

MONTANA KAIMIN

SHRINKING *R*ESPONSIBILITY



As higher education faces an enrollment cliff, UM sets its sights on fewer programs

Story by Corbin Vanderby | Photos by Ava Rosvold



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Cover photo by Ava Rosvold

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Kiosk



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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WOMEN'S

RUGBY

NO EXPERIENCE NEEDED

FUN, INCLUSIVE ENVIRONMENT

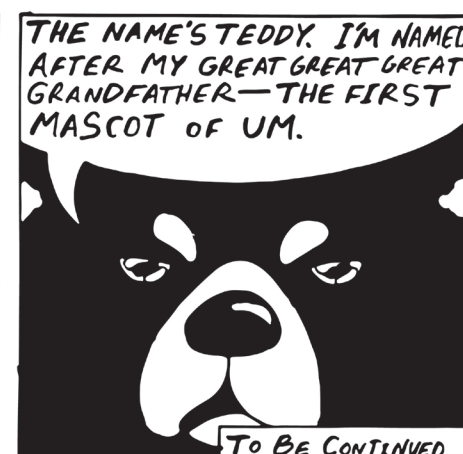
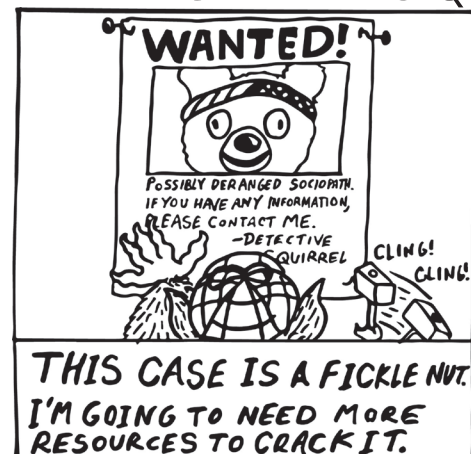
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BARRETT CLEMENT | MONTANA KAIMIN *BARRETT*

If UM is going to rush program cuts, it needs to give us a better reason

Faculty members at the University of Montana are used to being told their programs are in danger. However, this year's plans for cuts seem more severe, less transparent and absurdly rushed — especially when students and faculty aren't being given a clear reason as to why. And no, we don't buy "interdisciplinary work" as a tangible reason to force who knows how many professors into different jobs.

Our cover story this week attempts to explain this year's academic review, an administrative process looking at programs' graduation rates and enrollment to decide which ones to cut, which ones to combine and which ones to feed.

At a University that has seen an overall 21% enrollment drop over the last seven years, the administration is asking less successful departments to take a hard look at the work they came here to do. They have to ask questions like whether cutting their program is a reputational risk for the University and how much money the University would save if it was gone.

This year's "academic playbook," yet another euphemism the administration loves using to mask its hard decisions, is also happening very quickly with virtually no communication to students. Although the administration has apparently been working on this review since last semester, it only looped in faculty outside of the Faculty Senate to provide feedback and spoke to the student government, an organization with infamously low participation from the rest of the student body this semester. Just as a

reminder: 13.5% of the student population cast votes in the last student government election.

Worse than the impact on current students, incoming freshmen are committing to UM right now, putting \$300 prepayments to live in student housing and listing their major preferences on scholarship applications without even being told their program could be at risk.

Any programs the Board of Regents approves to be cut at its May meeting will still offer its classes for three years before it's officially dead, so current students will be able to graduate with their degrees, according to the Montana University System Website. But any new students in Fall 2024 won't be able to graduate with those majors in the regular four-year track, yet they're still being advertised on UM's website without any indication they could disappear.

UM administration told faculty that, somehow, no job positions will be cut in the process. The question of where the professors in specialized fields like French or dance will go if their programs are cut remains. UM hasn't shown any work on how it could possibly move forward still spending 90.5% of its tuition and state dollars on faculty salaries and benefits while offering fewer majors and minors.

This review has serious consequences for an effort the administration is branding as something that is simply preparing UM for its future, rather than a necessary action to compensate for budget issues. The administration is so clear-

ly out of touch with the campus by dragging faculty into yet another tedious review and telling them it's to better our "collective" future when their life's work and research is on the line.

What we fear is yet another example of UM framing a broken pipe as a water feature. If UM truly manages to eliminate program after program without firing any professors, it has plenty of other tactics. It could instead force them to retire or quit using cuts in pay or tedious new jobs, then tout the beautiful painlessness of its reformation. Official data will say no one was fired, and the outrage will only last as long as the fading impacted people are around.

UM could get away with it, especially as the students in struggling programs graduate. It's hard to remember UM's cut-throat decisions of the past — many current students aren't aware of the multiple cuts preceding this one since enrollment began declining in 2014.

UM is playing catch-up from its years of falling behind its rival state school in Bozeman and leaving its faculty and students behind in the process. The administration is trying to morph this University into its arbitrary ideas of what will be "best" to face the changing landscape, but throwing their hands in the air when trying to figure out how to involve students, the population it's designed to serve.

We draw the line at the provost's office pretending this will be painless. Administration, you're making hard decisions that will screw over plenty of people. You know that, which is

why you dropped the data being used on faculty with only two weeks to respond. It's why you added reputation impact to the checklist. Own it.

All we ask for is transparency. Instead of making professors jump through hoops of formal government meetings and feedback forms, cut the bureaucracy. Tell them why this is so urgent and why program cuts are the only answer. And when department heads are pulled into meetings in the review's next stages, hear them out. The numbers don't tell the whole story, and they deserve to be listened to when providing more context.

The provost's office is right: We have to change. Higher education, as it always has been, is unpredictable, and there are warning signs in national trends about the unknown impact of COVID-19 on children's progression in education. But there are thousands of smart, thoughtful and creative people on this campus who can think about these issues, not just those tucked away in Main Hall. Give them more opportunities to come up with solutions, especially since they, by the interim provost's own admission, spend a hell of a lot more time talking to students than the administrators do.

Like it? Hate it? Let us know
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Can't get enough? Start listening.

The University of Montana has been fighting a Caddyshack-esque battle with anywhere from 100 to 300 pigeons for the last year... and it's losing. On this week's Kaimin Cast, Elinor Smith chronicles UM's perpetual pigeon problems.



New episodes out every other Monday.
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SUDOKU

Difficulty: Easy

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

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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:

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

Briefs & Blotter

Beckwith under construction; health department reprimanded for SNAP delays; three Montana abortion laws struck down

ANDY TALLMAN

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PARTS OF BECKWITH CLOSED FOR FOUR MONTHS TO FIX WATER MAIN

Starting on March 1, construction crews closed down parts of Beckwith Avenue from Higgins to Arthur, according to the Missoulian. This construction will last for the next four months as Missoula's public works department replaces 1,600 feet of century-old metal pipes.

The city said in a press release this construction was necessary, as the old water main is in poor condition, but no more than two blocks will be closed at a time.

Detours have been established through South and University Avenues, and homes in the construction zone will still be accessible, according to the Missoulian.

HEALTH DEPARTMENT REQUIRED TO FIX DELAYS IN PROCESSING FOOD ASSISTANCE APPLICATIONS

In the first half of 2023, the Montana health department's rate for processing Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program applications dropped to about 84%, more than 10% below the acceptable rate set by the federal government.

As a result, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Service sent the department a letter requiring it to carry out a plan to fix the delays, according to the Missoulian.

"Low [processing] rates have a real and significant impact on eligible families who struggle to put food on the table," the letter, acquired by the Montana Free Press, said. "Timely application processing is paramount to customer service and meeting families' nutrition needs."

According to the state's plan, the processing time for SNAP application approvals was affected because, following the end of the federally designated pandemic emergency, the health department decided to start reevaluating Medicaid coverage for 330,000 Montanans beginning in April 2023.

This redetermination process took up callback slots and staff training

time for other programs like SNAP. In addition, it stopped Medicaid coverage for over 14,000 people for mostly procedural reasons in April alone.

The letter stated the federal government may issue more warnings if Montana doesn't improve its timelines by at least five percentage points every six months.

THREE ANTI-ABORTION LAWS STRUCK DOWN BY MT COURT

A lawsuit filed by Planned Parenthood against three 2021 anti-abortion bills ended on Feb. 29 when Butte Judge Kurt Krueger struck all three down. The pieces of legislation were already temporarily blocked while the lawsuit proceeded.

Pre-viability abortion is protected by Montana's constitutional right to privacy, according to the state Supreme Court in the 1999 Armstrong case.

The Montana Department of Justice defended the bills in court, arguing abortion is not a fundamental right.

House Bill 136 would have banned abortion after 20 weeks with limited exceptions. Krueger wrote, although the bill was based on the rationale of abortions after that point causing fetal pain, "there is no medical consensus that fetuses can feel pain before 20-24 weeks gestational age."

Even if a fetus may experience pain from an abortion procedure, Krueger wrote, it didn't justify state intrusions on a fundamental right to privacy. If that were the case, he said, the state could very well ban pregnancy since the mother or baby could experience pain in childbirth.

"The state seems interested in pregnancy-related pain only where a patient exercises their right to a pre-viability abortion," Krueger said.

House Bill 171 would have banned telehealth appointments for medication abortions and required medication abortion providers to have the credentials to treat a wide variety of conditions like breast cancer and renal failure. It would also require patients to fill out a detailed form and set a 24-hour waiting period between informed

consent and treatment, among other restrictions.

Krueger wrote this would functionally ban medication-related abortion by making it prohibitively impractical, both by requiring each of Montana's seven abortion-providing facilities to cover an average of 21,006 square miles and by requiring providers to be trained to treat so many unrelated conditions.

House Bill 140 would have required providers to offer abortion patients the opportunity to view an ultrasound and listen to a fetal heartbeat. Krueger wrote this infringed on the right to privacy and freedom of expression by requiring providers to offer treatment that might violate their own best judgment.

This law would require even more forms, but they wouldn't be kept by the state, only in patients' files. Krueger wrote the form requirement seemed to be intended to make patients second-guess their decisions rather than serve any legitimate need.

"The court is left with the strong impression that the law aims to advance the ulterior motive of discouraging abortion," Krueger wrote in his judgment. "That is unacceptable under the law."

CDC DROPS FIVE-DAY ISOLATION GUIDELINE FOR COVID-19

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention announced March 1 COVID-positive Americans can return to work after a day without a fever if their symptoms are mild and improving rather than isolating for five days.

COVID-19 dropped last year from being the nation's third leading cause of death to the 10th. It's also not causing as many hospitalizations and deaths as it did in previous years, according to the Associated Press.

Officials stated this change would bring COVID-19 guidelines in line with recommendations for flu and other respiratory viruses, since many people with respiratory symptoms are no longer testing to distinguish between COVID-19 and other illnesses.

POLICE BLOTTER

ANDY TALLMAN

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Crimes are so back, baby! After a slow February, the police logs are filling up once again. Sure, you've got your standard car break-ins and punches thrown, but the campus area also saw a mysterious explosion and some mouse-related graffiti. But seriously, guys, we do not condone crime. The University of Montana Police Department responded to seven crimes since the last blotter. That's too many!

FRIDAY, FEB. 23 - FREAKY FRIDAY

In a shocking upset, UMPD actually recovered a stolen bike this week. A student reported her bike, missing since late December 2023, was locked up at another location on campus. UMPD cut the lock and gave the student her bike back. Pro tip for bike thieves: don't bring your stolen goods back to the crime scene!

FRIDAY, FEB. 23 - THE PIT OF DESPAIR

Simple assaults are apparently pretty common in concert pits, and the Jon Pardi concert was no exception. At about 10 p.m., a group in the pit reported a simple assault, but the other group involved was gone by the time UMPD got there. Right now, the cops have no idea who could have done this musical slap-and-dash. Please mosh responsibly, folks.

SATURDAY, FEB. 24 - CVS CARMACY

A student reported a theft from their white Suburban at about 1:30 p.m. from the M Trail parking lot. The culprit had taken the spare key from its magnetic lockbox, then used it to steal the owner's prescription medication and \$50. Guys, we know the American healthcare system is a hellscape, but urban foraging is not the answer. Come on, Curry Health Center will get you a prescription.

SATURDAY, FEB. 24 - WAS IT ALIENS?

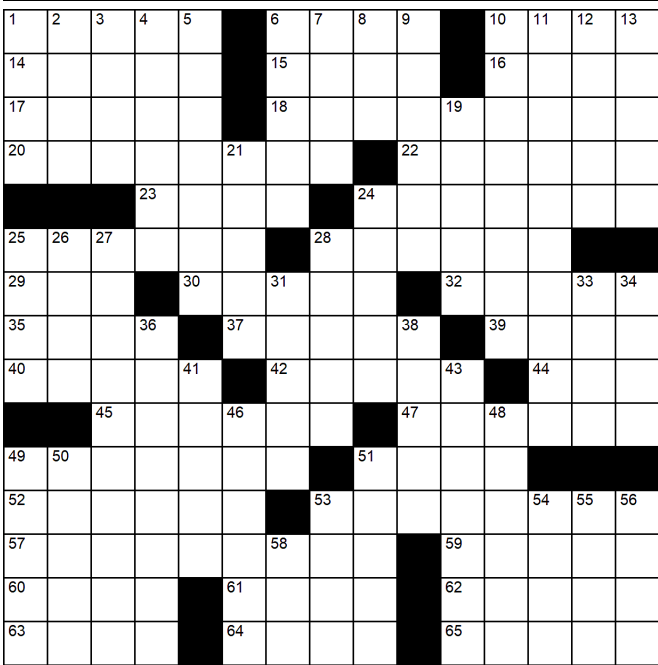
No, you weren't imagining it. At around 10:30 a.m., UMPD got multiple calls about a loud explosion that shook buildings toward the south of campus. UMPD could not locate the noise and has no idea what it was. Or so they say...of course, the government would tell them to help cover up the aliens that keep setting off fireworks to fuck with us. Pretty sure that's against interstellar wildlife law.

MONDAY, FEB. 26 - OH DEER

Somehow, a deer got locked in the University Center Gardens, and required UMPD help to get it out. UMPD doesn't know how the deer got in. At least it wasn't a bear. That would have been a grizzly scene.

WEDNESDAY, FEB. 28 - MISSOULA'S BANKSY

At 2:15 p.m. UMPD was called to the Skaggs Building and found some mysterious figure had spray painted a cartoon mouse on the wall. It seemed to be done very quickly, and only used one color, but, well, every artist has to start somewhere. UMPD has no clues, and no video cameras observe the wall, so the artist remains at large, hopefully improving their craft. But hey, the brick wall can get a little boring.



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ACROSS

- 1 Brazilian dance
- 6 Wild guess
- 10 Silent film star Lillian
- 14 Golf shoe feature
- 15 Stash away
- 16 Golden rule word
- 17 Insurance seller
- 18 Like noteworthy days
- 20 Beaten-up
- 22 Apprentice doctor
- 23 One way to run
- 24 Election data
- 25 Like many a bikini
- 28 Alludes (to)
- 29 Comic Conway
- 30 Picker-upper
- 32 Mortgage seeker's concern
- 35 Ticklish one
- 37 Filled with cargo
- 39 Wash up, old-style
- 40 Tiger at the tee
- 42 More recent
- 44 Hamilton's bill
- 45 Ornate style
- 47 Cole Porter's "___ We Fools?"
- 49 Insatiable greed
- 51 "___ Only Just Begun"
- 52 It may be cast
- 53 Combative
- 57 Drove away
- 59 Small greenish songbird
- 60 Shares
- 61 Show of hands, e.g.
- 62 Keyed up
- 63 Custodian's collection
- 64 Fancy pitcher
- 65 Goes on

DOWN

- 1 Sign of healing
- 2 Pond plant
- 3 Make the acquaintance of
- 4 Small chicken
- 5 Give it a go
- 6 Ogre who loved Fiona
- 7 20-20, e.g.
- 8 Say further
- 9 Agnostic's lack
- 10 Throaty sort of sound
- 11 Trucker's route
- 12 Back of a boat
- 13 Brass section
- 19 Reply to a knock
- 21 Palace dweller
- 24 Avoid cancellation
- 25 Crockpot dish
- 26 Metric prefix
- 27 Wickedness
- 28 Calgary Stampede, for one
- 31 Bass or Armstrong
- 33 Neck and neck
- 34 E-mailed
- 36 Like helium or argon
- 38 Staircase post
- 41 Discontinued Toyota line
- 43 Tent event
- 46 Musical stretch
- 48 Eye part
- 49 One way to be taken
- 50 Comparison shopper's quest
- 51 Dentist's request
- 53 Ration (out)
- 54 Star anagram
- 55 Cozy home
- 56 1992 Robin Williams movie
- 58 Road rescue

Answers to Previous Crossword:

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

Water-bottle-o-scope

MCKENNA JOHNSON

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Sip happens, and staying hydrated is in style these days — I mean, have you seen all the hype over the Stanley Cups lately, followed by the slew of research articles and opinion pieces attempting to analyze our obsession with them? (If you haven't seen SNL's "Big Dumb Cup" sketch yet, you're missing out.) Speaking as the generation who grew up on nasty, barely cleaned and years-old water bottles, who knew we would care so much one day about what special kind of plastic and metal hand-held gadget would contain our water. We've got an aqua lot to say about it and can't keep it bottled up any longer. The stars have spoken, and we know you're dying to know which type of water bottle you are, so don't worry. We're here to quench your thirst.

PISCES (FEB. 19-MARCH 20): You're a lazy piece of shit, but that's okay. We've all been there. As a reusable Dasani plastic water bottle, you're not exactly in the height of fashion, but it's the thought that counts.

ARIES (MARCH 21-APRIL 19): How many sports did you play in high school, Aries? The classic green and orange Gatorade water bottle with the nipple was elite, but now they just scream has-been, kinda like you. You're just a little leaky and easy to squeeze, the sign of a true competitor. Where you once inspired energy, you're now just another bottle in the back of the cupboard. Enjoy your midlife crisis.

TAURUS (APRIL 20-MAY 20): Down to earth. A little too serious. Made for extreme sports, but loved by middle-aged moms who like to walk around the neighborhood. You're the CamelBak hydration packs, Taurus, practical in some ways, yet no one ever knows how to actually clean you out. But maybe you like it that way? #Wink #Sip #Wink

GEMINI (MAY 21-JUNE 20): As the popular kid in school, Gemini, you're none other than the Hydro Flask. Despite whatever new fad comes into power, you'll always have a devoted fan base, and you're not above throwing a little shade at the competition, releasing new color palettes every chance you get and subtly hinting that your bottles don't contain any lead, like SOME bottles do...

CANCER (JUNE 21-JULY 22):

Cancer, you basic bitch. You really would be the Stanley Quencher H2.0 FlowState™ Tumbler, also known as the Stanley Cup. Your obsession with having "the best new thing" runs deep, beyond the lead coating rumored to run in your bones. We can only hope you aren't one of those collectors with a million Stanleys to your name.

LEO (JULY 23-AUG. 22): Lover of classics, have-r of respect for those who stand the test of time. Leo,

Nalgene water bottles are some of the most durable around, perhaps the predecessor to the modern emotional support water bottle as we know it today (before it was a thing). It's lightweight and dependable with a variety of patterned styles to choose from. What more could a dehydrated girly-pop want?

VIRGO (AUG. 23-SEP. 22): Sweet, sweet Virgo, relegated once again to a random water bottle brand commonly found at Target that no one really wants as their first choice, but might buy in a moment of weakness because of a cute pattern. The S'well water bottles may look yoga-mom chic, but after a few uses, we all realize why you're always fully in stock. #:(

LIBRA (SEP. 23-OCT. 22): Like the classic Starbucks Tumbler, Libra, you strive for perfection, but you play it safe and settle for what the basic white girls want. Just keep doing what you're doing. You'll crack eventually.

SCORPIO (OCT. 23-NOV. 21): You value loyalty most in life, Scorpio, so you will stay loyal to the subpar Yeti water bottle. You aren't really anyone's first choice, but then again, we can't all be. You're kinda like the generic-brand version of the Hydro Flask, but don't fret. Just be happy that the small fanbase you do have clings to you despite subpar insulation.

SAGITTARIUS (NOV. 22-DEC. 21): Sag, the funny gym bro trying just a little too hard. You're the gallon water bottle jug you jokingly tell everyone you grabbed because you couldn't find anything else when we all know that nobody just has a gallon water bottle jug lying around. Keep telling yourself that it's the best water bottle for the gym. We all know you're just overcompensating for something. #MilkDrinker

CAPRICORN (DEC. 22-JAN. 19): Capricorn, you got the Owala water bottle after hearing the rumor that it's called Owala because you look like a Koala bear when you drink out of it. You're just the target of crappy ad campaigns, and when you saw the two-bottle pack in Costco you had to get it. Keep making those impulsive decisions, Cap. It's

okay, we still love you.

AQUARIUS (JAN 20-FEB 18): Aquarius, who knew you were a sustainability junkie?

We all know that reusable bottles promote sustainability in themselves, but you just HAD to take it one step further with the Klean Kanteen, that random brand found in Target when the Owalas and Stanleys are nowhere to be found. Just keep telling yourself that you're as cool as the rest of them, but we all know the truth. You try so hard, and it shows. Maybe give it a rest and buy a name-brand like the rest of us.



BARRETT CLEMENT | MONTANA KAIMIN

Missoula Muslim community forced to adapt as prayer space closes

SAV CHAVEZ

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As members of Missoula's Muslim community enter a small room at the University of Montana for prayer, both men and women walk through the same single door, violating a traditional practice of gender segregation in the Islam religion. But with the space used as a mosque in Missoula closed for renovations, the Muslim population has found themselves with few other places for prayer.

The University owned house on Fifth Street quickly became the unofficial mosque to Muslims for prayers and gatherings. Renovations, beginning in summer 2023, left people who practice Islam without a place to pray and hold religious ceremonies. Instead, a room in the University Center at UM was offered up by administration.

Dave Kuntz, UM Spokesperson, told the Missoulian, once renovated, the house will be reopened as residential housing, not a mosque.

"I have to push back on this, it was never a mosque. The house was a meeting area for students that evolved from students living there," Kuntz said to the Kaimin. It is still unknown if it will be occupied by faculty or students when reopened. Sources the Kaimin spoke to for this story referred to the Fifth Street house as a mosque.

"Losing our mosque made us all worry about what this Ramadan will look like," Mai Khalil, 21, said. "The room provided is too small to fit all of us and lacks separate entrances for females and males."

The UC room is where Muslim students, and the larger Muslim population in the city, are called to pray, up to five times throughout the day.

Ramadan, starting the evening of March 10 this year, is the holy month in Islam. It includes fasting from dawn to sunset, extra readings of the Qur'an, the religious text of Islam and reciting special prayers. According to the Islamic Networks Group, Ramadan celebrates when the Qur'an was revealed by Allah to the Prophet Muhammad.

Ramadan will end on April 8 this year with the Eid al-Fitr, which celebrates breaking fast by eating festive foods and exchanging gifts. Dates for Ramadan, varying each year, depend on when the new



The Montana Islamic Society, a University-owned building on Fifth Street, was once used by Muslim students as an unofficial mosque to pray every day. The house is now being renovated and is slated to turn into residential housing in the future. **WALKER MCDONALD | MONTANA KAIMIN**



As the Montana Islamic Society building is no longer available to the public, the University of Montana made a small space available to the Muslim community. This room in the University Center only has one exit and very limited space, creating a challenge for large amounts of people to pray. **WALKER MCDONALD | MONTANA KAIMIN**

crescent moon is seen.

When Khalil, a senior studying biological science, moved to Missoula, there were few Muslim students to connect with.

But the building felt like a home to her during her time on campus after transferring to UM from Montana Technological University in Butte for her junior year of college, she said. She would pray and study there and said she was heartbroken when it closed.

With the loss of the prayer space, anxieties began to rise, as a large aspect of Ramadan is communal. With a room not large enough for the Muslim population, around 400 to 500 people in Missoula according to the Missoulian, students are curious how the holiday will look this year.

Celebrating Ramadan in America is different than at home for Khalil. Born in Cairo, Egypt, but predominantly growing up in Lisbon, Portugal, she has seen and felt significant differences during Ramadan.

"I don't get to go home and experience our holy month like most students get to go home for Christmas," Khalil said. "I don't get to see my family, I don't get to hear the adhan [call to prayer], I don't get to feel those Ramadan vibes I grew up with."

Saila Rapti, a second-year master's degree student studying economics, explained she's made some changes to her everyday life since moving to Montana from Dhaka, Bangladesh.

Between leaving the country she grew

up in and living away from her family for the first time, she faced some big changes.

"I noticed a lot of differences, mostly they are good, but there are some difficulties," Rapti, 21, said.

Something she's noticed since coming to Montana is the lack of bathrooms for Wudu, an Islamic ritual cleansing of the hands, mouth and feet with clean water before formal prayers and other acts of worship. Because of this, she has to go home to perform Wudu and will do a quick prayer in her office, but has to openly pray in the economics building, since there is no prayer room for women in Missoula.

"I felt quite embarrassed," Rapti said. "I can never make it a timely prayer."

She's also noticed a difference in her grocery shopping experience, adapting from having lots of fresh foods every day in Dhaka, to using frozen and canned foods when she can't go to a grocery store. She has struggled with finding Halal food, food permitted under Islam, and will often have to pack it with her when on campus out of fear she will not be able to find foods she can eat when going to class.

For the past year, the Missoula Halal Market has sat on the side of Russell Street awaiting to be opened. There has yet to be an official opening.

This raises some anxiety for Rapti as Ramadan approaches. She is worried about being able to keep a balance between studying and eating as well as waiting up

for sehri, the time to eat before fasting begins at sunrise.

The fasting for Ramadan includes not only food, but water and smoking. Anything considered bad is forbidden.

"It's a lesson for learning self-control from indulgence and bad habits or any crimes," Rapti said.

Both Rapti and Khalil have celebrated Ramadan in Missoula before, finding comfort in people like themselves with similar beliefs and practices during the month-long holiday.

"It makes it easier to find other Muslim people in [a] mosque who are not students. The UC narrowed it down because it's smaller," Rapti said.

Rapti hopes to see more facilities made available for the Muslim population in Missoula. According to Church Finder, there are 62 Baptist and Christian churches in Missoula, as well as four temples and one synagogue. Even though she's adapted to the difference, she said she would like to be able to practice her religion and celebrate her holidays like other religions in America.

Khalil spoke with the student government about the need for a larger space and is searching for a larger space to accommodate needs, but doesn't know when these accommodations will be met.

"I've accepted and adapted with the situation," Rapti said. "It's normal when you are in a different culture."

UM stops accepting SNAP at the UC Market

MELISSA DICKSON

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Card readers at The Market in the University Center at the University of Montana stopped accepting Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program debit cards as of this February.

After analysis of the program's requirements, and consulting with the United States Agriculture Department's Food and Nutrition Service during an annual renewal application, the government found The Market was no longer able to meet all mandatory qualifications, according to Associate Director of Retail Operations for UM Dining Michael Collichio.

The Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services distributes SNAP through an electronic benefit transfer system, a debit card issued to SNAP participants that replaced paper food stamps.

The USDA, the federal agency overseeing food benefit programs, sets guidelines for what The Market is required to sell, like bread and eggs, to accept food benefit programs. The Market mostly sells pre-packed or pre-prepared food items, instead of more traditional grocery basics.

The USDA's reasoning falls under an effort to promote using SNAP for particular grocery items.

"The federal government's interest in SNAP is to make sure those financial resources are spread as widely as possible for the people that use those benefits," UM Spokesperson Dave Kuntz said.

UM Dining consulted with the USDA before discontinuing the card readers, which said items typically sold at The Market do not meet the intended need for SNAP

benefits.

"As the federal government is issuing out these benefits, they're trying to incentivize those dollars to be spread in ways that can last a bit longer," Kuntz said.

Instead, the USDA advised The Market to have its employees deny anyone who tried to use their SNAP cards at the register. According to Kuntz, leadership at UM Dining services deemed it unfair to assign this responsibility to employees of The Market given what they're paid. Instead, signs explaining the change, without the reason, were posted on the outside of The Market and at registers.

Sara Kutz-Yeager, 24, who graduated from UM last May with a bachelor's degree in acting, said she began using SNAP when it started becoming more prevalent on campus.

When she graduated last May, programs like the UM Food Pantry were not as widely advertised or accessible as they are now. According to Kutz-Yeager, she didn't even know about Bear Necessities, which provides case-by-case support for students in need, until her last year at UM.

Kutz-Yeager, who has chronic pain disabilities, appreciated the accessibility of SNAP on campus while she was there.

"As someone with sometimes limited mobility, it's often hard to make the trek over to Albertsons or somewhere else for food," Kutz-Yeager said. "And DoorDashing for groceries can get very expensive."

She was approved for the program after a long application process through Montana's health department, which she found to be quite difficult.

The process of getting an interview and being awarded SNAP, along with the paperwork, is an unfortunate barrier for students,



Hundreds of people a day go to The Market, located in the University Center on the University of Montana campus. This location no longer accepts EBT or SNAP benefits, creating a challenge for students and community members who use these forms of payment. **WALKER MCDONALD | MONTANA KAIMIN**

according to Kat Cowley, director of Bear Necessities and the UM Food Pantry.

For students with disabilities and limited mobility who need SNAP, getting rid of it on campus would have a negative impacts on accessibility, Kutz-Yeager said.

According to Kuntz, financial data shows The Market brought in about \$30 of SNAP purchases a day.

Rise + Rooted on campus stopped using SNAP before this school year began. Since then, The Market has been the only option on campus for purchasing food with a SNAP card.

The Market began accepting the food program in 2018 after it officially got a business license. The Corner Store in the Lommasson Center, now Rise + Rooted, was accepting the payment form for a while before then, until it stopped last year for the same reason.

With SNAP benefits no longer accessible anywhere on campus, students are now directed to use their card at nearby grocery stores that accept SNAP, like Albertsons or Grizzly Grocery, which are within a mile of campus.

For anyone without access to a vehicle, assistance in navigating UDASH transportation is also available, according to Cowley.

The Food Pantry is available on campus in six different locations and will operate the

same way.

"We're not making any changes to our programming," Cowley said. "But we're happy to help students make a plan for how to meet their needs."

Services at UM like Bear Necessities are available as support for those experiencing basic needs insecurity, along with the Food Pantry, which provides free personal care products and food assistance.

Students who meet the eligibility for SNAP can use the EBT card at any eligible grocery store to buy food or seeds to grow food.

Students must meet at least one of the exemptions to participate in SNAP including: being employed at least 20 hours a week, under the age of 18 or 49 or older, having a physical or mental disability, participating in a state or federally financed work-study program as well as various other exemptions, according to the College SNAP Project.

The net monthly income standard for a household of one is \$1,215 or less to qualify to apply for SNAP, Cowley said.

Students who want to apply for SNAP can contact the UM Food Pantry at (406) 243-5125 for assistance in applying.

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SHRINKING RESPONSIBILITY



As higher education faces an enrollment cliff, UM sets its sights on fewer programs

Story by Corbin Vanderby | Photos by Ava Rosvold

WHEN IONE CRUMMY arrived in 1995 as a French professor, she was excited to be a part of the University of Montana's thriving master's degree program. Thirty years ago, it included six tenured or tenure-line French professors, two graduate student teaching assistants and several sections for many of the courses.

Then, amid budget cuts under then-President Royce Engstrom, UM decided to put the French master's program on moratorium — the word it uses for programs it's phasing out. A 2017 newsletter for UM's Modern and Clas-

sical Languages and Literature included the name of the last French graduate student. According to Crummy, in the years following the moratorium decision, three of the six French faculty retired and UM replaced two of them. One of the new hires left after a year, two others decided to retire and another decided to move to part-time, she said.

That left Crummy as the only full-time employee in the French program for the last six years.

"Since 2018, it's just been me, the full-time person in French, and then my colleague who only teaches in the Fall," Crummy said. "It makes it challenging to have enough courses

for the students to take."

In January, all UM faculty received an email detailing UM's plan to begin annual reviews to re-evaluate its programs. Colleges all over the country are preparing for what's commonly called the "enrollment cliff," which is based on a drop in the national birth rate, resulting in as many as 15% fewer college-aged students than before the 2008 recession.

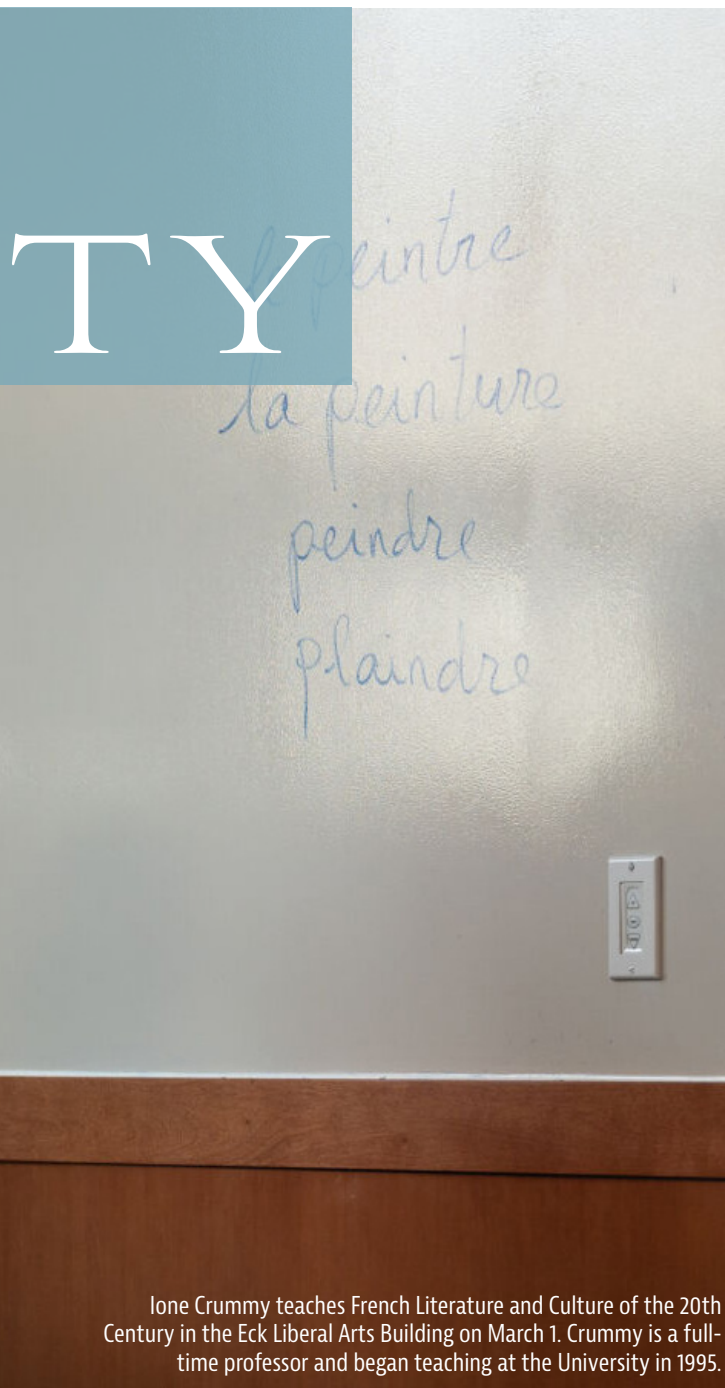
At UM, the looming changes are connected to what the provost's office is calling the "Academic Affairs Playbook." Presentations and emails explain it will provide a data-driven look into majors, minors, certificates and how hard it is for students to earn degrees

at UM's main campus and Missoula College. This year's process will not include graduate programs, which will be reviewed within the next couple of years.

UM Spokesperson Dave Kuntz told the Kaimin this program shakeup is "significantly less tied to the budget" than previous efforts. But a document sent to UM faculty states, "We have more programs than we can sustain, and we must rethink our academic portfolio."

The plan includes a new annual analysis of all degree programs offered at UM, with data on every program's number of students enrolled and degrees awarded in the past seven years.

TY



Ione Crummy teaches French Literature and Culture of the 20th Century in the Eck Liberal Arts Building on March 1. Crummy is a full-time professor and began teaching at the University in 1995.

Those data points are combined to form a final score from zero to 10, with 10 set by the highest-scoring program. Degrees awarded contribute to 60% of the final score and enrollment contributes 40%.

After these data have been gathered in what's called the "quantitative analysis," UM plans to identify low-scoring major programs — those that either scored less than 0.75 for majors or less than 1 for minors on the final score. Major and minors below that threshold, along with any that have had a larger enrollment drop than the rest of main campus' 26% decrease over the last seven years, undergo what it's calling the "qualitative analysis." That part will include meetings with the identified programs' deans or directors and UM admin-

istration.

Some new major and minor programs created in the last couple of years are not included in this review because they don't have enough available data yet. Certificates, concentrations and Missoula College programs are also subject to review with different parameters.

The draft plan UM posted online states that for 2023 and 2024, the goal will be "identifying programs needing modification, consolidation or moratorium to realign our current portfolio with student demand." It further states that in 2024 and 2025, the goal will be to evaluate the complexities of degrees, or how many credit hours and requirements students must complete, and how that impacts graduation rates and successful outcomes, including "gainful employment."

The provost's office has created a rubric used to assess programs with the considerations being the amount of staff in the program, funding amount, incoming student demands, how important the program is to other University programs, how well it "aligns with UM's mission," the reputational risk of the University cutting the program, if cutting the program is compliant with labor agreements, maintaining workforce relationships and how much money will be saved by cutting.

In short, low-scoring programs need to justify their existence or face a

moratorium, which will mean teaching it out until enrolled students finish and ceasing to offer it to incoming students. Administration wielding the axe will also need to consider the effect of cutting programs — in recruitment, legal matters and reputation.

"We're really trying to get a regular cycle of academic portfolio health-checking going on," Interim Provost Adrea Lawrence said. Programs identified in the qualitative analysis could be merged into another program, switched from a major to a minor or they could "sunset," a euphemism the UM administration is using for moratorium. Faculty, especially those who are tenured and represented by the University Faculty Association and covered by a collective bargaining agreement,

could be reassigned.

"As somebody who has a Ph.D. in French and [who] has done this for almost 30 years, I don't know quite what I would be reassigned to do," Crummy said. "Also, I don't know how that will save money. Are they just waiting for us to die or something and then retire?"

IN LIMBO

Lawrence and Vice Provost for Academic Affairs John DeBoer described the plan as something that should have happened years ago, comparing it to physical wellness checks UM faculty are encouraged to get every six months as part of their medical benefits.

"They take a bunch of my blood, and then they send back a readout telling me where the blood looks good and where the blood doesn't look so good," DeBoer said. "So that ideally, I change my behavior so that in the future, my blood is always amazing. This is that kind of health and vitality check for the University."

DeBoer said it's called the playbook because it's not supposed to be a document of set plans and procedures, but rather a base idea of what the University can do that allows it to pivot as the world (and enrollment) changes.

Lawrence said it looks to strengthen academic interdisciplinarity, or multiple fields and subjects coming together in a student's degree plan, which will be important for emerging issues like climate change and artificial intelligence.

But some professors and deans who have to answer for the so-called playbook have questions.

Robin Saha, program director for environmental studies, said the playbook worries him about his program and others at the University.

"It created a lot of uncertainty and fear, I think, for not just our program, but I think a lot of other programs," Saha said, "fear of being eliminated."

Despite being within the top 40% of majors in the quantitative analysis' final scores, environmental studies is still subject to further review due to its enrollment trend of -52.1%, according to the thresholds laid out on the UM website.

Similar to Crummy, Saha said faculty from his department have not been replaced over time. Since his arrival at UM in 2003, he watched seven full-time, tenure-track faculty slip to four. The current faculty now have to work harder and offer fewer courses.

"I think it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy," Saha said. "When you don't replace faculty, you see declining enrollment."

Saha said he doesn't believe the enrollment trends show a lack of interest from students, but a lack of investment from the University. Saha said his program saw a dip in enrollment after the creation of the environmental science and sustainability program in 2020, which was in the top 20% of major programs with a final score of 3.6.

G.G. Weix, a full-time anthropology professor and program director of the South and Southeast Asian studies minor, said that instead of the data, the focus should be on the hiring of faculty.

"The key to interdisciplinarity is in the hires that you make," Weix said. "A hire of a tenure-line is an investment in a 30- to 40-year commitment for the University. It's always a million-dollar decision."

Weix first interviewed in 1992 and said she was hired for her knowledge of women's studies and Asian studies. In 2010, the South

RUBRIC USED TO ASSESS PROGRAMS IN THE QUALITATIVE REVIEW

▶ Number of staff in the program	▶ Reputational risk of cutting the program
▶ Amount of funding in the program	▶ Compliance with labor agreements
▶ Incoming student demands	▶ Workforce relationships
▶ Importance of the program to other University programs	▶ Money saved by cutting the program
▶ How well it "aligns with UM's mission"	



Professor Robin Saha looks out over campus in Jeannette Rankin Hall, where he works as an associate professor of environmental studies and in the climate change studies program.



Professor of Chinese language Zhen Cao is an associate professor at the University of Montana. He faces potential course cuts, along with other majors and minors in the language department.

and Southeast Asian studies minor opened up, and UM had 10 faculty members who knew a total of nine languages to help teach it.

Over the years, and as faculty retired, UM stopped looking for replacements and now it's just Weix and two others who teach the minor on top of their other duties. One is a political science professor and the other is an English professor.

The South and Southeast Asian studies minor scored a 0.4 on its total score and had a -100% enrollment trend with no students enrolled since last year, which flagged it for the qualitative analysis. Over the last seven years, the minor program has had an average enrollment of just three students.

Weix said enrollment trends and graduation rates don't tell a program's whole story. The

minor program receives no extra funding from the University's budget, Weix said.

"If you eliminate the program for South and Southeast Asian studies, you will see it saves exactly zero dollars in the budget," Weix said.

Weix said that in 2018, UM administration had a meeting with her with the goal of cutting the minor.

Six years later, UM is once again saying it has too many programs, and Weix may have to defend her program again.

"We struggle to get courses offered. But why would you get rid of it?" Weix said. "It helps students open up the world."

Weix explained how Peter McDonough, the climate change studies program director at UM, is taking a group of his students to Vietnam to study the effects of climate change

this summer, and how she spoke to the class to teach them about history and culture before they leave.

Nadia White, the director of the environmental science and natural resource journalism master's program, is taking a group of students to Bangladesh, marking two UM class trips to Southeast Asia this year.

"I think what [White] and [McDonough] are doing exemplifies why having a South and Southeast Asia program on campus is important, even if we can't deliver all the courses that we used to," Weix said.

The Chinese minor program scored a 1.4, but its enrollment trend of -29.2% still puts it under qualitative analysis. Zhen Cao, the program's director and only full-time professor, said these numbers don't do his program justice.

"As far as I'm concerned, metrics — the numbers — they only show part of the program, and they do not show the whole picture," Cao said.

Cao tracked enrollment in his courses from all the way back in 2015. That year, the program had 30 students in both Chinese 101 and Chinese 201. Then, in 2018 and 2019, due to budget cuts, Cao was forced to become part-time, which lined up with a drop of enrollment in his courses to 25 in 2018, then 23 in 2019.

Cao also said many of his students have gone on to work for the U.S. embassies in Beijing and Taiwan, hold positions as state representatives and work for the U.S. Department of Defense in translation and interpretation — which the numbers just don't show.

Cao said he thinks UM is trying to collapse programs into world languages and cultures, combining disciplines like Chinese, French and German so they can say that they have them all, but don't make each of them "a real delicacy," as they should. UM will not confirm which programs it is proposing cuts for until later this semester.

Despite these issues, Cao said he's seen some support from the current administration — which reinstated him as a full-time professor a year-and-a-half ago — and doesn't want people to think the Chinese program is going anywhere.

Crummy's French program ended up in the bottom 20% of majors in the quantitative analysis, with a final score of 0.3 and an enrollment trend of -45.6%. The major had an average enrollment of about 13 students over the last seven years.

Crummy said that the playbook has caused a lot of confusion and misinformation around the University, with some people thinking that the French major had already been cut.

She's trying to be positive about the whole situation, but worries this is the University trying to be in touch with the future rather than focusing on its current faculty and students.

"I just wish that the University could embrace what we do offer, instead of wanting to jump on the latest trend that's going on around the country," Crummy said.

FOR THE FUTURE?

Although some faculty are scared of their programs being reassigned or cut, Lawrence and DeBoer claim all of the changes are in the best interest of UM. Kuntz points to the dramatic drop in birth rates. On top of this, according to the National Center for Education Statistics, undergraduate enrollment was 15% lower in the fall of 2021 compared to the fall of 2010, and some believe enrollment will continue dropping on account of the effects of COVID-19 on education.

"Things are gonna change for higher education, and efforts like this allow us to be more nimble in how we adjust those changes so the University can continue to remain healthy and impactful," Kuntz said.

Despite the criticism of enrollment and graduation rates being used as the main metrics in the quantitative analysis, Kuntz said that allows the entire process to be focused on students.

"The fact is, the ultimate decisions that are driving this effort are by students and what students are choosing to study," Kuntz said. "I anticipate that this will impact such a small percentage of students directly. The large majority of students won't notice any impacted decisions."

The only students who have been spoken to about the playbook so far are those involved in the student government. However, Kuntz said more information will get out to students as decisions become final, closer to the May Board of Regents meeting and in a democracy session near the end of March, which will be a forum for students to discuss the changes. If programs are cut, but changes aren't communicated to incoming students until May, students might find that their choice of major is no longer available come fall.

"I think we struggle in some ways to get an effective communication and a loop open with students," Lawrence said. "There could be things that we're missing — that we're not seeing — that are going to be really important for consideration."

Faculty feedback has been collected through a survey sent out along with the original playbook email. Lawrence also spoke at a Faculty Senate meeting on Feb. 8 to directly receive feedback. Two Executive Committee of the Senate listening sessions on Feb. 9 and Feb. 28 — led by Faculty Senate President Lauren Fern — gathered faculty questions for the provost's office.

The University Faculty Association President, Allen Szalda-Petree, has been involved in the process to ensure all decisions aligned with the UM faculty's collective bargaining agreement, which outlines labor practices, benefits and working conditions.

Petree said that, for now, the playbook isn't specific enough on changes the UFA should address.

"[The] UFA will continue to monitor the academic playbook as it becomes a more concrete plan," Petree said.



Professors from the University of Montana gather for an Executive Committee of the Faculty Senate listening session about the academic playbook on Feb. 28 in the Gallagher Business Building.

Petree is also a psychology professor at UM, which scored the highest of all programs in the quantitative analysis and set the bar for everyone else with a final score of 10 and an enrollment trend of 6.5%. On average, 107 students graduate with psychology degrees per year.

One criticism of the administration that came out of faculty feedback was its lack of focus on hiring new faculty and reinvestment to help dig struggling programs out of their holes. Although that may help, DeBoer said it may not be realistic.

“Reinvestment implies resource availability, and part of the thing that we’re working through is that there isn’t [that availability],” DeBoer said. “If there are going to be fewer students in the future, then our ability to fund everything we want to do is just not in the cards, and so we have to think about what will be possible within our limited resources.”

Kuntz also said that holding onto some of these smaller programs may prevent the University from being able to put more resources into the programs that are growing in student demand.

While freeing up resources is a goal for the University with the playbook, Kuntz said it isn’t the sole reason for the changes, which sets the playbook apart from past restructuring efforts that have affected many of the current faculty.

“In 2016, 2018 and 2019, there were similar

efforts that weren’t done in the same manner, to review and eliminate programs, but they were done solely because of budget constraints,” Kuntz said. “But the University’s budget is as healthy as it’s been in 10 to 12 years.”

UM’s budget may not be as bad as it has been in previous years, but in the 2024 fiscal year, UM spent 90.5% of its unrestricted funds, money from tuition and state funding, on faculty salaries and benefits.

NATIONAL TRENDS

Across the United States, higher education enrollment is dropping and colleges are scared. According to reporting by AP News, West Virginia University saw a 10% drop in enrollment since 2015 and decided to cut 28 majors and 143 faculty members, which included its entire world languages department. In UM’s quantitative analysis, of the 28 majors that scored 0.7 and below, six were from the world languages and cultures department.

According to the Hechinger Report, an education journal, many other universities, like Eastern Kentucky University, the University of Alaska, Missouri Western State University, Henderson State University in Arkansas and more are making large cuts, often in humanities programs.

Humanities subjects in general are seeing a large drop in college graduates across the United States. According to the American

Academy of Arts and Sciences, depending on what majors one counts as part of the humanities field, it has seen a drop between 16 and 29% in student graduates since 2012.

Lawrence and DeBoer said UM’s situation actually differs from some national trends, and will not cut nearly as much as West Virginia University did when it outright cut more than 100 faculty members and an entire department.

“If you look at some of our traditional disciplines on the census dashboard, they don’t look like the national trends,” DeBoer said. “We have healthy interest in our student population across those disciplines.”

In the quantitative analysis, 45% of the 20 highest-scoring majors were from the College of Humanities and Sciences. While this does differ from national trends, there are still plenty of struggling humanities programs at UM.

Of those with a final score of 0.75 or lower, 86% are programs from the College of Humanities and Sciences. Out of every undergraduate major program listed in the quantitative analysis, 60% were from the College of Humanities and Sciences.

Lawrence also said with artificial intelligence on the rise, humanities programs will become more important with new jobs working with AI, including prompt engineers who need to know things like language, literature, ethics and psychology.

“I think it would be very short-sighted for us

to conflate ourselves with a national narrative about the decline of the humanities,” Lawrence said. “I don’t think that’s going to be the case for long.”

A RUSHED APPROACH

After the quantitative analysis was released, the provost’s office reached out to program heads of all of the affected programs, letting them know they will have to do the qualitative review and sharing the rubric that will be used.

DeBoer said their office would either speak to program directors or email them about the qualitative review ahead of the Faculty Senate meeting today, March 7, where they will present their findings in full. Today’s meeting is open to the public and will take place from 3:30 to 5 p.m. in Gilkey 105.

March 26 is the deadline for the qualitative analysis so proposed changes can be reviewed by the Academic Standards and Curriculum Review Committee in April. Finally, all of the changes will have to be presented and approved by the Board of Regents during its May meeting to go into effect for the Fall 2024 semester.

“It is a very aggressive timeline,” Faculty Senate President Lauren Fern said at the Feb. 28 listening session. “I don’t know that there’s enough hours in the day to make this work.”

Kuntz said that although the timeline seems really tight, work on the playbook happened in the fall semester, but just hadn’t been communicated widely until January. He emphasized this timeline is necessary in order to get the changes made.

“The biggest driver is that if nothing is done by May, then we probably have to wait all the way till next year to do this, and then we lose a whole year of productivity,” Kuntz said.

With May just two months away, entire programs, like Crummy’s, are left sitting in limbo. The workload is already overwhelming for small programs with few faculty members, and defending a program’s existence is just one more intimidating ask.

“[DeBoer] actually described this process as sort of a well-check for the programs,” Crummy said. “But part of the problem is, I feel, that our productivity — or whatever they’re calling it — is being judged based on how well we’ve done under extremely difficult circumstances.”

To see where your program stands, scan this QR code to access the University’s data. The website includes links to the data and instructions to navigate it.



Revisiting 'Barbie' ahead of its 2024 Oscars snubbing

MCKENNA JOHNSON

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It's 2023, and Barbie is cool again. The sun rises over the horizon. The hair-raising sounds of a symphony sweep over a desert landscape as she takes center stage in her original black and white striped bathing dress, blonde hair curled up in plastic perfection, arms bendable past a 90-degree angle and tiny sunglasses perched on her head. Helen Mirren's lovely voice rains down from heaven like a gift to our ears.

Yet in 2024, "Barbie" might not be cool enough for the Academy Awards, airing on March 10. "Barbie," released last July, has a lot of things going for it and has raked in critical and popular acclaim for months. Despite getting eight Oscar nominations, it's been left out of the Best Actress and Best Director categories, two awards that Margot Robbie and Greta Gerwig, respectively, were expected to at least be nominated for.

The film, also featuring Ryan Gosling — who was nominated for Best Supporting Actor — and America Ferrera — who was nominated for Best Supporting Actress — tells the story of Barbie (Robbie) traveling from Barbie Land to the human world, leaving the picture-perfect plastic world behind to discover the dark reality of the real world.

It took me six months to get around to watching the movie, after watching the pink pilgrimage of moviegoers flock to theaters last summer from across Lake Michigan, where I was sequestered for four months on an island without any way to view it. This Barbie's job was Island Reporter, with mainland movie theater viewing privileges sold separately.

After finally watching it over Christmas break, I was ready to watch a movie about a doll. It kind of was, but it also succeeds at being more. It's kind of weird, but it works, with its combination of nostalgia and a devoted audience.

One of the movie's biggest strengths is that it leans into the fact that it's fun and kind of absurd, yet manages to juxtapose itself with more meaningful, bigger-picture zeitgeist moments. In one of its most pivotal scenes, Barbie is being chased by Will Ferrell after almost being twist-tied back into a box, before coming face-to-face



BARRETT CLEMENT | MONTANA KAIMIN

with a figure we later learn is Ruth Handler (Rhea Perlman), the creator of Barbie, who sparks Barbie's soul-searching endeavors and returns for some of the films most beautiful scenes.

When Barbie Land has been overrun by Kens, led by Gosling, it's taken back with the help of Gloria's (Ferrera) now-iconic "How hard it is to be a woman" speech. "Barbie" has a lot to say — dare I say, too much at some points, like it can't decide between showing us and telling us its main points — but it's also just fun.

It confronts and accepts the idea that

Barbie has created unrealistic expectations for women, while at the same time saluting Barbie's historically feminist place on toy shelves. It's nostalgic and playful and doesn't take itself too seriously until it does. If Stereotypical Barbie herself can recognize and break out of societal double-standards, we're going in the right direction. It's just a perk that the message comes packaged in sparkly pink plastic vibes. That's how you get the social media generation obsessed with something — remember the "This Barbie is..." social media templates that had everyone from

millennials to Gen Alpha in a chokehold for months?

"Barbie" is also just cinematically and technically clean and diverse. The transition scene sets, where the Barbies and guests travel to and from Barbie Land, were all made by props, not CGI. It's just one part that makes the movie so fun to watch.

"Barbie" clearly knows its audience. I may not have played with Barbies regularly as a child, but I could easily picture the pink convertible in the desert landscape and every other mode of transportation neatly packaged on a Walmart shelf, waiting to be circled in the Kohl's Christmas catalog.

Robbie has since publicly discussed she's not upset about being left out of the Oscars shortlist — "There's no way to feel sad when you know you're this blessed," she said in a discussion with SAG-AFTRA — but director Greta Gerwig should have had her name on the list. Gerwig's Hollywood solo directorial debut in 2017, "Ladybird," followed by "Little Women" in 2019, quickly established her as a powerhouse filmmaker. She uses similar themes of the power of women in "Barbie," though for a new audience with a fresher approach this time, and is incredibly successful.

It was quite the year for movies, Robbie also agreed, and the Best Director category may have been tough, but the film's overall message rings ironically true with the snub. The irony continues with a recent announcement that Gosling has been tapped to perform "I'm Just Ken" live at the awards on top of his nomination. Which, objectively, will probably be hilarious — it just would have been better if he were performing after Gerwig's name is announced.

For all its strengths, what really makes a movie like "Barbie" special is who you see it with. For example, I saw it with my mom, whom I've never seen wear pink. After pausing the movie to grab a blanket, I came down the spiral staircase to see my mom staring right at me, hastily shoved into a small pink cardigan dug from the back of her closet, last worn at my grandma's funeral 10 years ago. We laughed together for a long time, the doubled-over kind where you can't breathe.

The "Barbie" movie was good, but that moment with my mom made it 100 times better.

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A farewell to my peanut-sized partner

HALEY YARBOROUGH

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Pets have always played an influential role in my life. I grew up in what my dad described as our own little “zoo,” a household filled with bunnies, hamsters, rats, chinchillas and plenty of other small and large animals I can’t count on one hand. I cherished and continue to cherish (most of) these pets, but for some reason, my Syrian hamster, Peanut, left a lasting impression on me.

Maybe it’s because she was with me through at least half of my undergraduate career, or maybe it’s because she lived in my wall for five days. Either way, I bawled my eyes out when she died. Some pets come into our lives and leave a small hole in our hearts when they leave. Peanut did just that.

“Some pets come into our lives and leave a small hole in our hearts when they leave.”

The first time I saw her, she resembled raw hamburger meat. My best friend, Sophie, bred two of her hamsters, and after a particularly gruesome incident where I lost my chinchilla, I was looking for a fun-sized friend. She was only a few weeks old when I made the perilous 14-hour drive from California to Montana. With her strapped in the passenger side of my Jeep, barely the size of a peanut, I was unsure if she’d make the journey.

She proved much more resilient than what other hamster horror stories may suggest. Still, she upheld the standard that hamsters are an absolute pain in the ass to take care of.

My first few months living with her in ROAM Student Living were nothing short of hell. So hellish, in fact, that I ranted about why no one should get a hamster in an op-ed to the Kaimin.

Long story short, she was an expert escape artist and managed to survive in my bathroom wall for around five days before maintenance had to tear it apart to get her out.

I still remember when one of the main-

tenance workers — a large, barrel-chested man — saw Peanut emerge from the depths of her hobbit hole. Eyes wild, hair greasy and screeching like her distant relative, the Pika, Peanut was straight-up feral. The man told me he “ain’t picking it up.” I didn’t blame him.

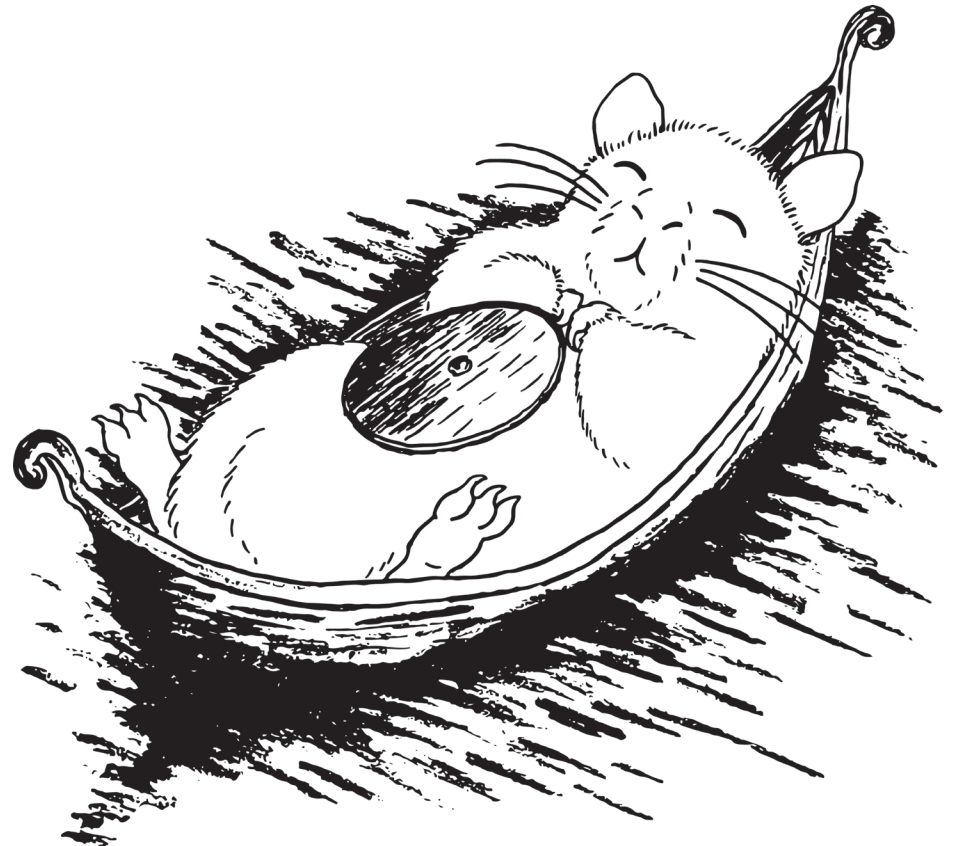
Despite getting off to a rocky start, my rage ebbed away as Peanut’s vacations to the bathroom became less frequent. When I moved to Seeley Lake for a summer internship, she became one of my few sources of company. Living in a trailer alone, we’d spend our nights watching movies, drinking whiskey (only me, I swear) and making stupid TikTok videos I still refuse to post. At the end of the summer, we were practically inseparable. So inseparable, I made the questionable decision to bring her to a party.

Even though she chewed through her portable carrier, she spent the rest of the night chilling in my coworker’s pocket, watching us play Cards Against Humanity with half-lidded eyes.

After that, activity with Peanut slowed down. She was getting older and had developed a common disease in hamsters called Wet-tail. With frequent visits to the veterinarian, I was always on edge about when she would go. I’d heard horror stories about hamsters dying in traumatizing fashion, but I knew Peanut would beat the odds. She always did, right? She’d survived so much; my trip to Montana, nearly a week in my walls, a summer in a trailer, a late-night party and even my goddamn apartment flooding.

Sure, I expected it eventually, but that didn’t make losing her any less hard. After more than two years of adventures, she died on a cold January morning. Originally, I joked with my friend about doing a pseudo-Viking funeral for her. The ceremony would be something similar to putting her on a little raft in the Clark Fork River and shooting a flaming arrow as she floated to Hamster-halla. I settled on burying her under a tree overlooking Missoula.

Call me overdramatic, but to me, she was more than a pet. She was a friend. She had been through so much with me and I don’t think I realized how much her presence affected me even after she was gone. Now, every time I hike up to that tree, I’m reminded of our adventures and comforted by the memories I shared with my peanut-sized partner.



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From collapse to comeback: UM Rugby's revival under freshman leadership

HOPE MORRISON

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As a part of his Big Sky Experience, freshman Gregory White walked down the Oval during the Bear Fair, an event to showcase all of University of Montana's student groups, and stopped to talk to the UM Rugby team about joining. After White revealed he had a few years of rugby experience, junior Aiden Tollefson said, "We need a new president. Do you want to be president?"

Founded in 1968, the UM Griz Rugby team, formerly the Jester's Rugby Team, is one of the oldest club sports on campus. Despite having achieved three major championship titles in the past, making it historically one of the most successful teams on campus, the team ceased to exist after the COVID-19 pandemic.

With its final post in 2019, the team's social media went inactive, and soon after, it disappeared from Griz Hub. The reasoning for this was simple: Common COVID-19 restrictions made it impossible for the team to practice, and the main officers and organizers of the club graduated and moved away, so the rugby team disappeared with them.

When Tollefson came to UM as a freshman in 2021, he was disappointed to find no rugby opportunities on campus, as the sport had been a significant part of his life since middle school.

"I wanted to play rugby, but there was no team, so I wanted to change that," Tollefson said.

After joining Missoula's rugby team, the Maggots, he met other UM students who shared his passions.

"They came up to me and said that they wanted to start up [the rugby team] again, and I thought that was so cool, I was all for it," he said.

With the help of the previous UM rugby president, Chris Walker, Tollefson knew the first step to restarting the team was finding a coach. Through the city team, the group got in contact with George Mullen, a dedicated member of the Montana Rugby Referee Society, who volunteered to coach the team.

"He really cares about us. He's almost a father figure to me," Tollefson said.

Now, with newly appointed rugby president White on board, the team is trying to get its footing again with a freshman at the helm. "We were thinking about the future of the team, so we wanted to get a freshman to be the president so we could keep

it going," Tollefson said.

With White's leadership, the team has found major success. Last October, Rugby was re-recognized as an intramural sport by the student government and rejoined the sports union. The team also played three major matches against Montana State University, Montana Technological University and the University of Idaho, and so far has reigned undefeated.

For the upcoming spring season, the team has already lined up its rematches and is looking for possible new competitors. White has been instrumental in the process of changing the team's image from the Jester's Club to Griz Rugby. He's found that for recruitment and outreach, "it's very important to be more school-centered" and hopes to change the team's name to "The Grizzlies" soon.

However, the journey to success has not been easy, as the team has dealt with a lack of equipment, players, usable practice space and adequate funding. While the group was left with the equipment from years past, the equipment is heavily used and beaten. Many of the jerseys, last replaced in 2019, have major tears and even blood stains. The team was also left without "necessary" equipment, such as tackle pads and a pump to inflate the rugby ball. The lack of equipment has led the players to instead tackle each other without the proper safety gear.

To replace and buy these items, as well as to fund the costs of traveling to compete, White has attempted to go through avenues like the student government and the sports union. However, due to his inexperience with their processes, White was unable to receive funding or be reimbursed for travel, leaving players to pay up to \$300 out-of-pocket, he said. In response to their struggle, the Associated students of the University of Montana business manager, Georgia Balius, said "[The ASUM team] and office are always 100% open and are here to advocate for student groups and help them with anything funding related." She also said ASUM is committed to making funding processes as easy as possible for students.

For the upcoming school year, White was able to submit the proper documents in time to get more funding and will be working to get the worn and missing items replaced soon. White said the team was "not in the loop" about previous meetings it could have attended in order to receive funding for this season.

With the new addition of the inflatable

indoor practice facility, which will occupy the field that the rugby team and other intramural sports have been using, is now unavailable, forcing teams to compete for other spaces like Dornblaser Field and the Fort Missoula Park. Both of those are off campus, making practices and games inaccessible to students without a car.

The team this year has significantly struggled with recruitment and growing its numbers, with space struggles as a major factor. With turnover of the rugby officers, the team has also failed to reconnect with its previous social media accounts, making marketing and outreach difficult. While the members attempt to recruit as many players as possible in person, White finds that the main reason for players not joining is that "they just don't want to get hurt, or people don't know what rugby is."

"There's more of a technique to tackling in rugby. The rules are more strict, so it's safer than football," said senior and long-time player, Kapono Mossman.

Despite the obstacles, the team is optimistic about its future. In the next few

weeks, White's main priority is recruitment.

"It doesn't matter if you're brand new, most rugby players are brand new," White said. "It doesn't matter where you come from, it doesn't matter what you do, you can play rugby."

"I wanted to play rugby, but there was no team, so I wanted to change that."

-Aiden Tollefson



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UM club Frisbee team, 'Pillowfight,' gives players welcoming, accessible competition

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Over the last decade, Ultimate Frisbee has become more mainstream, with organizations like USA Ultimate to arrange leagues and universities across the country with competitive teams, all while maintaining the welcoming vibe and personable environment that defined the sport's more niche years.

Now, there are two dozen members of the University of Montana women's Ultimate Frisbee team, Pillowfight (named after the idea of a team using pillows for padding during practice).

"I think it's a great sport, especially for college students who are maybe struggling to get by or save [money] or whatever, all you need is a pair of running shoes," Pillowfight co-captain Ellie McCarty said. "You're just here to play, and as long as you're here to have fun and work hard, then that's it, you got all you need for this one."

The sport itself is a seven vs. seven non-contact game played in an area with similar dimensions to a football field, the goal being advancing the Frisbee to the endzone. Referees are entirely absent at all levels of Ultimate Frisbee, and players must call out and determine fouls among themselves.

"I'm a super competitive person and so I can get caught up in the rules, and I want it to be fair," McCarty said. "But ultimately, something big about Frisbee as a culture is the spirit of the game, you keep yourselves accountable, you keep your teammates accountable and you play with honor and respect."

This accountability can lead to greater cooperation between opposing teams, as the Ultimate Frisbee community is incredibly close.

"A really big part of Frisbee culture is you host teams in your own home, and you give them a place to stay and you're not enemies, you're friends," McCarty said. "You're competitive on the field, but off the field you're joking, you're encouraging and you're lifting each other up. That's something unique, I don't know of any other sport that is really like that."

The good will felt between teams naturally translates from one teammate to another, with players from Pillowfight often hanging out off the field, which helps further strengthen the team's bond and provides a built-in community for anyone who joins the team.

"My sophomore year of college, I was

having a really hard time, and kind of as a last resort to meet people before I looked elsewhere to go to school, I got on the student government site for all the clubs and saw that Pillowfight was an Ultimate Frisbee team I was like, 'oh, I've played pickup Frisbee before, I'll give it a shot,'" McCarty said. "I went, and it was a legit practice and I grew up playing sports all my life and I was like, 'this feels really good to be part of a team again' and everyone was very welcoming and fun, and just kind of let me jump right in and I've been on the team ever since."

McCarty has been on the team for two-and-a-half years and she will graduate with her bachelor's degree in social work this semester. The on-campus community also expands beyond Pillowfight to its opposite, Smokejump, which is the men's team.

"We work with [Smokejump] a lot. Sometimes we practice with them, we like to do team bonding with them and they're a great group of guys and it's really fun to hang out," Pillowfight co-president Gracie Hietala said.

The team has also left a lasting impact on former player Shelbie White, who came back to coach the team and help revitalize the club after the COVID-19 pandemic.

"I mean, it took off before COVID and then I'm sure just like any other sport during COVID, it really took a huge hit," White said. "So, the last four years have been really about growth and growing that sport and community back up. Statewide, it's gotten really big with different clubs, like there's a women's All-Stars team."

The club hasn't had All-Star representation yet, but the team has finished close to the top of its group in recent years, and hopes to make it to regionals compete against some of the best teams in the country.

"I think it's a great sport, especially for college students who are maybe struggling to get by or save [money] or whatever, all you need is a pair of running shoes."

-Ellie McCarty, Pillowfight co-captain



Captains Ellie McCarty, left, and Bridget Benson, right, lead UM's Ultimate Frisbee team, Pillowfight, during warm ups on Feb. 29. Pillowfight began in 2012. **CHRIS LODMAN | MONTANA KAIMIN**



The University of Montana Women's Ultimate Frisbee team, Pillowfight, gathered at Washington-Grizzly Stadium before practice on Feb. 29. Pillowfight was declared the "Funniest Women's Ultimate Frisbee College Team in the Nation" by five Ultimate, a national Frisbee apparel company, in 2018 and 2019, according to a past Kaimin article. **CHRIS LODMAN | MONTANA KAIMIN**

Girls on Shred makes snowsports accessible

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Girls on Shred hosted its 15th annual Montana Snowbowl Ride Day on March 2, where riders of all abilities connected to enjoy the snow and meet other girls, non-binary and transgender people interested in snowsports. Girls on Shred, established in 2010, aims to eliminate barriers to entry for marginalized groups by providing gear, lessons, mentorship and lift tickets to those in financial need.

“Over the years, it’s safe to say we’ve reached over 2,000 participants,” said Bridget Creel, a board member and volunteer with Girls on Shred.

This winter, Girls on Shred provided season long passes, lessons and equipment for three children from Mineral County to learn how to ski and snowboard at the Lookout Pass Ski and Recreation Area. Girls on Shred will be hosting its last ride day of the season at Lookout Pass for intermediate and advanced riders on March 24.

“It takes a community to build a community,” said Samantha Veysey Gibbons, who has been the organization’s director since 2013.

Those interested in volunteering can reach out to girlsonshred@gmail.com. No snowsports experience is necessary.



LEFT: Aimee McQuilkin enjoys soft turns in the East Bowl at Montana Snowbowl. Riders who attended the Girls on Shred event separated into various groups across the mountain, with volunteers riding in each group.

BELOW: Sarah Lucero removes bindings from a snowboard provided by Girls on Shred to an aspiring snowboarder in an effort to eliminate barriers to entry.



ABOVE: Director of Girls on Shred Samantha Veysey Gibbons, left, applies glitter to Macy McQuilkin, right, before the ride event. McQuilkin volunteered to lead intermediate and advanced ride groups around the mountain, as well as teach beginner snowboarders on the bunny hill.



ABOVE: Wren Matlitch, left, and Nani Murray, right, regroup at the Girls on Shred tent. Products from Black Coffee Roasting Company and Veera Donuts were provided to riders at no cost.