

# Academic Affairs

Newsletter



## A Brief Summer Update

This week's newsletter includes a leadership announcement for the College of Science, an update to CourseLeaf's curriculum proposal forms, and a hands-on Canvas workshop coming up in July.

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### CourseLeaf Curriculum Forms Getting a Refresh

Updates to CourseLeaf's curriculum proposal forms are coming soon. The revisions are designed to make the proposal process more intuitive, reduce confusion, and provide clearer guidance throughout, improvements that benefit anyone who works with curriculum proposals.

As the updated forms roll out, the Faculty Senate Office welcomes feedback from anyone using the updated forms. Whether you notice areas of confusion, have suggestions for improvement, or want to share what is working well, your input will help refine the workflow for everyone.

Questions and feedback can be sent to the Faculty Senate Office at [facultySenate@umontana.edu](mailto:facultySenate@umontana.edu).

[CourseLeaf Curriculum webpage](#)

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# NEWS



## **Dr. Leslie Rissler Appointed Dean of the College of Science**

The Office of the Provost is pleased to announce that Dr. Leslie Rissler has been appointed as the inaugural Dean of the College of Science. Dr. Rissler will assume this role on August 1, 2026.

Dr. Rissler joins the University of Montana from the National Science Foundation (NSF), where she currently serves as Section Head for Living Systems and has held multiple senior leadership positions, including Acting Division Director and Acting Deputy Division Director in the Division of Environmental Biology. Throughout her tenure at NSF, she has overseen research portfolios exceeding \$100 million annually, guided national research priorities, and led initiatives that strengthen research capacity, support faculty development, and advance safe and inclusive research environments.

Prior to joining NSF, Dr. Rissler served on the faculty of the University of Alabama, where she rose to the rank of Professor of Biological Sciences. An integrative biologist whose research spans ecology, evolution, conservation biology, and

biodiversity science, she founded interdisciplinary academic programs, mentored students and faculty across career stages, and led efforts to strengthen public engagement with science.

Dr. Rissler brings extensive experience at the intersection of scientific research, higher education leadership, and federal research policy. Her work has focused on helping institutions build research capacity, foster interdisciplinary collaboration, and position themselves for success within an evolving national research landscape. She is widely recognized for her leadership in supporting faculty research, broadening participation in STEM, and advancing excellence in science.

An elected Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, Dr. Rissler has received numerous honors recognizing her contributions to scientific leadership, public engagement, and inclusive excellence. She holds a bachelor's degree from Indiana State University, a master's degree from Utah State University, and a doctorate from the University of Virginia. She completed postdoctoral training at the University of California, Berkeley.

Of her appointment, Dr. Rissler shared:

“I am honored to join the University of Montana and serve as the founding Dean of the College of Science. Science is one of humanity’s great endeavors because it invites us to approach the mysteries that surround us with curiosity, humility, and rigor. Few places invite scientific inquiry as naturally as Montana. Its extraordinary landscapes, waters, and communities provide a living laboratory for scientific discovery.

What excites me most is the opportunity to work alongside the many people who are invested in the future of the university because we have a rare opportunity to build a distinctive and nationally visible College of Science. Science is inherently collaborative, and the most important questions we face increasingly require us to build bridges among fields, perspectives, and people. I look forward to building on UM’s remarkable strengths to create new opportunities for discovery, student success, and public impact.”

Please join us in welcoming Dr. Rissler to the University of Montana.

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# EVENTS



[Learn More on GrizHub](#)

[Register on the LEAD Bookings page](#)

## **LEAD Training: Canvas Course Building Workshop** **10 a.m. - 12 p.m., Wednesday, July 8, LA/Eck Hall 103B**

This in-person workshop will give you hands-on experience building and updating your course(s) in Canvas. The workshop will begin with 30 to 45 minutes of instruction followed by Q&A and one-on-one support with an instructional designer there to provide guidance and answer individual questions. Please bring own device for course development. Workshop enrollment will be limited to 10 participants. Please register at least 1 hour in advance on the LEAD Bookings page.



# SUBMISSIONS

Use the AA Newsletter Submission Form button below to share your content with the Academic Affairs sector. To be considered for next Monday's newsletter, submissions need to be received by Friday at 10:00 AM.

## AA Newsletter Submission Form

University of Montana, 32 Campus Drive, Missoula, MT 59812

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