

FY26

Office of Research and Creative Scholarship

Annual Playbook



Our Approach

The Office of Research and Creative Scholarship (ORCS) at the University of Montana is proud to present a strategic plan shaped through meaningful collaboration with our campus community. This plan reflects a shared commitment to advancing research, scholarship, and creative work across disciplines, and to fostering an environment where innovation and discovery thrive.

Our approach to developing this strategy was rooted in active listening and inclusive engagement. We conducted surveys, held one-on-one meetings with key stakeholders, and facilitated open listening sessions to better understand the needs, aspirations, and challenges faced by our researchers and scholars. These conversations illuminated opportunities to strengthen communication, enhance resource sharing, and refine our systems to better support proposal development, research compliance, and grants management.

Guided by these insights—and informed by our deep understanding of ORCS’s strengths, the unique context of our campus, and the broader landscape of research opportunities and challenges—we crafted a purpose-driven vision and mission to steer our work into the future.

To bring this vision to life, we identified five strategic objectives, each anchored by a set of actionable projects. We are committed to seeing these initiatives through, and have established a robust internal framework to support implementation, foster collaboration, and ensure accountability. This includes engaging project leads, coordinating efforts across teams, and proactively addressing barriers and resource needs.

This plan is more than a roadmap—it is a call to action. It reflects our belief in the transformative power of research and creative scholarship, and our dedication to empowering the University of Montana community to reach new heights of excellence and impact.



Vision

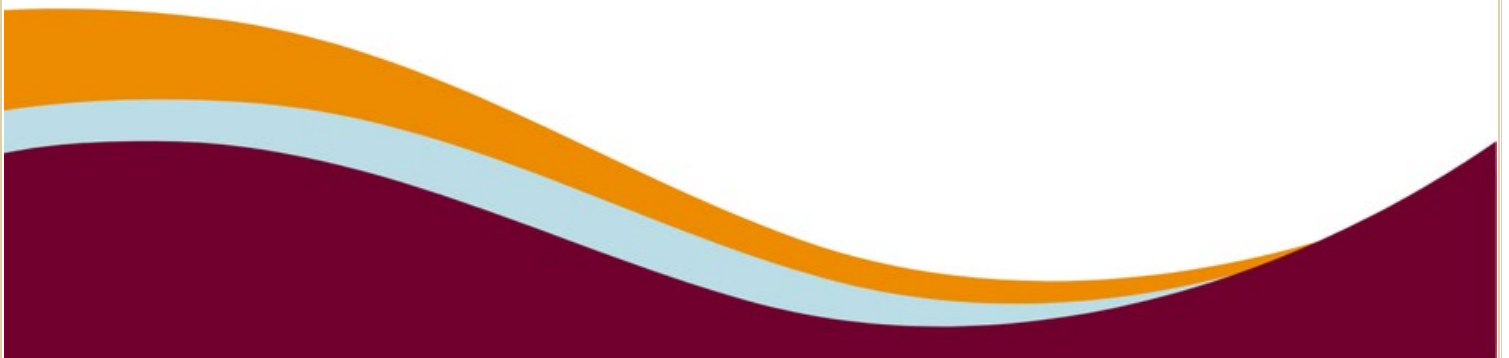
To be the leader of place-based, community-engaged research and creative scholarship in the region, known for local and global innovation and impact.

Mission

Our mission is to foster a dynamic and collaborative research environment that drives innovation, economic growth, community wellbeing, and prosperity for Montana and beyond. We are committed to:

1. Providing robust support to our faculty, staff, graduate students, and partners, fostering a culture of collaboration and mutual respect.
2. Ensuring open communication within our organization and with external stakeholders to disseminate the impact of UM's research and creative scholarship.
3. Supporting graduate student recruitment and retention and providing robust student research experiences.
4. Promoting the health and wellbeing of Montanans through partnerships that enhance the impact and reach of our research and creative work, while also aiming to become the primary health education institution in Montana.
5. Building partnerships and leveraging economic and workforce development initiatives in response to community, state, and global needs.

Together, we will build a research identity that is recognized for its innovation, expertise, and contributions to the wellbeing of the communities where we live and work.



Objective 1

Provide robust research support through effective systems, processes, and services

Project 1.1

Develop and implement a strategy to improve systems, processes, and services in the Office of Sponsored Programs (OSP)

Purpose: To improve the systems, processes, and technology OSP in order to build trust with campus partners, provide responsive services, improve staff wellbeing, and promote independence among PIs & DRAs.


Project Leads: Director of the Office of Sponsored Programs; Director of Research Development, Strategy

Project 1.2

Develop and implement a strategy to improve systems, processes, and services in the Office of Research Compliance and Tech Transfer (ORCTT)

Purpose: To enhance the support of ORCTT through targeted efforts to increase communication, enhance training, and ensure compliance with federal cybersecurity regulations.

Project Leads: Associate VP of ORCTT, Assistant VP of ORCTT



Objective 2

Ensure effective communication with campus and external partners

Project 2.1

Advance research impact through open, responsive, and researcher- and public-centered communication

Purpose: The purpose of this project is to enhance the visibility, accessibility, and relevance of research and creative scholarship at the University of Montana by developing communication strategies that are open, responsive, and centered on the needs of both researchers and the public. By strengthening two-way communication practices, the project aims to support UM's research mission, foster greater trust and engagement across diverse audiences, and ensure that the outcomes of research are shared, understood, and appreciated beyond the academy.

Project Leads: Associate Director of Research Development, Communications

Project 2.2

Sustain and enhance UM's biodiversity research collections

Purpose: To achieve sustainability and capacity for the Philip L. Wright Zoological Museum, the Herbarium, and the Paleontology Center to flourish as hubs for student experiential learning, research, and public engagement.

Project Leads: Broader Impacts Group Director

Project 2.3

Leverage UM Impact platform

Purpose: To support collaboration and showcase research and creative activity through improved awareness and use of the UM Impact research information management system.

Project Lead: Research Information Management System Administrator



Objective 3

Increase graduate and professional student enrollment and enhance student experiences

Project 3.1

Refine strategic approach to graduate enrollment

Purpose: Recognizing the importance of graduate students to enrollment at UM and the overall research enterprise, this project aims to improve outreach and retention strategies while examine graduate education and research experiences to optimize our support and preparation of graduate students.

Project Leads: Associate Vice President for Research and Associate Dean of the Graduate School

Project 3.2

Enhance the graduate student experience

Purpose: To support graduate student experiences to cultivate the talent and ability of a new generation of scholars and professionals, ultimately making UM's graduate programs national models for supportive fieldwork, integrated mentoring, and robust professional development programs.

Project Leads: Associate Vice President for Research and Associate Dean of the Graduate School

Project 3.3

Enhance undergraduate research experiences

Purpose: To nurture opportunities for undergraduate students interested in research and creative projects from across campus, showing the breadth and depth of academic interests and their importance and relevance for various communities.

Project Leads: Office of Undergraduate Research Director



Objective 4

Support the wellbeing of Montana and beyond through research and creative work

Project 4.1

Engage with Providence in the RESOLVE Collaborative

Purpose: Providence and the University of Montana are working together to create a rural health collaborative called RESOLVE. The aim of RESOLVE is to: (1) Improve health outcomes of rural health populations; (2) advance care practices & protocols with rural health partners; (3) improve telehealth and remote care access for rural communities and their providers; and (4) support vulnerable communities through advocacy of rural policies and investment.

Project Leads: RESOLVE UM Executive Sponsor

Project 4.2

Support and elevate the work of creative scholars

Purpose: To foster opportunities for visibility, collaboration, and community engagement that contribute to the cultural and social wellbeing of our state and region.

Project Leads: Director & Associate Director of Research Development, Director of UM Press



Objective 5

Build external partnerships through research and economic/workforce development

Project 5.1

Manage a portfolio of engagement strategies with state, federal, and private partners

Purpose: Develop an engagement strategy with state, federal, and private partners to enhance UM excellence in research.

Project Leads: Director of the Office for Health Research Partnerships, Assistant VP for Defense Engagement, Associate Vice President for Research

Project 5.2

Research to Impact (R2I)

Purpose: To amplify the reach and impact of innovation by empowering faculty, students, and partners to transform research and creative work into real-world solutions—through robust support systems, collaborative partnerships, and clear pathways that move ideas from beyond the lab, studio, or classroom to create a real-world impact.

Project Leads: Director of Innovation and Entrepreneurship Programs, Associate Vice President for Economic Development



To learn more about the work of the Office of Research & Creative Scholarship, visit our web page at

<https://www.umt.edu/research/default.php>.

