2011 shows that among first-time, full-time, bachelor-degree seeking freshmen, our freshman-to-sophomore retention rate is 76%, the highest in the history of UM and the highest in the Montana University System. This is still not high enough; our target is >80%.
- For the entering class of fall 2006, first-time, full-time, bachelor-degree seeking freshmen, the national metric of the 6-Year graduation rate is 48.3%, the highest in the history of UM. This is still not high enough; our target is >50%.

These gains reflect the hard work of many people, including recent programmatic changes such as the Exploratory Studies program for undeclared freshmen and the use of EdReady, an online math skills refresher course funded through the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Of the 70

freshman who completed EdReady this summer, over 80% raised their math placement score by at least one level.

The faculty has adjusted the curriculum to provide new opportunities for education and research, at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. Last May we received approval for a new Materials Science Ph.D., offered collaboratively with Montana Tech and Montana State University. The Department of Management and Marketing along with Management Information Systems brought forward a Digital Marketing Certificate. New certificates are in effect at Missoula College in Health Information Technology and Applied Science in Energy Technology.

The newest issue of *PreLaw* Magazine highlighted 25 of the most innovative ideas recently launched by laws schools across the country and it's no surprise that UM's Law School is included. First-year law students at UM are grouped together to function as a law firm with seven classmates and a TA as the junior law partner. The students learn problem-solving skills and how to interview clients. Most of the innovative ideas about curriculum highlighted in the magazine are intended to bring practical training into the legal curriculum, which is already a hallmark of UM's Law School.

## **Research and Creative Scholarship**

Research and Creative Scholarship are central to our mission as a research

university, and we have seen some tremendously exciting recent developments.

Nate McCrady, associate professor of astrophysics, was recently awarded a NASA grant of \$1.125 million for *Project Minerva*. He will work to build a dedicated observatory to detect Earth-like exo-planets with partner institutions Harvard, the California Institute of Technology and Pennsylvania State University. That's pretty good company!

Andrij Holian and his colleagues in the Center for Environmental Health Sciences received a \$5 million, five-year award from NIH. This is the first ever Phase 3 COBRE or Center for Biomedical Research Excellence Award in Montana.

Media Arts Professor Andrew Smith recently debuted, to much acclaim, *Winter in the Blood*, a feature film based on a novel by Montanan James Welch. Professor Smith hired many UM students to assist with production and filmed on location throughout our state. In addition to being featured at the Los Angeles Film Festival, *Winter in the Blood* won the Grand Prize at the Montreal First People's Festival.

In the Humanities, Associate Professor Jody Pavilack in the Department of History won two prestigious awards for her book on the politics of Chile's

coal mining communities. Ray Fanning in the School of Journalism won the Best of Festival Award for his radio piece on wrongful convictions in Montana.

In July, we announced the Blackstone LaunchPad Montana Project, which is a partnership among the Blackstone Foundation, the University of Miami, Headwaters from Butte, MSU and UM. It will bring a three-year, \$2.6 million student and alumni entrepreneurship program to Montana. The program will help students and alumni take an idea and grow it into a business.

Yesterday, I attended a meeting in Helena of the new Institute on Ecosystems. Made up of approximately 200 faculty researchers from both UM and MSU, this truly interdisciplinary endeavor represents a milestone in collaboration between institutions. The Institute is part of a five-year, \$20 million grant from the National Science Foundation.

### **Campus Community: Building and Facilities, Including IT**

Physical infrastructure is a foundation for a dynamic learning environment, and this year you will see significant work on our campus. Having gained Legislative approval, we will begin construction on several buildings this year:

- The Gilkey Center for Executive Education and Entrepreneurship is the result of private philanthropy and student fees. The Center will be built just west of the Gallagher School of Business. This \$9.3 million facility

will be home to innovative programming for working professionals from disciplines across campus. The Gilkey Center will also house the UM Foundation. Lead donors were Harold and Priscilla Gilkey, residents of Spokane and long-time friends of the University.

- The Interdisciplinary Sciences Building was constructed a few years ago, but the inside was not completed. Both Indirect Cost Recovery funds and general funds will be used to pay for the build-out of more space, increasing our capacity for cutting-edge scientific research.
- The lower level of The Payne Family Native American Center will be finished out this year as the Eloise Cobell Land and Culture Institute. Eloise Cobell was a member of the Blackfoot tribe and the key figure behind the recent multibillion dollar settlement on behalf of Native people nationwide. The Institute will include a high-technology land-studies laboratory, a communications center to connect our students and faculty with indigenous people from around the world and a small theatre-style lecture hall. The project, funded entirely through donations, is out for bid right now.
- A student-athlete academic success center, attached to the Adams Center, has been designed and funded thanks to generous donors. Our student-athletes, who spend many hours each week practicing and training, will now have a dedicated facility to help them exercise their minds as well. We are proud of the academic record of our student-

athletes; 16 semesters in a row now above a 3.0 GPA, and we want to make sure that they keep their studies as a top priority.

- This year Information Technology will improve the housing of our most critical computing network equipment. The new space is an incredible upgrade, enhancing our security and is also 400% more efficient than the existing spaces.
- Finally, let's talk about Missoula College. As you know, the Legislature provided \$29 million in funding for a new building, with the requirement that we raise \$3 million in matching funds. Bill Johnston, our Lobbyist and Alumni Director, was pivotal to our success, as was Asa Hohman, whom I introduced earlier. Our original plan was to place the building on the South Campus. We are exploring an opportunity to make a more direct connection to the business community, to downtown, and to MonTEC, our business start-up incubator, through another location on East Broadway. After upcoming forums to seek feedback, we will make a final decision about the location, move into final design, and begin construction.

### **Campus Community: Student Safety and Campus Atmosphere**

In May, the United States Departments of Justice and Education completed their investigations into the adequacy of the University's responses to reports of sexual assault involving students. As a result, we have entered into

agreements which prescribe target dates for improving policies and procedures.

We have a diligent and creative team working to improve our campus as a model of safety and responsiveness. Partly in response to the Department of Justice, but with our own initiative leading the effort, we have taken these and many additional measures:

- Extensive training of students began last year with the launch of PETSA, and virtually all of our students completed the course. A second generation of PETSA will be administered to all new students this year.
- Our police officers have been engaged in extensive additional response training, as have our personnel associated in any way with Title IX.
- We have developed a revised discrimination and harassment training for all employees, which provides tools to identify, respond to, and prevent discrimination and sexual harassment. This tutorial launches Monday, and I thank employees for their role in creating a higher standard for UM.
- We have a newly rewritten student-conduct code with refined procedures, a new student-athlete conduct code, and a new Title IX policy.
- Independent of any investigation, we have written a new Emergency Operating Plan to cope with either natural or human-initiated emergencies. The Cabinet and our Public Safety Officers went through

training this summer, and we are commencing what are called “table-top exercises” to continue improving our ability to respond. In today’s world, we must be as prepared as possible to respond to emergencies and to ensure campus resiliency.

We are not satisfied to do only what is required of us. We have, and will continue, to go beyond these requirements to make our campus an even better place to work, teach and learn.

Two years ago, in a move to promote and protect the health and wellness of our campus community, our campus went Tobacco Free. While compliance is good, we can do better. I am committed to enforcing the Tobacco Free policy for the health of everyone on our campus. Our approach is one of education and voluntary compliance. You can get involved by politely asking smokers to help us comply with our no-tobacco policy.

## **Missoula Community Relations**

You may have noticed about two weeks ago an announcement that Livability.com recognized Missoula as among the very best college towns in America. In fact, we were ranked #7. While such surveys often raise questions about validity, the fact is we enjoy a tremendously supportive and exciting community as our host. On any given weekend or evening, in addition to the array of activities on campus, our community provides

sporting events, cultural activities, entertainment, recreation, and interesting people who enrich our lives.

The recent International Choral Festival provides a terrific example; the community hosted 16 choruses from around the world, singing on our campus in a truly inspiring program.

Later this afternoon, the SpectrUM Science Center will celebrate the grand opening of their new downtown location. The Center will be housed on Front Street in a prime location, bringing to community members of all ages the wonders of science through hands-on interactive displays and activities. Holly Truitt, Director of the Center, was recently recognized with a Noyce Fellowship for her work with SpectrUM.

In December, then ASUM President Zach Brown, Mayor John Engen, and I signed the Quality of Life Initiative, aimed at taking tangible steps to enhance our university-community relations even more. The initiative focuses on housing, transportation, and safety.

Let me give you an example of progress. ASUM runs an impressive bus service, providing over 425,000 rides last year. In addition to offering transportation, it gives students the opportunity to be involved in running a business. It does come with occasional friction – some of the buses are old

and noisy by today's standards. I am delighted to tell you that in response to community concerns, ASUM is bringing one brand-new bus on line right now and has another on order for delivery this time next year. They have responded responsibly and enthusiastically to community concerns.

In yet another collaboration with the Missoula Community, our Phyllis J. Washington College of Education and Human Sciences partnered with the Missoula County Public Schools and the Washington Foundation to launch "Shape P-20," a program aimed at professional development of teachers with the goal of preparing students for the transition to college as a critical part of today's educational needs.

## **Athletics**

Athletics is an important part of this campus and the state of Montana. Grizzly Athletics last year won conference championships in women's soccer, men's basketball, and women's basketball. UM was one of just six schools in the country to have both the men's and women's basketball teams earn an automatic berth to the NCAA tournament.

We will add women's softball starting with the 2014-15 academic year, and the interest from around the state and the country has been tremendous. Nearly 100 people applied for the head coaching position. Athletic Director Kent Haslam has been receiving scores of inquiries from potential softball

players already.

The NCAA investigation is complete, and we now know our status and so I don't need to go into any further detail here. Athletic department staff, coaches, and student-athletes have fully embraced the three-fold mission laid out for athletics: 1) academic success; 2) athletic excellence; and 3) community service.

Fall sports are underway, and we are looking forward to Griz Nation demonstrating its passionate support in just a week as the Grizzlies take on Appalachian State.

## **Financial Status**

Enrollment is tracking in line with the budget projections at this point so the budget figures from last spring are still solid. The focus now will be looking forward to 2015 and building a balanced budget that provides resources for strategic initiatives that will move the university forward.

Our budget is enrollment dependent, so we have taken several measures to improve our enrollment figures. We contracted with a company, Ruffalo-Cody, that specializes in extending the recruiting effectiveness of universities by providing strategically increased contacts with prospective students. We also initiated a detailed review of our financial aid strategies to ensure that

we are optimizing our scholarships and tuition waivers.

We have revamped our web presence and our digital outreach for communicating with prospects and with the public. We are increasing our outdoor, TV, and newspaper advertising. The collegiate world has gotten considerably more competitive, and frankly, we have some catching up to do.

Meanwhile, the class of accepted students for this fall continues to increase steadily in academic strength with GPA, ACT, and SAT scores significantly above last year's class, which was above the previous year's class. 56% of admitted students for fall 2013 graduated in the top 25% of their high school class, compared to 50% of fall 2012. In addition, this class is expected to have over 600 international students, representing over 70 countries.

## **Communications**

If we have learned nothing else recently, it has been the importance of communication. When I began as President, I pledged that we would emphasize communication. We have done so, but we need to continue building mechanisms to support that.

The best way for each of you to keep up with the latest news about the University is to go to our website every day. New story tiles – with photographs – are posted frequently, and the lead picture changes at least

weekly. You can send us your good news for the home page by emailing it to [thrive@umontana.edu](mailto:thrive@umontana.edu). You can also keep up with UM by following us on Facebook. Here's a sign of that momentum: in January we had 16,000 Facebook followers; today, we have over 71,000.

Also this year:

- You'll continue to receive ForUM via email every Monday with campus news.
- The first Tuesday of the month, you're invited to attend University Council meetings, the primary mechanism for conversations with representatives of our shared governance system. The Council has members from student government, staff senate, faculty senate, faculty union, administration, and community. Meetings – which will be publicized – are open to all and I encourage you to participate.
- You'll receive the President's Update email, which is a message that is emailed to the entire campus community, along with alumni and supporters of UM, each month. The August message is going out on Monday and will be a summary of my remarks today.
- The Provost and I plan to visit each college or school individually throughout the year. Other members of the Cabinet will be available as well.
- I'll provide you with a mid-year update in early February and I will continue to hold monthly office hours.

I ask that you take advantage of these mechanisms not just to listen but also to offer feedback and ideas. A robust shared governance system depends upon active participation.

## **Investing in Student Success**

At a special meeting in July, the UM Foundation Board of Trustees voted to launch a major, highly-focused, fund-raising effort. It is called *Investing in Student Success*, and speaks to the critical need for us to recruit, nurture, and graduate more students who will provide the intellectual capital of Montana and our nation. *Investing in Student Success* has three major components:

1. A program of undergraduate scholarships and graduate fellowships designed to attract the best and brightest to UM; students who are otherwise capable but who need financial assistance, students who prepare by taking a college-preparatory curriculum in high school, and students who excel in disciplinary-specific areas
2. The campaign also supports programmatic bolstering of two university-wide programs, the Global Leadership Initiative and the Davidson Honors College
3. And finally, the campaign supports facilities directed at student-success, namely the Learning Commons of the Mansfield Library and a combined weight-room/locker room facility for athletics.

All told, this ambitious fundraising effort will more than double our current annual giving rate while providing much-needed involvement of philanthropy in student success efforts. Just yesterday, President Obama announced his plan to make college more affordable, so raising funds for student success is right in-line with our national agenda. I want to thank Mike McDonough, Chair of the Foundation Board of Trustees, for his leadership in bringing this effort to the point of initiation, and Shane Giese, who immediately and energetically embraced this effort. Our Alumni Association, chaired by Brandon Byars of Portland, will play a crucial role as well.

## **Closing**

This is a university whose greatness is derived directly from the people who work and learn here: the staff members who responded to the scholarship challenge by organizing the Diploma Dash, the Dean who created a scholarship to help doctoral students pay their program fees, the students who took on the leadership task of improving relations with the community, the faculty members who in addition to their work in the classroom and in research are also known for their high level of community engagement, and the friends and alumni who continually come forward in support of the University through participation in cultural events and through their financial support.

We have the responsibility to become a great university, and we have the opportunity before us. Now is our time. Let's build for the future, full speed ahead!