

MONTANA KAIMIN

**RESCINDING THE
ROADLESS RULE**

**THE POTENTIAL ROLLBACK OF
PUBLIC LAND PROTECTIONS**

**STORY BY MADELYNN PANDIS
PHOTOS BY JACKSON MAILEY**



7 TROUBLED GRANTS

12 SAX MAN

14 CREATIVE COMBAT

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The Montana Kaimin is a weekly independent student newspaper at the University of Montana. The Kaimin office and the University of Montana are located on land originally inhabited by the Salish People. Kaimin is a derivative of a Salish language word, "Qe'ymin," that is pronounced kay-MEEN and means "book," "message" or "paper that brings news."

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POLITICAL CARTOON

"ANTIFA-LED HELLFIRE"



BARRETT C
2025

Bad Bunny belongs at the Super Bowl

The National Football League announced a little over two weeks ago that Bad Bunny is set to perform for the 2026 Super Bowl halftime show, and to say it's been met with opposition from the Make America Great Again crowd is an understatement.

Bad Bunny, also known as Benito Antonio Martinez Ocasio, was born in 1994 in Vega Baja, Puerto Rico. Many against his upcoming performance at the halftime show say the fact that Bad Bunny was born in Puerto Rico is a reason why he shouldn't perform.

"He's not an American artist," said Fox News host Tomi Lahren.

Turning Point USA, the conservative nonprofit organization created by Charlie Kirk, also just announced on X its counterproduction, calling it "The All-American Halftime Show." Well, Puerto Rico is a U.S. territory, making Bad Bunny not only an all-American artist, but also a U.S. citizen.

President Donald Trump's secretary of Homeland Security, Kristi Noem, stated in a podcast, "The Benny Show," that U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, also known as ICE, agents will "be all over" the event. She went on to say the only people who should come to the Super Bowl are "law-abiding Americans who love this country."

Trump's former campaign manager, Corey Lewandowski, appeared on the same podcast and warned that ICE agents will be present. "There is nowhere you can provide safe haven to people who are in this country illegally. Not the Super Bowl and nowhere else. We will find you and apprehend you and put you in a detention facility and deport you. Know that is a very real situation under this administration, which is contrary to how it used to be," Lewandowski said.

Essentially, MAGA officials are assuming that all of Bad Bunny's fans are

undocumented immigrants who need to be "taken care of."

What's with all the negative reactions? Well, honestly? It's racism.

In response, Bad Bunny joked about the controversy on his most recent appearance as a Saturday Night Live host. "I think everyone is happy about it, even Fox News," he said.

2026's Super Bowl will mark the 7th year the halftime show has been managed by Jay-Z's entertainment company, Roc Nation. Essentially, Jay-Z has been picking the lineup for the past six years and I think it's no coincidence that every year a person of color has performed.

The halftime show is arguably America's biggest stage. In fact, according to Deadline, the second highest-rated broadcast in American television history was last year's Super Bowl at 123.4 million viewers. To put it in perspective, the most-watched American television broadcast is the Apollo moon landing.

During last year's halftime show, Kendrick Lamar performed a set that brought attention to America's rising authoritarianism with his lyrics and imagery. Trump was even in the audience while Lamar's backup dancers formed an American flag that split in half.

With the rise of ICE raids across the nation and what it means to be an American

citizen on unsteady ground in the United States, it's a deliberate choice to make a Spanish-speaking artist the headliner.

I believe it's the right choice. We're in really terrifying times. People who have immigrated here to achieve the American dream are getting it ripped right out under their feet, but that doesn't mean we have to hide. Bad Bunny intentionally didn't schedule any tour stops in the United States for fear of ICE raids.

As a second-generation immigrant, I'm more proud than ever to say I'm Filipino American. I've seen the sacrifice my family has made to come here to give me a better life. They're the whole reason I even get the privilege to pursue a degree. I'm never going to hide that fact.

Our country truly is a melting pot and I'm tired of MAGA talking heads telling us it's not.

Despite the opposition, now is the time to embrace our diversity. Now is the time to dance, eat and experience other cultures that keep our country alive, including at the Super Bowl. Honestly, I'll be watching the Super Bowl just for Bad Bunny.

- Kairi Lising, arts and culture editor

Like it? Hate it? Let us know.
Email us your opinions at
elle.daniel@umontana.edu

Flipping fun



The Hellgate High School cheer team launches a teammate into the air on the streets of Higgins Ave. for a basket toss during the annual homecoming parade on Oct. 11. Hellgate High School was one of 140 floats in the parade. **WILL LADYMAN | MONTANA KAIMIN**

SUDOKU

Difficulty: Medium

Edited by Margie E. Burke

HOW TO SOLVE:

Each row must contain the numbers 1 to 9; each column must contain the numbers 1 to 9; and each set of 3 by 3 boxes must contain the numbers 1 to 9.

Answer to Previous Sudoku:

2	8	5	6	4	7	1	3	9
3	6	9	5	2	1	7	8	4
4	7	1	3	8	9	5	2	6
6	4	7	2	3	8	9	5	1
9	1	2	7	6	5	3	4	8
8	5	3	1	9	4	2	6	7
7	2	8	9	5	6	4	1	3
5	9	4	8	1	3	6	7	2
1	3	6	4	7	2	8	9	5

					9			4
	6							
9		2			1		5	6
		4					2	
		5		8	7			
7	2		3		5			9
4						7		2
					4		6	
	3	7	9	6			4	

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In local news...

ABBY WILLIAMS | NEWS REPORTER
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HATE CRIME SUSPECT RECEIVES FELONY CHARGE

Twenty-nine-year-old Michael Cain was arrested and charged with felony malicious intimidation and harassment relating to civil or human rights. The victim was found bleeding from the face after being assaulted, according to KPAX news.

When officers found the victim at the 1100 block of West Broadway, he gave a description that matched Cain.

"Evidence obtained by officers on scene substantiated probable cause that Cain had assaulted the victim and that the assault had been motivated by the victim's religious, ethnic or cultural [identity] of belonging to the Jewish religious community," a news release stated.

Anyone with information about the assault is asked to contact the Missoula Police Department at (406) 552-6300.

EXTENSION ON PROJECT NEEDED DUE TO WATER ALLOTMENTS

Issues over water in the planned Lower Miller Creek subdivision will have to be addressed as the developer moves forward with early phases of the project. This would include a transfer of water rights to the city and a notice to each plot of land, regarding water.

The Riverfront Trails Subdivision is proposed on 92 acres off Old Bitterroot and Lower Mill Creek roads. Nearly 44 acres will be protected as open space and provide public access to the river.

The Missoula City Council approved the Riverfront Trails Subdivision in four phases in 2022. The developer has already met the filing deadline for phase one and is now seeking an extension for phases two and three, pushing them out to 2028 and 2030.

"The review can't deny any particular phase, but it can add new conditions if circumstances have changed," Missoula city planner Tara Porcari said to KPAX. "We did receive some information back from Public Works about water capacity

issues and water rights. That led to a few new recommended conditions of approval."

Given the concerns around water, the city is likely to add new conditions to the project through the development agreement with the builder.

"I understand the nervousness about water rights in the area," said Andy Schultz, city engineer for utilities. "But the reality is, the pumping will actually occur at our well fields, which are several miles south of any of the adjoining properties."

NEW ZONING PLAN FOR CITY

The city of Missoula released a proposed zoning map and framework for public review, a couple of months ahead of council review in December.

The update to draft zoning codes follows the adoption of Our Missoula 2045 Land Use Plan, which was put in place to guide city growth and development over the next 20 years. This plan is estimated to support 37,000 people by the year 2045, according to the Montana Free Press.

"Residential opportunities are distributed through mapping of new residential and mixed use districts, so upzoning is not concentrated in vulnerable areas," said Cassie Tripard, Missoula city land use supervisor.

The new code incorporates changes that are required by the state. It allows small-scale commercial development in all residential areas, something the community supported during the planning process. Eran Pehan, director of the city's community planning, development and innovation department said to Montana Free Press.

The current zoning code includes 38 zoning districts, 21 overlays and 95 planned-unit development districts while the new framework outlines 22 new zoning districts.

The residential plan organizes districts into rural, limited urban and urban, with more housing units permitted in the limited urban and urban districts.



Coming this week on the Kaimin Cast ...

"The UM Woodsman Team: More than a performance sport."

One of the greatest challenges for the woodsman team is the learning curve to fell trees. Most students do not have enough time to learn everything, already having 15 credit hours, a part-time job, and other club events. The club allows students to participate as they wish to grants students flexibility.

23-year-old Alumni and former Woodsman Team member, Henry Norwood said, "The biggest learning curve is discipline. Not everyone has developed that skill of training by the time they reach college, nor have they competed in a sport on a team. Being disciplined in one's approach to learning skills and training the sport yields far greater results than those who join a club or team for the social aspect."

This has not always been the case for the team. Jared Landin said the group struggled multiple years ago with morals and intentions. Previously, the team was focused more on the performance aspect of competitions, but now the team is rebuilding its focus on education, teamwork, and stewardship.

-Samuel Armstrong-DuBois,
audio reporter



New Kaimin Cast episode out this week. Stay tuned. Scan for the latest



NATIONAL GUARD IN TENNESSEE

The National Guard has started patrolling Tennessee's second biggest city. This comes after the National Guard in Illinois engaged only in planning and training, after a judge blocked their deployment to Chicago.

The guards in Tennessee were seen at the Bass Pro Shop monument in Memphis, a mile away from where the Memphis Grizzlies play. They were also spotted at a tourist welcome center on the Mississippi River, posing and taking pictures with tourists.

Back in Illinois, Democratic U.S. Sens. Dick Durbin and Tammy Duckworth were barred from visiting an immigration enforcement building near Chicago. "What are you afraid of?" Duckworth asked reporters, referring to the government. "You don't hide, you don't run away when you're proud of what you're doing."

It was unclear how many Guard members were present or if there were more expected to arrive. Republican Gov. Bill Lee said troops would not make arrests and would not be armed.

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION LAYOFFS

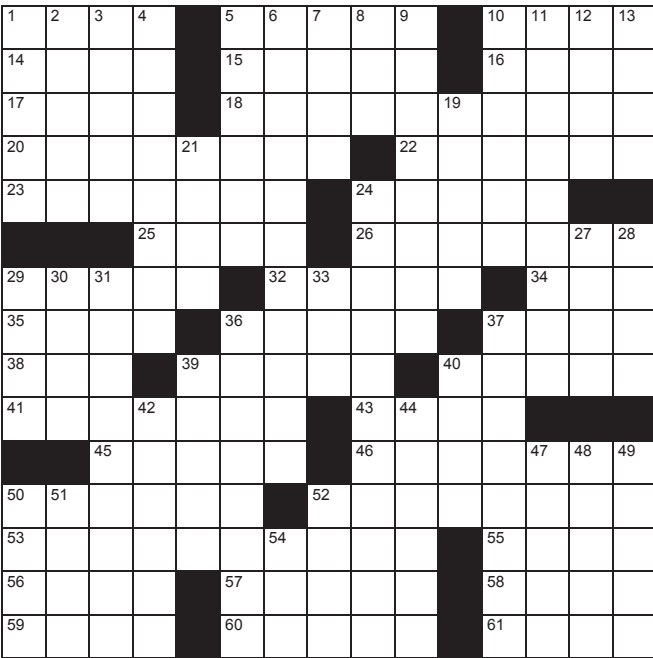
Due to the government shutdown, the Department of Education has laid off the majority of its staff in the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services.

Separately, employees from the college access program, TRIO, were also laid off, said Rachel Gittleman, the president of the American Federation of Government Employees Local 252.

The union has challenged these firings in court, and Gittleman said the lay offs are doubling down "on the harm to K-12 students across the country."

In a Friday court filing, the Justice Department said more than 460 Education Department employees had been laid off, cutting roughly a fifth of the agency's already-hamstrung workforce.

"The system is designed to happen at the school level, with oversight from the district, with oversight from the state, and then with oversight from the federal level," said Glenna Wright-Gallo, who served as assistant secretary in the office from 2023 to 2025. "Now we're losing that checks and balances system."



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ACROSS

- 1 For fear that

5 Henhouse sounds

10 Long narrative

14 Jazzy Fitzgerald

15 The "A" in "CAT scan"

16 Farm machine

17 Presidential office

18 Fancy flower pot

20 Cartier offering

22 Ran smoothly

23 Exasperating

24 Comic strip sound

25 Icy coating

26 Some bank workers

29 Starter for 007's car?

32 Chicago team

34 Cowboys QB Prescott

35 Tub foot, sometimes

36 Young salmon

37 Quartet member

38 Evil spell

39 Pocket breads

40 "Twilight" writer Stephenie

41 Large building

43 Ski lift type

45 Clinton cat name

46 Shortages in containers

50 Kids series, "PAW ____"

52 Marital infidelity

53 Precision

55 Privy to

56 Dial follower
- 57 Students take them

58 Estimator's phrase

59 Partner of odds

60 Disgusting, slangily

61 Must-have

DOWN

- 1 "Madam Secretary" actress

2 Baby eel

3 Give in a rope

4 "The View", e.g.

5 Kind of party

6 Makes worse

7 Dublin's home

8 Paw part

9 Bedroom pair

10 Perfect pass

11 In a watchful way

12 Horror film staple

13 Wowed

19 Cancels

21 "Crazy" bird
- 24 Like an Oscars gala

27 Word with birth or interest

28 Heath alternative

29 Dull pain

30 Winter ride

31 Airport area

33 Period of time

36 Preparing, as kimchi

37 Lawn improvement process

39 Lace edging

40 Shopping mecca

42 Troops

44 Like B.B. King's music

47 Horror or sci-fi, e.g.

48 Notched, as a leaf

49 Bishops' body

50 Ribisi series, "Sneaky ____"

51 Nerve fiber

52 Insurable item

54 Rocky peak

Answers to Previous Crossword:

S	O	S	A		P	R	E	S	S		F	A	W	N
I	R	I	S		R	A	M	I	E		A	L	E	E
L	A	D	S		O	V	E	R	A	C	T	I	V	E
O	L	E	A	S	T	E	R		S	U	T	T	E	R
		B	Y	T	E		S	T	O	R	Y			
T	R	Y		A	C	C	O	U	N	T	A	N	T	S
R	E	S	U	L	T	A	N	T			C	A	R	E
I	C	I	N	E	S	S		O	R	B	I	T	E	D
P	A	D	S			T	H	R	E	A	D	I	N	G
S	P	E	C	I	A	L	I	S	T	S		O	D	E
		A	C	R	E	S		A	E	O	N			
O	R	A	T	O	R		S	P	I	L	L	W	A	Y
T	E	C	H	N	I	C	I	A	N		D	I	N	E
I	S	L	E	V	I	N	C	E	E	D	N	A		
S	T	U	D	E	D	G	E	R		N	E	A	R	

Cheese-o-scope

BEE REISWIG | ARTS & CULTURE REPORTER

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If you don't like cheese, you're either lying or you haven't eaten shredded cheese while standing in front of the microwave waiting for your poverty nachos to get that perfect crisp to them. Whether shredded, spreaded or sliced, what cheese are you?

LIBRA (SEP. 23-OCT. 22): Ricotta cheese can be deliciously savory served with salad and lasagna, or delicately sweet in a cheesecake. I've even seen recipes for lemon ricotta pancakes, Libra! You get along with just about anyone or anything, adapting to the situation. That might make you a lil' boring sometimes, but there's nothing wrong with a gentle classic.

SCORPIO (OCT. 23-NOV. 21): Listen, cottage cheese might be... unique, to say the least, but it's found in just about everything these days. And sometimes it's good! But you can overpower others, Scorpio. Take a moment and make sure you're in the right place.

SAGITTARIUS (NOV. 22-DEC. 21): You might stick to savory, but swiss likes to travel all around to veggies, meats and even seafood. I know you love that freedom, Sag. But man, those holes can make it hard to perfect the bread-meat-lettuce-cheese ratio on my sandwich. Get your holes together!

CAPRICORN (DEC. 22-JAN. 19): You're kind of

niche, Capricorn, in that brie cheese is mostly baked in some way. You know your job and you do it well. Served with something fruity or nutty to balance out your buttery flavor, you just need some friends around you to warm up. You do come off a little pretentious though — I mean, who really uses brie cheese for a casual hangout?

AQUARIUS (JAN. 20-FEB. 18): Not everyone likes goat cheese, but you know exactly who you are. Strong, pungent and bright, you can be found in salad dressing or stuffing someone — oops, something else. After all, you can take some heat, Aquarius. Just... take a step back, maybe? You kinda stink...

PISCES (FEB. 19-MARCH 20): Who doesn't love a good cream cheese, Pisces? You can be sweet in the best kind of frosting, and truthfully? You can be added to just about any random recipe. But you're arguably best on your own. A warm bagel in the morning is such

a classic. Just don't spread yourself too thin — you deserve to do more than scrape by.

ARIES (MARCH 21-APRIL 19): Aries, you love to take charge in a salad, leading all of the vegetables to the sharp flavor of feta cheese. You've got a dry sense of humor, and you are quick to warm up. Like on a pizza! But make sure you don't crumble under the pressure. It's hard being the star of the show.

TAURUS (APRIL 20-MAY 20): You know what's always reliable? Medium cheddar cheese. Pretty much no matter what, you're a safe option, Taurus. For a sandwich, quiche or the aforementioned poverty nachos, you come through. And so what if you're basic? No one hates a classic.

GEMINI (MAY 21-JUNE 20): Did you know you can make mozzarella cheese in only 30 minutes?

And there are so many cool uses. One of my favorites is with a fresh tomato, basil and balsamic vinegar. Delicious! Plus, the obvious mozzarella sticks. You can flip a switch between fried and fun and gardeny-freshness. But don't change too much, Gemini, I like you as you are.

CANCER (JUNE 21-JULY 22): Blue cheese is a little mysterious, just like you, Cancer. Those who like you REALLY do, and who cares about those who don't. A little

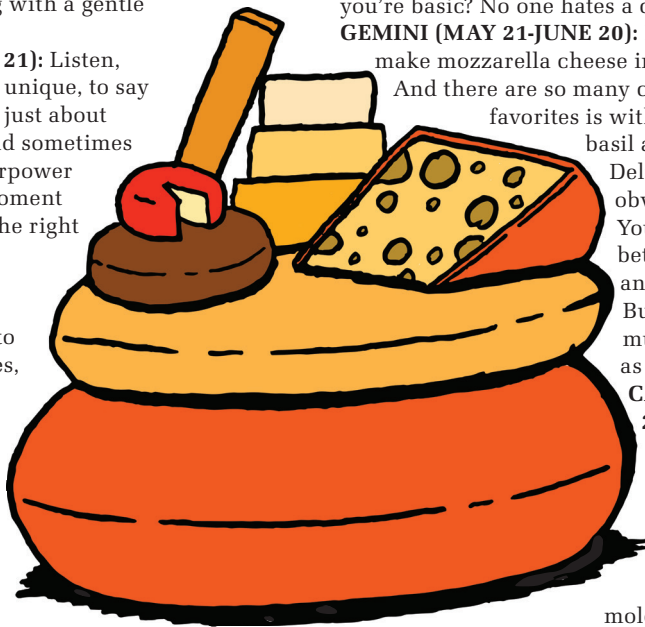
mold never hurt anybody!

People love to put you in as a little flair of flavor, even though you can

be kinda unpredictable. Who knows what's gonna happen?

LEO (JULY 23-AUG. 22): Gouda keeps getting better with age. Sound familiar, Leo? It's one of the most popular cheeses in the world. You're warm and are often found in homey dishes: pasta, grilled cheese and breakfast casseroles. So yeah, you've got a lot of yays. But don't go getting too full of yourself, you hear?

VIRGO (AUG. 23-SEP. 22): You can never go wrong with some parmesan cheese. How many people have sat, eyes gleaming with joy, as they wait to tell the Olive Garden waiter "when?" You're dependable and practical, Virgo. You might fade into the background as the pasta sauce drowns you out, but I can hear the little flakes calling. Stand up, Virgo! The people love you.



BARRETT CLEMENT | MONTANA KAIMIN

Making science sustainable: Inside the Grizzly Green Lab

CAIIA GARNER | NEWS REPORTER
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A nonprofit organization at the University of Montana is addressing pollution issues produced by labs through identifying areas of improvement for research on campus.

Grizzly Green Labs, a program created by a group of capstone seniors last spring, aims to guide labs through making sustainable changes. This includes finding ways to properly dispose of specialty chemicals.

In less than a year, Grizzly Green Labs has helped more than seven campus labs reduce their environmental impact. Sustainability research interns and UM students Declan Clark and Tristan Shamlin work one-on-one with UM's Office of Sustainability and individual labs to evaluate environmental practices.

Clark and Shamlin are now in official positions for the program after it won the 2024-2025 Capstone Award for Pioneering Campus Sustainability Program, setting it on its path as a long-term sustainability effort.

Laboratories play a vital role in scientific progress, but they are also among the most resource-intensive spaces on campus. From specialized equipment to constant energy demand, their environmental footprint can be substantial.

The University currently has at least three buildings dedicated primarily to research lab space: the Skaggs Building, McGill Hall and the Todd Building, with additional space in major science buildings that also include classrooms and offices. Compared to classrooms, offices and libraries, laboratories are distinct in their high energy and resource use.

Each lab walk-through examines details such as electricity use, freezer temperature settings, chemical disposal, recycling practices and general waste output. After establishing a baseline, Clark and Shamlin help identify ways to improve energy efficiency and explore alternative waste solutions.

They also create graphics, signage and checklists to keep sustainable habits visible. Clark and Shamlin follow up with

each lab after a few months to track progress and answer new questions.

Both Clark and Shamlin conducted lab research over the summer, deepening their passion for sustainability and understanding of their work.

"There are a lot of labs on campus that you don't end up seeing," said Clark. "They're kind of hidden away, and seeing what's going on, it's super interesting."

Clark and Shamlin said the position has given them insight into both science and stewardship.

"Getting to hear from each lab, what their individual research is, and how passionate they are about it is very cool," Shamlin said.

Until recently, UM's Office of Sustainability lacked the capacity to provide individualized, time-intensive support to every lab, according to Eva Rocke, UM's director of sustainability. That changed last spring when a group of six seniors in the Global Leadership Initiative launched Grizzly Green Labs as their capstone project, winning the capstone award and creating a sustainability program specifically tailored to research spaces.

Drawing from successful programs on other campuses helped establish a precedent for moving forward with specific labs, such as those in different science departments.

"A goal of sustainability programs on university campuses is to address the environmental footprint of the university. That's a pretty big piece of the pie that we would be ignoring if we didn't look at research and the footprint of research," Rocke said.

Rocke said she hopes this program will become a long-term resource for UM's research community. In addition to expanding the program's outreach, Grizzly Green Labs could eventually serve as a hub of sustainability information and guidance. Rocke said that labs plan to reach out to the Office of Sustainability directly to confirm whether certain plastics are recyclable and how to process them.

Clark and Shamlin already field many of those questions. Recently, Clark re-

searched how to properly dispose of empty chemical bottles from a participating lab. Their problem solving often bridges the gap between sustainability goals and the strict safety that guide lab operations.

Research labs are complex environments that require strict safety and waste management protocols. Around the world, universities rely on Green Labs programs to help maintain environmental responsibility while supporting active research.

Although Grizzly Green Labs remains smaller than programs at larger universities, the dedicated team plans to continue growing. Funding and staffing resources have posed challenges in previous years,

but Rocke believes increasing awareness and participation will sustain the effort.

"We have some committed people who are on board, who understand why we're doing it and they are happy to participate," Rocke said. "We're just going to grow from there."

Clark and Shamlin's efforts represent more than just recycling or reduced power bills. They signify a cultural shift toward conscious research.

Grizzly Green Labs is continuing to expand its outreach. Students interested in sustainability or scientific engagement can learn more or get involved by contacting UM's Office of Sustainability.



SUNRISE Saloon
Missoula's only
Country
Western Saloon!

10/16 Country Dance Lessons by Cathy Clark @7PM!

10/17-18 Cody Bartell @9PM!

10/21 Line Dancing Lessons by Cosmic Cowgirl @7PM!

10/22 BINGO @7!

10/24 Americas Liquor Down Band @9:30PM!

10/25 Outlaws & Lawmen @9PM!

Sundays, Tuesdays & Thursdays Karaoke @ 9PM!

 **1101 Strand Ave, Missoula, MT 59801**

Proposed federal budget cuts threaten financial aid programs

AIDAN GRAHAM | NEWS REPORTER
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The Trump administration proposed cuts to the Pell Grant, TRIO and other educational aid programs in May, creating concern for the University of Montana administration and the large population of students who depend on these grants.

In the latest White House budget proposal for the 2026 fiscal year, large-scale cuts were proposed toward the Department of Education. In addition to cutting programs like TRIO and GEAR UP, which are designed to assist first generation and low income students, the budget suggested removing Federal Work Study. Additional proposals include slashing the Pell Grant and the Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant.

According to current UM enrollment statistics, over 33% of the University's student body is eligible for the Pell Grant, TRIO and other programs. TRIO, a preparedness program that includes Upward Bound and Student Support Services, is offered to first generation and low income students and assists 300-400 students per year at UM. Students enrolled in this program have achieved an 80% retention rate throughout graduation, according to the UM administration.

"If TRIO is cut, we would easily see enrollment drop," said Dave Kuntz, UM's director of strategic communications.

Additionally, students attending on aid programs like the Pell Grant are more likely to complete their degree, and have stronger employment outcomes, according to a study from Columbia University.

The Pell Grant is a federal grant offered to students of exceptional financial need and is not required to be repaid. The grant was introduced as a part of the Higher Education Act in 1972. While the maximum award has been raised in prior years, cuts of this level have never been proposed.

"I am on the Pell Grant and a second scholarship. Because of that, I will graduate from UM with no additional debt to that which I acquired before transferring. Because of this, I can work a job I like and live downtown without either the debt from loans or the stress of trying to pay it off while in school," said Hannah Thornton, a senior studying English.

The slash would cut the grant by \$1,685 or 22% of its current maximum award of \$7,395. Cuts to the Pell Grant would set it at

a decade low, and according to predictions by the education department, would force dependant students to drop out.

The White House has additionally proposed cutting the entirety of the Federal Supplemental Opportunity Grant, an additional grant which supports undergraduate students in need of heavy financial assistance.

"The budget cuts would not necessarily impact me, but I am worried about it for others who are in similar situations to me," Thornton said. "I am worried for my own security because of this budget cut in case I wanted or needed to study more, but also for others who are in financial programs like Medicaid and SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program), I do think they could very well pass considering how many people in this country think these grants only help 'lazy freeloaders' and minorities."

These cuts are a part of a continued push against the Department of Education by the current presidential administration. The administration published in its "Skinny Budget Proposal" plans to cut federal spending by \$163 billion in non-defense discretionary funding. The focus on the education department has been reasoned as a push towards state control, and claims that the department has remained ineffective and stagnant due to low national test scores, according to the White House. The cuts proposed by the executive branch will not be approved in sessions by Congress until April of 2026.

"This is something we are closely monitoring, but right now we feel there is enough in place to protect Pell and TRIO," Kuntz said.

The University, while concerned, has remained positive that these programs will stay in place.

"We're pretty early in the appropriation process, obviously the government shutdown, but we at the University are keeping a close eye on this. When the appropriations process comes out for next year, we'll be keeping people informed," Kuntz said. "We're still concerned about it, but our focus is on the congressional process, not just the president. We haven't seen cuts proposed like this before. Just because it's cut in the president's budget, Congress gets the final say."

While the University and student body remain hopeful against these program cuts, the position of the current administration remains unclear. "I think the possibility of it passing is an interesting one, and I don't feel certain it would pass, but things have not

been working as they should," said Cecilia Ahrens, a senior history major attending on the Pell Grant. "Considering the current government shutdown, paired with the Republicans not agreeing on a budget, and the direct impact we would see on the working class, it shouldn't have a lot of potential to pass, especially because of how many working class

people live in Republican districts. I think if the congressional committee did vote for the proposed cuts, it could have adverse effects on their security as representatives."

The direction of these proposals have made little progress in Congress so far, and a decision will not be seen until appropriation hearings finish in April.

Pell Grant

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BARRETT CLEMENT | MONTANA KAIMIN

# RESCINDING THE ROADLESS RULE

## THE POTENTIAL ROLLBACK PUBLIC LAND PROTECTION

STORY BY MADELYNN PANDIS PHOTOS BY JACKSON MA

**A**rnold “Smoke” Elser has built not only a 60-year-long career, but an entire life spent connecting with untouched Montana wilderness. Since buying a backcountry outfitting business in 1964, Elser, who is now 91, has witnessed a plethora of public land management changes as different federal administrations came and went.

To him, some changes have been made with the best interest of wilderness in mind, but when it comes to other changes, like the potential reversal of the Roadless Rule, Elser said the opposite is true.

In August, the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture, Brooke Rollins, announced that President Donald Trump’s administration was taking the first steps toward rescinding the Roadless Rule.

By rolling back this rule, formerly protected public lands will now be open to development, with the approval of people living near these areas. The goal is to better manage wildfires and create local jobs and revenue. However, wilderness groups across the nation warn that opening up these lands will create more wildfires and will have a negative impact on wildlife and water quality by destroying intact wilderness.

An executive order Bill Clinton signed into effect in 2001, the Roadless Rule protects 58 million acres of national forest service land throughout the country from development like logging, roadbuilding and mining.

In Montana alone, the Roadless Rule shields 6.4 million acres. It’s second only to Alaska in total roadless acreage. Included in Montana’s acreage of protected lands are wilderness areas in the Crazy, Beartooth and Bridger mountains.

Even closer to Missoula, the Roadless Rule prevents development in parts of the Bitterroot Mountains, like Blodgett Canyon and Bass Creek. According to High Country News, the original proposal of the Roadless Rule accumulated over 1.6 million comments with 90% of those writing in support. It received more public comments and support than any other executive order in history.

“We need land that we can let future generations decide on better land management. They may decide to put roads, they will probably, some of them. But a lot of the real good ones, they’ll keep it. I know they will,” Elser said. “They’ll keep those roadless lands just because that’s where they can go and have solitude and be by themselves and learn about themselves and the land all in one place.”

Elser believes future generations will have a better understanding of how to manage public forests and wants to make sure that they have some land, if any, to manage. And like many others he believes that by uplifting the protections of the Roadless Rule the Trump administration will be setting up wilderness for failure.

When Rollins announced the rollover of the Roadless Rule, the public comment period reopened, and twenty-four years later, it has once again garnered an immense amount of public opinion and support, with over 400,000 submissions within the first week of the comment period.

In a June press release, Secretary Rollins called the Roadless Rule “an outdated administrative rule” that is “overly restrictive” and announced the administration’s plans to overturn it. She said the unraveling of the Roadless Rule will strengthen

the management of wildfires, create more local job opportunities and allow forest and wilderness management decisions to be made at a more local level.

However, wilderness conservation groups across the nation are crying out against these claims, claiming the rollover would actually increase wildfire risks, affect wildlife populations, pollute water sources and block public land access. Wildfire management has historically been a hot topic that foresters have learned some hard lessons from. Fires can be devastating, yet foresters say under certain circumstances, they should be allowed to continue burning.

Now the question remains of whether or not a rollback of the Roadless Rule will help prevent forest fires, or create opportunities for new ones.

### LET IT BURN:

One of the biggest fire catastrophes of the West was the Great Burn of 1910, a fire that scorched 3 million acres across the Montana-Idaho border, eventually making its way into Canada. Following events like this, and the more recent catastrophes in Palisades, California, or the 2023 blaze that destroyed Lahaina in Hawaii, wildfires now carry a stigma of destruction and death.

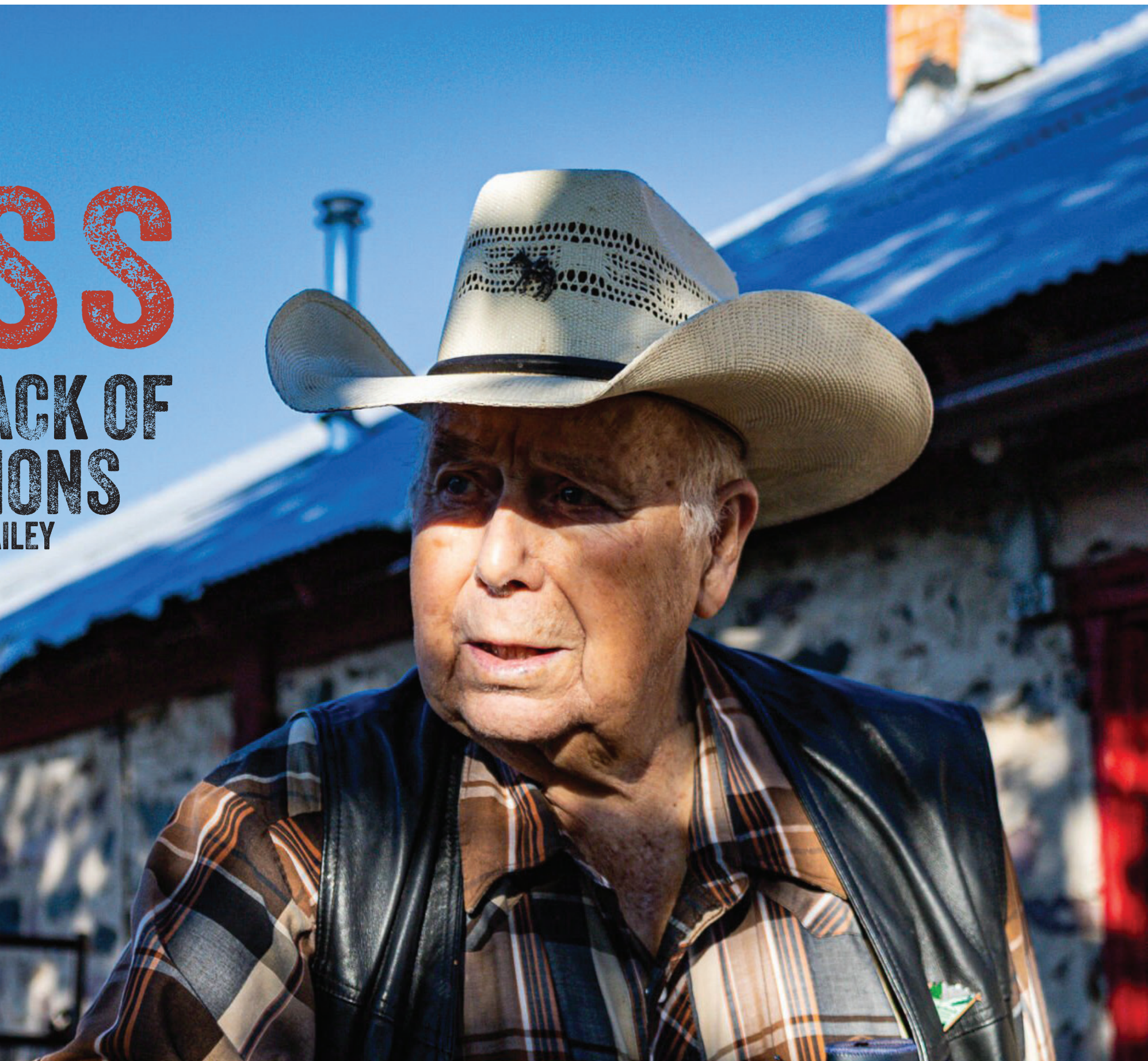
After fire disasters like the Big Burn, foresters worked to put out all fires, no matter the size or location, when maybe they should have let them burn.

“Fire is the enemy because it kills trees, it kills people, it destroys people’s livelihoods,” said Peter Kolb, a forestry extension specialist at Montana State University. “Based on all of these big cata-



Arnold “Smoke” Elser looking into the distance

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nce in front of his barn on Oct. 8.

strophic fire events at the time, it made perfect sense.”

Kolb, who has worked in the forestry industry for 29 years, said that following the Big Burn, fire was taken off the table as a forest management tool and the U.S. National Forest Service made it a goal to fight all wildfires, often following the 10 by 10 rule: All wildfires less than 10 acres should be contained before 10 a.m. the next morning. However, UM professor of forest operations Beth Dodson said that wildfires are not only healthy for wilderness, they are vital to forest management.

“What these forests are really designed to do is to have this pretty frequent, low-intensity fire. But when White man came out west, we decided that, no, fire is bad. We’re going to put it all out because it’s destructive. And we’re still dealing with that legacy now,” Dodson said.

More trees do not equate to better forest health. In fact, the opposite is often true. When forests are exposed to frequent wildfires, they burn less intensely. Forests that see wildfires are more spread out and cleared of flammable debris. This means when a wildfire comes back through, there’s little deadfall to fuel the flames, and the trees that are still alive are farther apart and aren’t as likely to spread the fire to neighboring foliage.

On the other end of the spectrum are dense forests that have potential to be devastated by fire. The trees are extremely close in proximity and surrounded by deadfall and undergrowth, which creates the perfect environment for an intense fire that is harder to control. Rollins said of the 58 million acres protected by the Roadless Rule, 28 million acres are at risk of wildfire.

The U.S. Forest Service Chief Tom Schultz announced in August that the U.S. Forest Service was initiating the process of reversing the Roadless Rule.

“For nearly 25 years, the Roadless Rule has frustrated land managers and served as a barrier to action — prohibiting road construction, which has limited wildfire suppression and active forest management,” Schultz said.

Dodson warned that building roads isn’t the simple solution that it is perceived to be. Where there are roads, fire follows: ignited by cars, fire pits or people just generally being irresponsible.

“That’s the double-edged sword. If we have road access then it’s easier to get to a fire to put it out,” she said. “But if we have roads, people use roads, people start fires. Something like 90% of all wildfires are human-caused. So it’s not the fault of the road, it’s the people who are using the road.”

Solomon Dobrowski, a professor at UM’s College of Forestry says many wildfire management plans are actually based around protecting communities in what he calls the wildland-urban interface.

The wildland-urban interface are areas where if a wildfire were to ignite, there would be concern about damage to people’s property. Dobrowski said in these areas, roads already exist and are not categorized as Inventoried Roadless Areas as defined by the government,

invalidating the Trump administration’s idea that there is a need for roads to fight wildfires.

“In areas that we’re trying to protect, actively protect, near communities already, they’re not roadless areas,” Dobrowski said. “And the notion that we need to punch roads into currently inventoried, roadless areas in order to protect communities doesn’t make sense to me either because those inventoried roadless areas tend to be far from communities.”

## CLEARING THE FORESTS:

The concept of multiple use roads is nothing new. It tends to find itself within larger discussions of where and why to build roads. The Trump administration argues that building roads in forested areas will not only help with managing fires, but will also serve as a way cities can utilize logging to boost the local

not going to be really excited about buying a lot of logs.”

Sawmills have an important responsibility in forest management by turning logged timber into usable wood products. Often forest management plans include using forest treatments, like clear cutting or thinning forests, but with vanishing saw mills, there is no way to continue paying for these treatments. Sawmills have provided opportunities for forest treatments to pay for themselves by milling and selling the timber extracted under forest management plans.

Now with nowhere to ship raw timber, forest management plans have become convoluted. Instead of doing what is best for each plot of land, forest management teams have to weigh their options.

“Sun Mountain also owns another mill in



Forestry specialist Peter Kolb shows a tree cookie in his office on Oct. 9. The tree cookie shows fire scars and the history of the tree’s growth.

economy.

In the past, logging was a booming industry, supplying business for a myriad of sawmills and providing wood products across the nation. But the logging industry has since slowed down. It has slowed down so much that Montana has seen numerous closures of local sawmills, including some of the most recent closures in Bonner, Seeley and Missoula.

“The primary driver of demand for our wood products are housing starts,” Dodson said. “And we know that economically across the U.S. right now, housing starts are down. So there’s just very little demand for the wood that’s being produced in Montana. If the sawmills can’t sell their lumber, then they’re

Livingston,” Dodson said. “They were having to truck their residuals over to the Dakota Panel in, I believe, Spearfish, South Dakota. That’s not a short trek.”

When the cost of implementing forest treatment and management plans becomes too great, both the landscape and ecosystems living within them are at risk. Kolb offers a different outlook.

Many forests in Montana have experienced the impact of bark beetles. Bark beetles kill trees by tunneling underneath the top layer of bark and into the middle. In places like the southern Bitterroot National Forest, beetle-killed forests are prevalent and with them comes excessive amounts of dry and dead, blown down timber.

Unless addressed, the fallen timber is a wildfire waiting to happen. Kolb says creating roads in roadless areas that have experienced beetle kill is a good grounds for reversing the executive order.

During beetle kill outbreaks, private landowners immediately logged their forests to prevent the further spread of bark beetles, but on federal and protected public land, foresters’ hands are tied. Kolb says the situation is a lose-lose for both loggers and foresters.

“We need to have a certain amount of timber volume to keep our mills alive,” Kolb said. “And we need to rebuild some of our mills. We don’t have the milling infrastructure in Montana to handle the capacity of the land that needs treatment. But at the same time, we have these proposed wilderness study areas that you can’t build roads into. You can’t harvest, but they’re burning up.”

## INVASIVE AND ENDANGERED:

Building roads for managing wildfire, logging or a combination of both undoubtedly has an impact on the various native plant, animal and fish species living in roadless areas.

Some areas currently protected under the Roadless Rule are areas critical to Montana’s water quality, wildlife and plant health. Not all roads in wilderness are consistently maintained, resulting in deterioration of gravel roads. Dobrowski says as neglected dirt roads crumble, they will pollute pristine water sources, as well as fish species that live there, like Montana’s endangered bull trout.

“You are going to reduce, potentially, water quality if indeed they build a bunch of roads into these places,” Dobrowski said. “Because we know from a long history of work in this space that you build roads, it’s easy to build them. It’s much more difficult to maintain them, and they end up becoming sediment sources and basically impair our waterways.”

Surrounding these waterbodies are countless plants native to Montana. When “Smoke” Elser used to pack guests into Bob Marshall, he would always point out the plants for his guests, like lupine, beargrass and Indian paintbrush.

One plant he hates to see in the backcountry is invasive Knapweed, sometimes standing up to five feet tall with a hairy purple bulb. He said building roads in roadless areas requires bringing heavy machinery into forests. As the machinery drives on the dirt, it disturbs the top soil, creating an easier environment for weeds to grow in.

“They now have equipment that can do a whole lot more damage, not only to the trees, cutting the trees and taking them out, but also just climbing through the country and tearing up the ground,” Elser said. “And the first thing that comes in there is weeds. Knapweed, all kinds of different weeds that come into that area.”

The same is true for non-commercial vehicles driving on roads built in wilderness. Wild Montana found the spread of invasive plant species is twice as likely to occur within 500 feet of roads. The spread of invasive plants poses the risk of outcompeting native plants that



Retired outfitter Packer Arnold “Smoke” Elser stands with his two horses.

ungulates like deer, elk, moose and even bison rely on for survival.

Landscapes play a huge role in wildlife corridors, and by building roads in currently roadless areas, wildlife migration may be under jeopardy. Migration is an important player in wildlife genetics, according to Dobrowski.

“When we think about the animals that move in and out of Yellowstone, like elk, these are migratory animals,” Dobrowski said. “They need to move across landscapes in order to have access to forage. They need to have access to other mates, to mix their genes so they don’t become inbred.”

Kolb often helps private land owners manage forests, and he says one of the most common things he hears from them is that they want to manage their forests so wildlife flourishes. When they tell Kolb this, he is able to help them outline how they want to manage their forests so they see that result.

Now the Trump administration says they want to give the same power to locals when it comes to deciding how to preserve or develop their public land.

### LOCAL RULINGS:

During a press release, Secretary Rollins said a motivating factor to rescind the Roadless Rule is that it will allow public land to be managed at the local level, and create more local jobs.

“I think, yes, putting roads into roadless areas is probably going to bring jobs for about six or eight, 10 years. Then they’ve destroyed all the recreation value there,” Elser said. “So I don’t think that’s a valid point at all. I think the most valid point is the fact that these wilderness study areas create jobs that last forever, as long as it’s a wilderness study area.”

Elser isn’t confident that building roads will create a sustainable job force, but for Kolb, the idea of turning over forest management decisions to the people that live in the area is an enticing argument. He says nobody knows the land like the people who live there.

“The Forest Service wasn’t designed to operate at a top down level,” Kolb said. “It was designed initially to operate so that the local forest rangers would inventory and develop their management skills with the local community in mind. That got pulled away from them back in the ‘70s where all the decisions were made at the regional level, at the D.C. level. So I’m all for bringing back to the control to the local level.”

On the other end of the debate, wilderness advocates are concerned that turning the power over to the local level would end in the privatization of public land, but Kolb dismisses this argument, saying that the sale of public lands will only happen if Congress approves it.

Nevertheless, wilderness advocates say an increase of logging, mining and resource extraction will open the door to the selling of public lands. Elser is among this group.

“What will happen is that the roads will be put in, and then it’s easy to go in and take a look at it,” Elser said. “Well, then they’re going to go and sell those pieces of land. Those will be lost to the future generations. And, you know, we aren’t making any more, so we got to protect those.”

After spending thousands upon thousands of hours in the backcountry, Elser said he realized the value of public lands does not lie in how many natural resources it has to offer. “Everybody thinks we’re setting all this land aside just for wilderness, just for people to go in and make a living like me,” he said. “But it’s not. The wilderness, the land that is set aside as wilderness, it isn’t timber value, it isn’t gold and silver, and it isn’t logs, timber, and it isn’t mining and it isn’t those kinds of values. Instead, I think it’s a different value. It’s the value of clean air and clean water.”

### THE ROAD AHEAD:

When the Trump administration announced the initiation of rescinding the Roadless Rule, they were met with an overwhelmingly negative public response.

According to a 2025 study conducted by the Pew Research Center, nearly 53% of all U.S. adults say they at least sometimes get their news from social media. Kolb said social media is a steadfast way forest management misconceptions are spread throughout the nation. Kolb warned outdoor enthusiasts to be aware of their biases towards forest management. He said just like any other politically charged topic in today’s world, people should keep an open mind.

“We need to understand how things change and how knowledge increases our understanding of a system,” Kolb said. “We know a lot more about the ecology of these systems than we did 20 years ago than we did 40 years ago. I think it’s important and we need to do that periodically and so just because the Roadless Rule is going to be rescinded doesn’t mean that it’s all going to be clear cut.”

Though Kolb calls for versatility throughout people’s personal opinions of forest management, wilderness advocates like Elser stand strong in their opinion to leave protected areas roadless.

After spending so much of his life in wilderness, Elser has a deep rooted appreciation and connection to Montana’s wilderness. Elser shares this feeling with the many Americans who voiced their opinion not to roll back the Roadless Rule. Like Elser, in many people’s eyes there is nothing more valuable than pristine intact ecosystems. Public support for the Roadless Rule remains unwavering.

“We know that the United States, the population of the United States, already endorsed roadless lands,” Elser said. “And when they endorse it, I think it should stay.”



Excluding current roadways, the USDA says that Lolo national forest is home to 758,424 acres of inventoried roadless areas.

# UM parking garage's

NICOLETTE SEIBEL | ARTS REPORTER  
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During the golden hour of Missoula autumn, Brooke Stanley, an environmental science and sustainability major, walked out of the Forestry Building after class with the weight of an upcoming presentation and midterm on her mind.

Approaching the parking garage, she recalled a mystical, ethereal sound luring her, and instantly, her mood lifted. At first, she thought it must be someone playing loud music from their car, or maybe speakers were installed within the concrete walls.

"I was like yo, did we get an upgrade or something?" she said.

Vaughn Sheridan, a communicative science and disorders major, wondered the same thing after walking by one day. "I initially thought it was speakers," Sheridan said. "Then I saw the guy and I was like, 'oh shit, that's an actual person, like playing the music.'"

So, who is the man responsible for

serenading students as they park or pass?

The answer is a man as full of music as he is personal struggle, a musician looking for an outlet to help cope with addiction.

With nothing but a speaker and a saxophone, Jim James Lee gets off his shift roofing houses, makes his way to a corner of the garage, presses play on the speaker,



James Lee plays saxophone in the parking garage on Oct 9. Lee plays in the parking garage daily. WILL LADYMAN | MONTANA KAIMIN

# mysterious musician

and lets the saxophone carry his music with every breath. James Lee has been practicing his saxophone, with indie pop music as a backdrop, for seven years. Though to him, playing in the parking garage at University of Montana is only his practicing grounds.

"I don't have an actual goal of what I want to do, and I hope I'm not annoying anybody too badly," he said.

For James Lee, the parking garage by Mount Sentinel is a perfect place to practice. The glow from the evening shines through the concrete pillars, and even late at night, or when the rain is pouring down, he finds a sense of solitude as people pass by. To him, the 30 seconds a stranger might be bothered by his work is rationalized by the nature of a parking garage, that people come and go fairly quickly and are never forced to feel trapped into listening to what he is playing.

James Lee has been a student of music ever since he started playing saxophone in the fifth grade. He has also played the French horn and the pipe organ since he was in high school.

While music has always been a passion for James Lee, he has also struggled with substance abuse. "I was just doing drugs the whole time, from like 15 on. Didn't finish school or anything else until I was like 26," James Lee said.

While he didn't specify the types of drugs, his decision to make a change about his situation was influenced by one specific moment.

In his late 20's, he took his grandma to see a performance of the Nutcracker. As he listened to the horn section's "terrible execution" of the same part he played in high school, he recalled experiencing an out of body experience and was horrified. At that point, he was heavily abusing drugs. James Lee knew he needed to make a change or he wouldn't be alive within another year.

"I got a little bit of help and it just popped, like something with puss, or a joint," he said.

Starting his journey to quit using drugs, music became not only an outlet but also a life line. When he lived in Alberton, James Lee used to play under the underpass by the river to the mountains and the stars. The UM parking garage gave him a new opportunity to play when he moved to Missoula.

"I pray that I hear him every day until the semester ends, whether there's rain or snow, and I hope that everyone gets to experience it," Brooke Stanley said.

He made the decision to move from Alberton to Missoula in 2018 and has been sober since July that same year. He has been playing music every day since the Nutcracker show. He has been seven years sober, and from continuous practice, the process of creating music drives him every day.

James Lee's favorite practice session is when he can play along to a song he's never heard before and let the music take him into a new creative space. He describes this process as being as carefree with his saxophone as someone singing in the shower.

James Lee's motivation for playing is to gain more creative freedom and skill through his practice sessions because the process of making something new is an outlet he depends on.

"I have to play now, it's too late, it's weird,

but I've kinda built my life around it," he said. "Just the idea that I have to make something in the real world."

He has never performed to a real audience before, and how the music sounds is simply an afterthought. In his opinion, he doesn't think he sounds very good at all. He does have hopes that maybe something else will come out of playing in the parking garage.

"Maybe someday I'll be able to make something people will like and maybe I'll meet people that play instruments too, and maybe not," he said.

That goal may have already been met, even if James Lee doesn't know it.

James Lee has had an effect on the passersby at the University of Montana. When Sherian walked by that day and heard the lovely sound, it reminded him of the music scene in Billings, making him feel less homesick after transferring this year

to pursue his communicative science and disorders major.

Stanley has high hopes to hear his music pouring out of the concrete structure after her next class.

"I pray that I hear him every day until the semester ends, whether there's rain or snow, and I hope that everyone gets to experience it," she said.

Wildlife biology and dance major Taylor Ferguson has noticed the sound a handful of times on her way from work and classes. "It adds a little magic to the day," she said.

Ferguson also feels the concert in the parking lot is worth going to when she's not between the bustle of dancing and biology classes. She said, "If I know when he's playing, I want to go and listen. Let's go get him a crowd!"

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# UM's Medieval Combat Society wants you to wallop your friends

JACK SNOW | SPORTS REPORTER

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The University of Montana's Medieval Combat Society has returned for another semester of foam-coated warfare. After struggling through the pandemic years, the club is back on its feet and is looking to provide a fun, unorthodox activity to UM students.

They practice a sport called belegarth, "A full combat, full speed sport where we fight with foam-covered weapons that are regularly checked for safety," Josey Walker, the club's president and a second-year doctoral student at UM.

Competitors use a wide variety of mock armaments to do battle. "We have any weapon you could want to play with," Walker said. "Anything from a side dagger to a big eight-foot-long spear. It's pretty varied in the ways you can fight and make it fun."

The club's major selling point is the opportunity to live out the fantasy of glorious medieval battle, but for members like Shaun Jacobson, the friendships are what keep many coming back. "Just having a bunch of friends who are always good to be around [is] very fun," said Jacobson, who has been involved in the community since 2012. "And hitting people with sticks. It's probably a tie. You come for the sticks, you stay for the friends."

The club has faced setbacks in recent years and were hit hard by social distancing during the pandemic.

"Following COVID, there kind of wasn't a Medieval Combat Society, except in name," Walker said. "It wound up really shrinking the club and separating it from the local realm, which is bad for both groups."

The local realm is a term for Missoula's official belegarth chapter, dubbed the Realm of Stygia. Stygia isn't technically affiliated with UM, but the groups many participants come to the meetings of both organizations. "There's a lot of mixing with the local realm," Walker said. "The community here in town is really great."

That group is one of the most appealing things about the sport to many of its fans. "It's a really good support system and that's a big draw to it," Walker said.

According to Walker, most belegarth groups across the nation are tight-knit, but the Missoula group is an exceptionally supportive one even by those standards. Inclusivity is another one of the core tenets of society.

"The belegarth community is extremely queer and neurodivergent friendly," she added.



Members of the medieval combat club practice their skills on the oval during their semiweekly practices on Oct. 14 2024 **CONTRIBUTED| UM ATHLETICS**

Jacobson joined the group with some friends after seeing others participate and was quickly hooked. "We were like hell yeah, let's hit people with sticks," he said, "I'm one of our rare lifers. I guess walk-ons are our only form of recruitment."

Belegarth is highly physical, and the workout is another reason participants love it.

"It's a fun way to stay active," said Duncan Anderson, another member and practitioner of eight years. "It doesn't look like a sport, but it feels like one when you're doing it. Plus, it's very nerdy, it's as nerdy as you want it to be."

Belegarth's rules allow strikes to the body and limbs, with a single blow to the body marking instant "death."

The limbs are a different story. Once struck, an arm or leg can no longer be used for the rest of the match, and a total of two hits to the limbs signifies defeat. More complicated rules can be employed for armor and less common weapons like polearms.

The sporting component gives it crossover with other activities as well. "I had been doing martial arts my whole life," Jacobson said. "I guess belegarth scratched that itch."

In practice, it looks like exactly what you'd

expect. Warriors face off with blades of foam, thrusting and slashing as they circle each other in the dance of combat. Swords, axes and flails sing through the air to find their marks, or be narrowly dodged.

Attire is another big part of belegarth. Fighters dress in a wide array of garb that ranges from imitations of historical dress to more stylized accessories.

Jacobson wears a blue gambeson, a padded jacket used as armour, and wields an enormous rectangular tower shield alongside his flail. Anderson prefers to don loose purple garb and a tophat studded with dozens of enamel pins.

Recently, UM's club has redoubled its recruiting efforts and has gained more traction this semester. "Our biggest thing has been catching up and getting recruitment back up following COVID," Walker said. "We've had five or six new members who've been getting really into it."

Practices are held on Tuesday and Thursday on the Oval, where members train and fraternize. "Normally, during weekday practices, we don't dress up because most of us are coming from work or class," Walker said.

A larger spectacle can be found at

Bonner Park on Sundays when the club joins the wider Missoula group of Stygia for their weekly event. Fighters often use the meeting as an excuse to break out their most extravagant garb.

Stygia is one of only two official realms in Montana and has existed since 2001, making it one of the older belegarth companies in the United States. Montana's only other belegarth realm is located in Kalispell and was founded in 2021, a relative newcomer to the scene.

The society is also involved in a program with some of Missoula's high schools where it introduces teens to belegarth and shows them how to safely play the sport. Walker believes it can be a great activity for those in high school who may not feel they fit in with other sports and clubs.

Whether newcomers are interested in diving deep into a new community or just letting off some steam after class, the Medieval Combat Society offers something for everyone.

Despite centuries of technological development and decades of psychological study, perhaps the best way to battle the struggles of modern life is with medieval weaponry.

# Griz battle for conference title despite injury trouble

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This year, the University of Montana soccer team has had to play through multiple team injuries.

Injuries have ended the season of several Griz players, including senior forward Kayla Rendon Bushmaker, who was expected to be a key goal scorer for Montana this year.

On Sunday, injuries struck again as senior midfielder Chloe Seelhoff exited the game in the second half with an injury. UM Athletics did not release the severity or status of Seelhoff's injury. The Kaimin reached out to Seelhoff for comment but did not hear back.

Despite this, the Griz sit atop the conference standings with a 3-1-2 conference record with only three games remaining. If the team can hold on to that spot, it would be its third straight regular-season conference title, which would be the first three-peat in the Big Sky in 25 years.

In the seven years that head coach Chris Citowicki has been in Missoula, the Griz have won a conference championship in all but one, with three regular season titles and three tournament titles.

For Citowicki, he said the fact that his team has a chance to win the conference despite the injuries is a testament to their strength as a team.

"It's so easy to just fall apart and say 'It's not our year,'" he said. "It's so lucky that we are in the hunt, because if we were toward the bottom, nobody's motivated at that point, but we're hungry because we're on the cusp of something pretty amazing."

He said staying motivated was even more difficult when the team started conference play slow.

The conference standings are determined by a points system based on games played within the conference, with a win being worth three points and a draw worth one. This means even though Montana went 7-2-1 in non-conference play, its 3-1-2 conference record is only worth 11 points.

And in a conference schedule that is only eight games long, every game is important. Citowicki said that when things don't go the team's way, it gets difficult.

"It was really emotionally straining that we still played in Idaho and Eastern [Washington], but it wasn't falling our way," Citowicki said. "The good thing for us is nobody else is winning games either. That helped lessen the blow."

As of Oct. 13, no Big Sky team has won more than three conference games, and every team sits between four and 11 points in the standings.

For Citowicki, a big factor for his team's success was Seelhoff, especially after the injury to Bushmaker.

"It was supposed to be the two of them [scoring]," he said. "We had to ride Chloe out for a while, and fingers crossed, somebody else could figure it out."

Seelhoff scored four goals in the first five

games of the season, something that she said was because of a boost in confidence.

"Last year I started a bit slow until I finally broke free and scored my first goal," Seelhoff said in an interview with the Kaimin before her injury. "This year, I went into this saying I have no pressure on myself. I have these goals set, and I know I'll get there if I can play with confidence. I don't chase scoring goals, I don't chase getting assists, but when I play free, it just happens."

Seelhoff didn't have many assists in the first few games because she was scoring the majority of the team's goals. Citowicki said he knew that would have to change if the team wanted to succeed.

"We had so many meetings between the Boise [State] game and the start of conference where we said other people have to stand up," Citowicki said. "And then all of the sudden Reagan [Brisendine] starts popping up, Eliza [Bentler]'s popping up, Lucie Rokos is scoring. It's just nice to know there's depth."

Seelhoff said that some of that is due to how other teams prepare for the Griz.

"Teams have started to heavily scout and double team me, and I get frustrated," she said. "I have to remember that's a compliment in itself and it means that somebody else is open."

Seelhoff said that finding whoever is unguarded has been fun for her to do.

"Finding the open player and giving new people chances to score has been awesome to watch," she said. "It helps their confidence, and when one person can play a little bit better, the entire team plays a little bit better."

Seelhoff said that finding her teammates

has been a struggle at times, not only for her, but for her teammates as well.

"[I'm] learning how to find them early, and then empowering them to ask for the ball, to demand the ball almost so I know when to play it," she said. "Then just learning how to play under this pressure and not forcing myself to be the one to score, but letting somebody else do it."

Seelhoff said that she's been getting better at that skill, which is one reason why she thinks the team is ready to take the final steps toward winning a conference championship.

"Our team just seems like we're on a new level of competing right now. We're doing it for the girls that can't play," she said. "I'm just super excited to see us play with confidence, leave it all out there, and hopefully take home a trophy on senior night."

After Seelhoff's injury, it is unsure who the Griz will turn to offensively.

Maycen Slater scored the lone goal for the Griz on Sunday, having scored three goals in the last two games. Other potential goal scorers could be found in Regan Brisendine and Eliza Bentler, who have four and three goals respectively.

"I am beyond confused and devastated that this time I'm out for an undetermined amount of time," Seelhoff stated in an Instagram post Monday. "I now gain the empathy of what it feels like to go down and immediately know your season is over. The heartbreak that we are so close. We still are. My team will still do it."



Chloe Seelhoff, midfielder for the University of Montana soccer team, kicks the ball away from defenders around her in the Big Sky Championship Semifinal game on Nov. 8 2024.

## SPORTS BRIEFS

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### HOMECOMING COMEBACK

Griz football saw its winning streak extend to six games in a row with their win against the Cal Poly Mustangs on Saturday. It's the first time the team has seen this long of a streak since the 2009 season.

It wasn't an easy game for the Griz as the team was shut out at halftime, the first time since playing Oregon in 2019, and trailing by nine points. However, once the second half started, the Griz looked like a completely different team.

"I told them in the locker room after the game that's what good football teams do. They find different ways to win," head coach Bobby Hauck said to UM Athletics.

Kenzel Lawler was able to put the Griz on the board with a 21-yard pick six, making the score 9-7 with Cal Poly still leading.

But it wouldn't be long before the Grizzlies were able to get their first lead of the night.

As the fourth quarter started, Keali'i Ah Yat handed the ball to Michael Wortham, who was able to run past the defense of Cal Poly right into the endzone.

Eli Gillman secured the win for the Griz with a pair of touchdowns. Gillman totaled 167 receiving and rushing yards.

### TAKING THE COURT

The University of Montana's men's basketball team will be taking the court for the first time this season with an exhibition game against the University of Denver.

This will allow fans to see how the Griz will bounce back after a Starch Madness win and an appearance in March Madness.

Last season also saw Travis DeCuire, head coach of men's basketball, become the winningest coach in Montana program history with 222 wins.

The Griz lost two key players during the off-season in Kai Johnson and Joe Pridgen. Both played all 35 games at around 1,048 minutes for the team and combined for 794 points on the season.

Another notable loss is Brandon Whitney, who stayed with the Grizzlies for five years, playing 3,748 minutes overall for the team and scoring 325 points.

The Griz were able to keep star player Money Williams on the team, who led the team with 461 points last season, 56 of which came from the 3-point line.

# Coloring connections

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Paintbrushes clinked in jars, sneakers smudged with streaks of maroon and orange and sunlight bounced off the pavement where dozens of new illustrations glinted in the sun.

By late morning, University of Montana students had transformed the sidewalk by Turner and Brantly Halls into a vibrant art installation.

The Hello Walk tradition began because of an old superstition that if someone walked the Turner-Brantly Hall sidewalk and didn't greet a passerby, they would be doomed to fail their finals.

The event, hosted by the UM Alumni Office and organized by the UM Advocates, drew a steady stream of students near the heart of campus on Oct. 7. They grabbed brushes, picked paint colors and left greetings behind, and the results were more than just the new paintings.

"One of the fun parts of being a student is the opportunity to be involved, and this is a fun way to showcase art and welcome everybody to campus," Elli Erickson, the Alpha Phi president, said while painting with her friend. "It's a good time."

From 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., students came and went throughout the afternoon enjoying the fall air. At times, silence took over as some painters slipped on headphones, focusing intently on their designs as if the sidewalk was their personal canvas.

Some students spread messages of encouragement. Payton Frenson painted a flower with the phrase "Tiny steps still count."

"I thought that was a good reminder for people to see walking to class and around campus," Frenson said.

Others brought personality to their messages through foreign languages. Josephine Stump, a Latin enthusiast, traced in bold orange, "Salvete omnes," meaning "Hello all."

"I love doing Latin graffiti all over campus. It's fun to say something that lasts until the end of the year," Stump said.

Freshman Isabella Schmitt painted her signature phrase: "Hello, lovely people."

"I always call my friends lovely people," Schmitt said. "Everybody is a lovely person, so hopefully this brings someone some joy."

One of Schmitt's favorite parts of the Hello Walk is seeing everybody's creativity.

"There are so many different styles and personalities," Schmitt said. "It's neat to see everyone come together to create this amazing masterpiece."

The Hello Walk's primary goal is to unite UM students, alumni and anyone else wishing to spread positive vibes through the community. As for the students' artwork, it will stay put until Montana's winter washes it away.



Freshman Isabella Schmitt paints "Hello Lovely People" to spread positive vibes on UM's campus on Oct. 7.



UM Advocates Madison Davis (left), Brooke Odenthal (middle) and Milena McKee (right) pose while running the paint station for the UM Hello Walk.



Ellie Erickson, president of Alpha Phi sorority, and her friend Hannah Currier paint messages together on the Hello Walk path.



Colorful messages decorate the sidewalk outside of Turner and Brantly halls by the end of the painting session.