

# MONTANA KAIMIN

## ‘PULLING THE RUG OUT’

**Faculty survey shows  
COVID-19’s lasting impact**

Story by Emily Tschetter  
Photos by Nate Sanchez



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March 3, 2022 | Volume 124 | Issue No. 21



**MK** 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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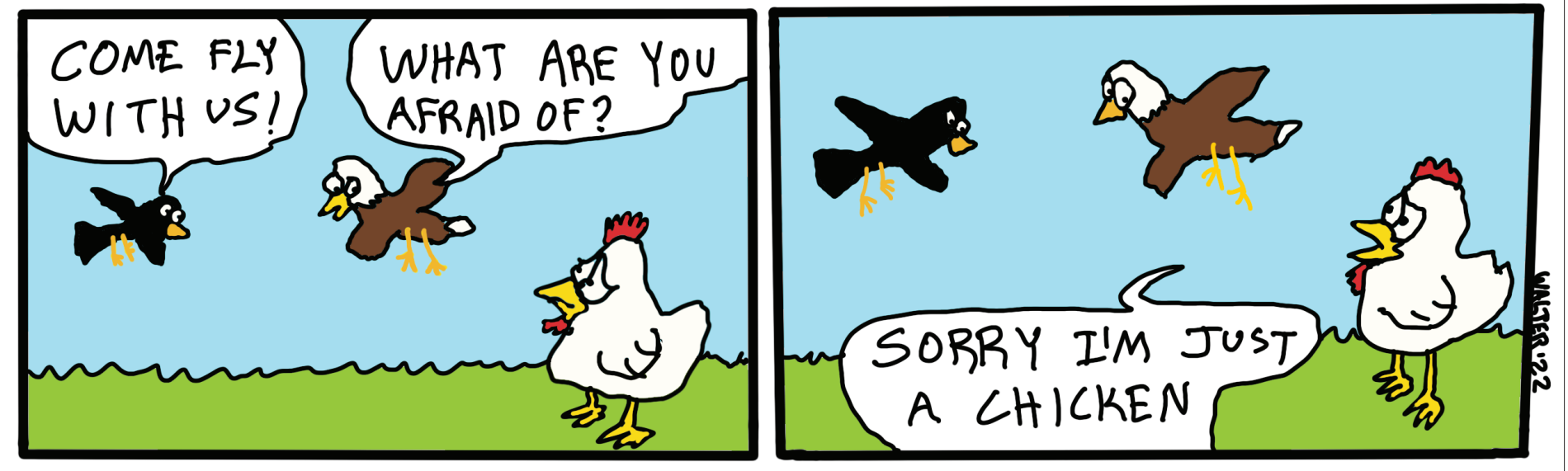
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THE GARAGE: SE 2 EP 7



WALTER MEDCRAFT | MONTANA KAIMIN

‘Pray for us’: Missoulians protest Russian invasion



Mykhailo Lytiuga, a Ukrainian American Missoula resident, protests the Russian invasion of his home country outside the steps of the Missoula County Courthouse, Feb. 26. Lytiuga said he still has many family members who can't flee the capital city of Kyiv. "All I ask is for people to pray for us," he said. The rally was organized Ukrainian and Russian Americans and other Missoulians as a show of support for the people of Ukraine. **ANTONIO IBARRA | MONTANA KAIMIN**

Register to vote

With the 2022 midterms coming up in November, it is imperative that everyone is registered to vote. Voting is a fundamental right given to all Americans, it doesn't matter whether you're a Democrat, Republican, or independent. Make your voice heard in these elections, for every vote is a vote to preserve our democracy!

Here's what's at stake in Montana: Native American voting rights. Ever since Republicans regained both houses in 2009, they have been working to limit Native American voting. There are no polling places on reservations, so third parties would have to haul votes from the reservation to the nearest polling place. Everyone is aware that many Native Americans live below the poverty line and don't have the capacity to leave the reservation often.

Another is higher education, if the Republicans get the super-majority here in Montana, then funding for higher education will start to slowly decline as it is right now for two-year colleges. Education pushes each person to be the best they can be for their academia. With lower funding, this will not be the case, less enrollment, little funding for programs essential to real-world experiences, etc.

So, if you care about these topics as much as I do, you'll register to vote and make sure to vote in the primaries and the general elections when those come up. Your voice matters and should be heard! This is what America is about, power to the people.

Here is where you can register <https://www.mtpirg.org/register>

—O'Shay Birdinground

**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:

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

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Briefs: Masks not required, Aber Hall opens, Griz sweep Cats

GRIFFEN SMITH  
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MASK MANDATE LIFTED

Beginning Thursday, March 3, there will be no mask mandate in buildings, classrooms and labs at the University of Montana campus, a move that came after COVID-19 cases began subsiding in Missoula County.

UM made the decision to remove the mandate after the Montana Commissioner for Higher Education advised all public Montana universities to phase out coronavirus restrictions as the omicron variant slowed down across the country.

Masks had been required at UM since Sept. 20, when COVID-19 cases rose across the country from new variants. By the peak in mid-February, there were more than 3,000 active cases in the county, including almost 200 UM cases, according to Missoula City-County Health Department data. On Monday, there were 300 total active cases in the county, 15 hospitalizations and 13 UM-affiliated cases.

Some exceptions to the lifted mandate include the Curry Health Center and UM buses, according to a Feb. 24 UM Coronavirus Response Team email.

UM CHOIR GOES ABROAD

After waiting two years, UM's chamber choir will have the chance to travel abroad, compete and perform in some of the best venues in Europe.

The choir, made up of students from majors across campus, will embark on

a journey to Spokane for a regional competition in March, before flying to England and Germany this summer. According to the group's advisor, the trip will be the group's first international competition.

The chamber choir previously qualified for the competitions, but pandemic restrictions halted any chance of performing.

With loosened restrictions, UM's choir will first travel to London, with performances at the historic Cadogan Hall and Southwark Cathedral. Then, the team will go to Germany, competing in an exchange with the University of Saarbrücken, and debut as a competing choir in the International Choral Competition Marktoberdorf.

The choir will wrap up its trip with performances in Munich and at the World War II-era Dachau concentration camp, and a concert in Missoula's sister city, Neckargemünd.

ABER HALL OPEN FOR SERVICE

Essential UM employees from several buildings are relocating across campus after the rebirthed Aber Hall opened as an office space.

Aber, which used to be a residence hall, has been under construction since August. The building opened in January, allowing some departments to trickle into the first six floors when convenient, but a majority of student-facing departments, like the registrar and career services, started the move this week.

The relocation should not interrupt any student services, said Dave Kuntz, director of strategic communications at

UM. While the hall had originally been slated to open at the end of last semester, supply chain delays kept the office space shuttered.

The move is a part of a larger UM campus renovation plan to demolish the east side of the Lommasson building, making way for a new dining hall.

UM replanned the transition to take place over the semester, picking ideal times for the departments to move. By next week, the Office of Disability Equity, Montana 10, Experiential Learning and Career Success, Office for Student Success, the Testing Center, TRIO, the Registrar's Office, Financial Aid, Global Engagement, Admissions, IT, Dining Services, Business Services and Student Accounts, Graduate School and Human Resources will be completely moved into Aber, which is open during normal UM business hours.

GRIZ BASKETBALL SWEEPS MSU

Both the women's and men's basketball teams took decisive victories at home over Montana State University last weekend, picking up a key game over the league-leading Cats.

The Lady Griz, which played Feb. 26, easily handled the Lady Cats, outscoring the competition in all four quarters and winning 71-57. The victory moved the women's team to 11-7 in conference play, and one step closer to a first-round bye in the Big Sky Conference Tournament mid-March.

The men, who played Feb. 27, battled MSU in a tighter game, but finished on top 80-74. The win handed the Cats their fourth conference loss of the season on an otherwise successful conference campaign, leading all teams by one game with the regular season wrapping up.

The Griz, which are fifth in the Big Sky, are on the bubble for a first-round bye into the conference tournament. Both teams have two games left in the regular season, with the women finishing on the road, while the men anchor at home.

The Big Sky Tournament, which starts March 7 in Boise, Idaho, will determine whether the basketball teams will compete in the NCAA Championships later this month.

Blotter

CHRISTINE COMPTON  
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Between Feb. 19 and 25, the University of Montana Police Department logged just six crimes, probably because of the polar winds whipping criminals back indoors. A whopping third of them were criminal mischief — which sounds wild until you realize it's only two crimes on the official log.

SATURDAY 2/19 - SUSPICIOUS PERSON

A middle-aged man walked up to a random passerby and said, "I'm your guardian, and I will be standing watch," during a visit to Don Anderson Hall for some high schoolers at 4:30 p.m. The man — with light brown hair, a light jacket, tan pants and a mask — wasn't found after officers swept the area.

SATURDAY 2/19 - SWIPE THE CARD SWIPER

Someone ripped Jesse's front door card reader from its secure spot on a wall at around 11:45 p.m. The card reader hung miserably by its wires until an electrician replaced it with a temporary fix. Now, the fun part begins — going through hours of footage to identify the person who did it.

SATURDAY 2/19 - FUCK BITCHES, LOSE MONEY

A resident assistant in Miller spotted scandalous graffiti strewn across a bulletin board while completing their weekend rounds. Etched in mechanical pencil was the phrase "Fuck bitches, get money." While erasable, this is considered vandalism, and perpetrators can be charged for the replacement of the board. Irony.

SUNDAY 2/20 - TERRIBLE TIMING

A Jesse RA walked into an elevator in the wee hours of the morning to discover every RA's favorite thing: An underage student standing with a Bud Light Seltzer Cranberry. "What's in your hand?" the RA asked. "An empty can," the student replied. It was not an empty can. At the elevator's next stop, the RA had the student pour out the drink and recycle it before issuing a student conduct referral.

SUNDAY 2/20 - CAR VS. DUMPSTER

Around 4:30 a.m. a car hit a dumpster with a loud slam at Cinnabar and Emigrant Court. The hit was called in after someone heard the sudden impact. When officers arrived, the only trace left behind was shattered glass. UMPD has no suspects.

TUESDAY 2/22 - DUMPSTER VS. CAR

In a twist, the second dumpster-car clash came with the wind. A dumpster was blown by high-speed gusts into an innocent car parked in Lot H at 2:50 p.m., leaving \$2,000 worth of damage. Because Mother Nature was the criminal here, a report was sent to risk management.

TUESDAY 2/22 - FREEZEBREAK FLOOD

At 3:30 p.m., a major pipe in the Dahlberg Arena broke, spraying water in powerful bursts near the student athletics study area. Water steadily trickled down the stairs while plumbers worked to plug the flow. The plumbers fixed the burst pipe, but not before the elevator shaft filled with five feet of water.

THURSDAY 2/24 - ASSAULT IN MILLER

A student was assaulted in Miller Hall after two other students pushed them to the ground and spat on them. The student reported it to an RA, and the two students are going through the student conduct process.

The Weekly Crossword by Margie E. Burke

1	2	3	4	5		6	7	8	9		10	11	12	13
14						15					16			
17						18				19				
20						21			22					
			23					24						
25	26	27					28					29	30	
31						32					33			
34						35				36				
37				38	39				40	41				
42				43					44					
		45						46						
47	48						49					50	51	52
53						54				55				
56						57				58				
59						60				61				

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ACROSS

- 1 Squander
- 6 Blood flow blockage
- 10 Ice mass
- 14 "Password" host Ludden
- 15 Derriere
- 16 Skater's jump
- 17 Artificial leg?
- 18 West-to-east wind
- 20 Bonds had 762
- 22 Live, after "in"
- 23 Wind indicator
- 24 Censor sound
- 25 Running late
- 28 Smoothie makers of
- 31 Blue bloods
- 33 Caviar source
- 34 Farrah co-star
- 35 Droning sound
- 36 Paul Bunyan's blue ox
- 37 Sixth sense, briefly
- 38 Portable warmer
- 42 Editor's concern
- 44 Overage
- 45 Don't just stand there
- 46 Grilling site
- 47 Seward's state
- 49 1948 Bob Hope comedy, "The \_\_\_\_\_"
- 53 Don Juan, e.g.
- 55 Competitor
- 56 CBer's sign-off
- 57 Doberman daddy
- 58 Senior dances
- 59 The life of Riley, say
- 60 Some tributes

61 On edge

DOWN

- 1 Neighbor of B.C.
- 2 Type of sax
- 3 2019 film, "Queen & \_\_\_\_\_"
- 4 Put on the air
- 5 Competitor
- 6 Frasier's surname
- 7 Telescope part
- 8 Feedbag morsel
- 9 One of three in the delivery room
- 10 Type of owl
- 11 Try the patience
- 12 Make over
- 13 Secluded valley
- 19 Low double digits
- 21 Menu option
- 24 Point a finger at
- 25 Like some beans
- 26 Expunge

- 27 Top 40 lists
- 28 Wayne, aka Batman
- 29 Judges' attire
- 30 Clairvoyants
- 32 Crowd's call
- 36 Boomerang, as a plan
- 38 Satisfy a thirst
- 39 "Three Musicians" artist
- 40 Command to Fido
- 41 Selected passage
- 43 Streetcar name?
- 46 Copenhagen natives
- 47 Burn soother
- 48 Molten flow
- 49 Peel with a knife
- 50 Calling company?
- 51 Rotating parts
- 52 Word in a threat
- 54 Prefix with life or wife

Answers to Previous Crossword:

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



CLARISE LARSON  
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OLIVIA SWANT-JOHNSON | MONTANA KAIMIN

LEO (JULY 23–AUG. 22): No, you weren't dreaming, and honestly you weren't even that drunk when you decided to order an alien dildo. When you squeeze it, it lays an egg inside you. But hey, I bet no one else in Missoula has one, so that makes you the No. 1 alien dildo mother.

VIRGO (AUG. 23–SEP. 22): We know you like to be prepared, but maybe don't keep the fleshlight and flashlight in the same communal drawer. We know you did it because they are relatively the same size and fit perfectly together for quick use, but please, just don't.

LIBRA (SEP. 23–OCT. 22): Why didn't anyone tell you the ornate glass sculpture you bought at Underground Thrift was actually a dildo? Smh you literally posted a pic of it on Instagram.

SCORPIO (OCT. 23–NOV. 21): Your partner can't tell if you actually swallowed the key to the handcuffs during sex or if you were just joking. They may be pink and fluffy, but a bitch got work tomorrow and they do not follow the UM dining uniform standards.

SAGITTARIUS (NOV. 22–DEC. 22): We know you don't have an indoor voice, but like, shut up — nipple clamps can't hurt that bad. Lewis and Clark's walls are thin and your window is open. For fuck's sake, my guy.

CAPRICORN (DEC. 23–JAN. 19): When someone needs help, you can be the responsible friend. Most people carry ibuprofen or tampons in their backpack for emergencies, but you keep multiple travel vibrators for the homies hurting for a squirting. Thank you for helping those in need <3.

AQUARIUS (JAN. 20–FEB. 18): Nobody gets you. Nobody understands that you like your dick in a cage. Nobody understands you using it as a metaphor for how society has trapped you from cumming. I mean blossoming. Nothing hits like post-nut-clarity.



# Debate narrows over McGill Hall asbestos lawsuit

Griffen Smith  
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The parents and guardians of some children who enrolled in University of Montana child care could get a final answer this year on whether UM and the state of Montana are responsible for unnecessary exposure of asbestos to their kids.

In early 2019, UM reported dangerous levels of asbestos in McGill Hall, the UM building that housed ASUM Child Care. Concerned parents of children exposed to the asbestos met with attorneys to suss out possible legal action.

Eventually, a complaint was filed in May 2020.

The complaint, filed against both UM and the state of Montana, alleges the University knew of asbestos in many spaces on campus, including two childcare centers in McGill Hall and the Craighead Apartments.

“The University then inexplicably ignored its own policies and procedures regarding the treatment, detection and monitoring of asbestos in these buildings known to contain asbestos,” the suit states. “As a result, the children

attending the ASUM Child Care Centers were exposed to extremely high levels of asbestos.”

The complaint states University officials did not follow correct procedure when people came into contact with the cancer-causing mineral. It alleges that parts of the daycare had unacceptable amounts of asbestos on counters and shelves.

The state of Montana responded for UM later that year, arguing that while there has been asbestos in many buildings, including McGill and Craighead, no child, infant or toddler came into unhealthy contact with asbestos.

Both sides agreed there has been asbestos in UM buildings for years, like many other older buildings across the U.S. While nearly 50 countries have banned asbestos altogether, the U.S. allows it to remain in buildings through regulations like particle testing and sealing over.

Asbestos, a mineral common in older building materials, can cause deadly diseases like mesothelioma and lung cancer, sometimes developing nearly 30 years after exposure.

The complaint alleges officials knew the dangers of asbestos in student housing and daycare facilities since 1983, and knew of

McGill Hall’s asbestos for decades. While the rebuttal agreed there was asbestos on campus, it disputes the knowledge of exact places with known asbestos left untreated.

The University first reported unacceptable asbestos levels in McGill Hall in early 2019, relocating the preschool and later completely closing off the building two weeks later. UM spent more than \$200,000 sealing off any detected asbestos.

The suit, brought by the parents of 11 children who attended both Craighead and McGill preschools, alleges UM closed off three offices Dec. 12, 2018, after facilities personnel found a white powder while fixing a circulation fan.

The University then sent all staff close to the exposure to St. Patrick’s Hospital for medical evaluations. Yet UM allegedly did not tell faculty, students or parents of the daycare children, according to the parents’ lawyers. The state and UM say this narrative misstates the evidence.

On Jan. 19, 2019, University staff swabbed dust from the tops of shelving, countertops and cabinets alongside a nearby air vent in McGill. The wipes, said to the parents’ lawyers, result-

ed in contamination of the daycare center.

But UM denies the severity of the parents’ case, arguing the tests were for analysis of asbestos in McGill Hall.

“(The) defendant denies students, faculty, staff, and children in the child care center were exposed to asbestos or harm or that an ‘exposure’ occurred,” the University said in its response to the suit.

The parents argue the University was negligent to asbestos exposure, and should be held responsible for the emotional distress of their children, and held accountable for violating Montanans’ right to a clean and healthy environment.

After the two sides deliver their preliminary arguments, the case will head to the discovery phase, where the information disputed could be backed up by provided evidence. Both parties requested a trial by jury, which could play out at the Missoula County Courthouse in October 2022.

The Kaimin reached out to Paula Short, associate vice president of campus preparedness and response, but did not get a response by press time.

# ASUM VP resigns after fallout over resolution

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The vice president of the Associated Students of the University of Montana resigned at an emergency meeting amid fallout over the handling of a resolution calling for a professor’s resignation.

Canyon Lock, former VP of ASUM, resigned during the public comment period of an unusual Sunday morning ASUM Zoom meeting Feb. 27. ASUM President Noah Durnell used his executive power to convene the emergency meeting to vote on Senate Bill 89, a resolution calling for the resignation of Management Information Systems professor Clayton Looney.

“I did consider staying on out of spite, but I’m listening to the better angels of my nature and not doing that,” Lock said when addressing the Senate in the Feb. 27 meeting.

Private videos and screenshots of Looney making racist comments emerged in October, which the University deemed a non-workplace issue after a Title IX investigation. Looney is listed as the Poe Family Distinguished Faculty Fellow within the College of Business.

Calls for Lock’s resignation circulated among senators after a Feb. 23 ASUM meeting, when more than 30 people attended public comment to express frustration over SB 89’s omission from the meeting agenda after getting stalled in committees.

After an hour of public comment, Lock suggested the Senate adjourn the meeting and convene for a special meeting to vote on SB 89 that night, which the Senate voted to do unanimously.

Senators voted to pass the resolution with only a single no vote by senator Joselyn Jolly.

ASUM advisers Sarah Swager and Brian Reed from the Office of Student Success informed Durnell on Feb. 24 that the resolution was nullified because it violated Montana Code Annotated Section 2-3-202, which states agencies may not take action on any matter without giving the public 24 hours’ notice through an agenda.

Lock cited the ASUM Constitution when suggesting the special meeting to the Senate and believes he did not violate the governing body’s rules.

“My suggestion was not against anything in ASUM governing doctrines,” Lock said. “If there is a law that prohibits students who are either duly elected or appointed for the purpose of representing the interests of students at UM from action, I am proud to say I disagree with that law.”

Lock also said he would pose the same

suggestion to the Senate again if he could and called on senators to pass the nullified resolution once again at the Feb. 27 meeting.

Durnell said he knew the suggestion was in violation of Senate rules before Lock made it. Durnell said he told Lock an emergency session was not viable during the Feb. 23 meeting.

Lock responded by saying, “I can and I will,” before proceeding with the suggestion.

“There’s a nuance that wasn’t considered and our governing documents were misrepresented to the entirety of the Senate and the public commenters,” Durnell said. “I understand the sentiment and the reasons why, and I wish we could have responded exactly like we did in a way that was lawful, but it just wasn’t the case.”

Durnell sent out a campus communications email to the student body Feb. 25, clarifying the situation and naming Lock as the one who prompted the special meeting. Lock, who was not consulted ahead of the statement, was surprised when the email hit his inbox.

“I received it in my email and read it and I don’t know what the emotion was,” Lock said. “[Durnell] has a privilege to have access to emailing every student, and I think using that privilege to communicate with the entirety of the campus to do some silly politicking is irresponsible and was a strange position for me to be in.”

The Senate once again passed SB 89 on Feb. 27, with only Jolly voting no after Lock’s resignation. Lock voiced his concerns for the future impact of his involvement in the nullified bill during his resignation speech.

“I’ve really been wrestling with being slandered to 10,000 students and I think there will be long-term ramifications with these



UM students attend an emergency ASUM Senate meeting on Feb. 23 holding protest signs urging the student government body to pass a resolution calling for the firing of UM professor Clayton Looney. ASUM convened on Sunday to again vote on a resolution bill calling for the firing of Looney. **NATE SANCHEZ | MONTANA KAIMIN**

events being associated with my name when I’m searching for jobs and careers,” Lock said before the Senate.

Jorgia Hawthorne, one of the resolution’s authors, thought the Feb. 23 vote broke ASUM rules, but appreciated the attempt to expedite the process.

“I don’t think time-sensitive issues means we can disregard all our processes; we need to find a way to operate within those processes and still be able to respond to things in a timely manner,” Hawthorne said. “It was the entire body’s fault that the resolution wasn’t seen.”

Although, according to Durnell, multiple senators called for Lock’s resignation after the Feb. 23 meeting, some senators voiced support for the nullified vote despite breaking ASUM rules.

“I wholeheartedly believe that it was the fault of ASUM as a whole and not just [Lock], because not one person can make us do this. Everybody voted yes,” Margaret Bell, one of the resolution’s authors, said. “I wouldn’t have changed anything because we took immediate action. I just feel so bad that it had

to come at the cost of VP Lock.”

Durnell is confident ASUM will reunify and still govern effectively under a new vice president. He called on senators to scrutinize ASUM bylaws to avoid similar situations.

“If there’s one word I would use to describe our Senate right now, it would be resilience,” Durnell said. “Losing a vice president can be an extremely difficult position for senators, and ASUM will continue to thrive and grow following these circumstances. We just need a little bit of time to process how large the changes are.”

Public commenters widely condemned ASUM’s prioritization of rules over of urgent action. Senators, especially the resolution’s authors, are looking forward and re-examining their relationships with bureaucracy versus efficient resolution passage.

“None of us are overly qualified to be as formal and political and bureaucratic as we are,” Bell said. “It really puts a damper on the student body when ASUM comes from an angle of being above the students, and I will always try my best to work with students and not above them.”



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# ‘PULLING THE RUG OUT’



Coreen Duffy conducts the UM Chamber Chorale on Feb. 25 at the UC Ballroom at an event celebrating UM for receiving an R1 research designation. Duffy directed most of the choirs on campus in a socially distanced manner and in outdoor rehearsal spaces for the past two years using her personal microphone and keyboard. **NATE SANCHEZ | MONTANA KAIMIN**

## As mask mandate lifts, faculty addresses pandemic difficulties

*Story by Emily Tschetter*

*Photos by Nate Sanchez*

**WHEN THE** University Faculty Association, the premier union on campus, met on Feb. 18, public commenters had only one topic in mind: Loss of the mask mandate at the University of Montana.

“I started the semester teaching in person because the assumption was that we would be masked the entire time. I feel like that’s pulling the rug out from under me, and I think there are a number of students who would want to move online,” Jackson Bunch said at the meeting. Bunch is an associate professor of social sciences and director of the grant-funded Criminology Research Group. His staff page instructs students to make all office hours appointments on Zoom “due to COVID.”

Other faculty members echoed Bunch, adding concerns with the administration’s lack of technical support and clear direction to accommodate immunocompromised students. Many anticipated increased workloads by opening online options for students who started the semester in fully masked classes and now are entering spaces where wearing a mask is optional.

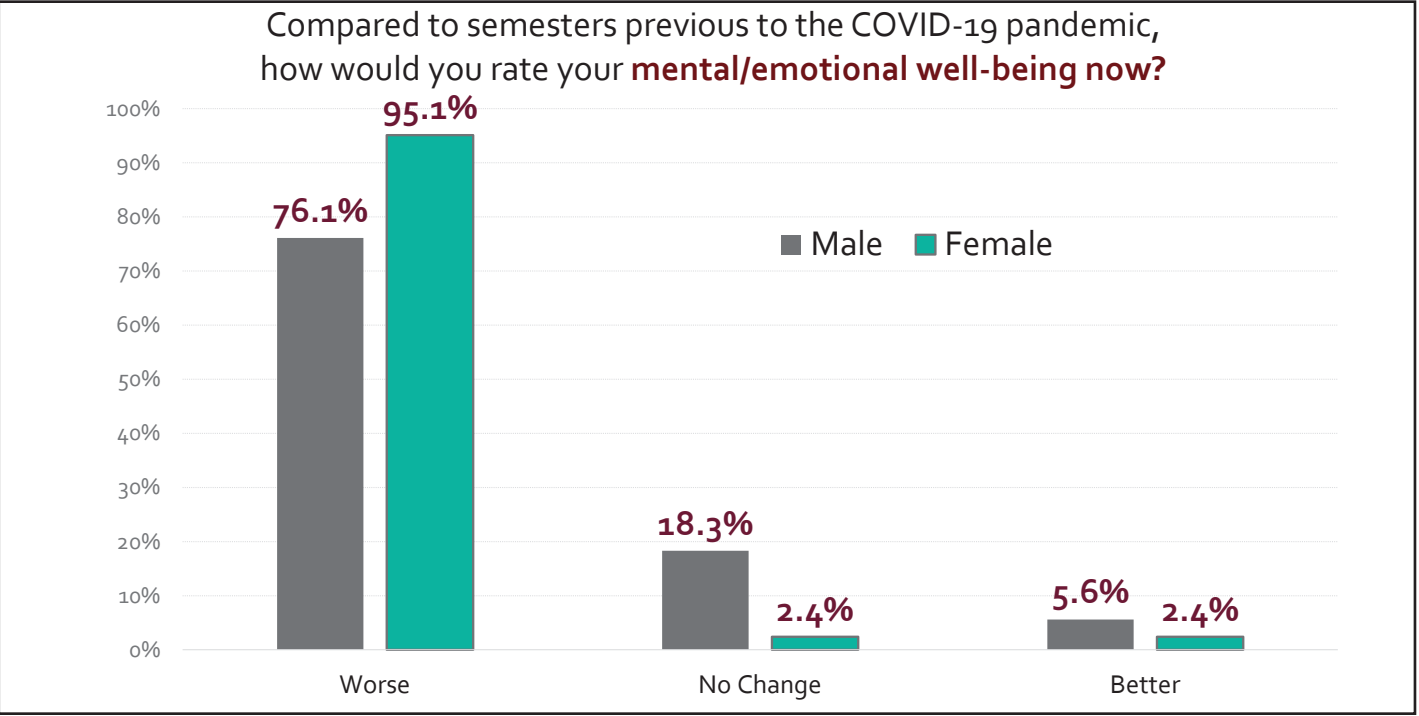
At the meeting, Amanda Dawsey, UFA’s president, presented results from a UM COVID-19 faculty experience survey co-sponsored with the Faculty Senate. Out of 191 respondents, 76% of male faculty and 95% of female faculty reported worse mental and emotional well-being now versus before the pandemic.

Despite the survey’s findings, which pointed to faculty struggling with heavier workloads and decreased creative output, the UFA board members focused on the mask policy. On Feb. 18, it was common knowledge there would be an announcement about it. Commissioner of Higher Education Clayton Christian had passed down guidance a week earlier urging the Montana University System to “begin the process of phasing out COVID-19 restrictions as soon as possible.”

On Feb. 24, the change arrived in UM’s inboxes, making masks no longer required in public spaces, effective immediately, and striking down the mandate virtually everywhere else on campus, including classrooms and labs, on March 3. With the new mask policy, instructors can not mandate masking in their own classrooms.

Montana State University in Bozeman lifted its mask mandate 10 days earlier, on Feb. 14. Missoula County Public Schools followed suit, sending its mask-optional announcement Friday at 5 p.m., effective the following Monday. That followed the Centers for Disease Control guidance on lifting the requirement in places with “low to medium” risk for serious illness caused by the COVID-19 virus and its variants. According to data, that’s 70% of the country, including Missoula.

Dave Kuntz, director of strategic communications for the University, said UM never communicated to faculty that the mask mandate would last for the entirety of the academic year. Kuntz said there is a process for changing the way



**SOURCE:** “Pandemic Stress among UM Faculty, Insights from the faculty workload survey,” University Faculty Association and Faculty Senate.

courses are delivered, which requires approval through the American Disabilities Association. He added that part of that process is IT assisting with tech support for faculty and students.

For nearly two years since the pandemic began in March 2020, UM faculty have navigated a number of challenges — from conducting hundred-person lectures entirely over Zoom, to the “hybrid model” of juggling students on their desktops with another 20 physically in the seats in front of them. With some professors using up to four different teaching formats in a single semester, the pandemic has been one of the most personally and professionally challenging periods of their lives.

With the majority of survey respondents reporting worse well-being, greater workload demands and expanded roles in supporting peers and students, professors at UM are exhausted from contending with COVID-19, and some say they want action from administrators addressing the survey’s findings.

### The results

Faculty Senate Chair Kimber McKay created the faculty COVID-19 survey after the Office of Commissioner of Higher Education tasked those in her position across the MUS with providing information on faculty post-pandemic technology use. She worked with Dawsey, the UFA head and chair of the economics department, to revise the survey, including data collection on pandemic stress, workload increases and mental health.

“It was clear to me that these issues were urgent and widespread, and I thought the survey would help to document the scope of the problem,” Dawsey said in an email to the Kaimin.

According to McKay, they rolled out the

survey for faculty during the last week of the fall 2021 semester and kept it open for about a month. In the end, 191 faculty members responded out of the 560 the survey was sent to — a 34% response rate. Dawsey and McKay presented the results to the president’s cabinet on Jan. 26, then emailed the presentation to faculty and UFA members a week later.

Dawsey and McKay were alarmed by the survey’s results regarding the impact of the pandemic on faculty who identified themselves as people of color and women, although the widespread poor mental health reported across all faculty was more expected.

“I wasn’t exactly surprised, no. I’m very familiar with the challenges faced by my colleagues, in particular my female colleagues who are also, like me, parents of school-aged children,” said McKay, who’s a full-time professor in the School of Public Health Sciences. “I was perturbed and very concerned to see the magnitude of the impact reported, particularly among female and BIPOC faculty.”

People who identified as BIPOC reported greater impacts on their workloads and productivity than those who identified as white, with 71% reporting increased teaching responsibilities and almost 86% reporting decreased research and artistic output. In contrast, 47% of white faculty respondents reported increased teaching responsibilities and 71% reported decreased research and artistic output.

Regarding gender, 71% of both female and male faculty reported decreased research and artistic output, but 58% of female faculty members reported increased service demands versus 52% of male faculty. Male faculty reported increased teaching workloads at a much higher rate than female faculty at 60% and 38%, respectively.

Dawsey and McKay both understood many of the negative results as byproducts of issues preceding the pandemic — specifically pointing to the University’s budget cuts over the past five years, which have decreased staffing in many departments.

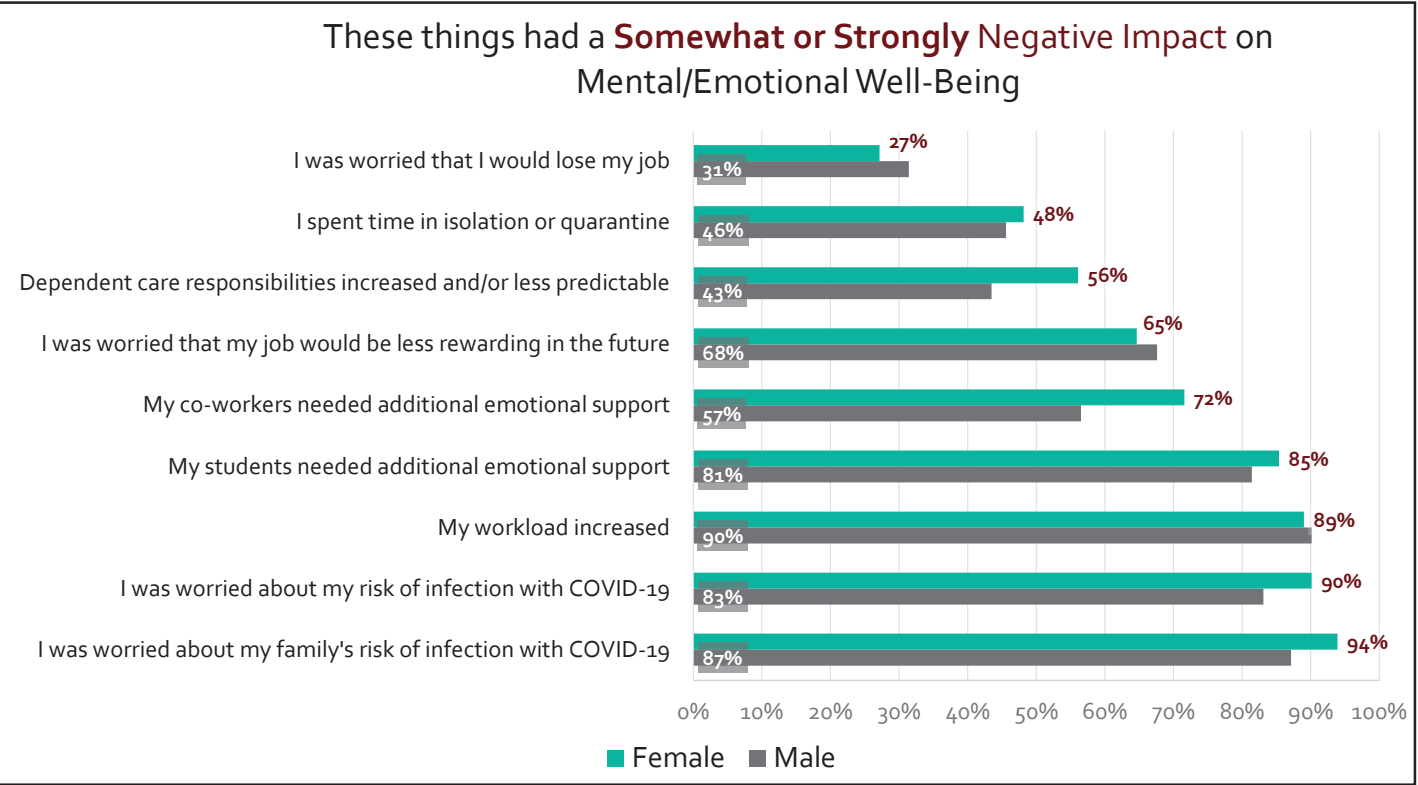
“COVID exacerbated problems that already existed. Previous cuts to faculty and staff meant there was little backup for faculty during the pandemic,” Dawsey said. “The effects of the pandemic on productivity will be delayed, but could be with us for years to come. Despite the small sample size, there were clear indications that the burden of invisible labor fell very heavily on BIPOC faculty.”

According to Kuntz, the University’s spokesperson, UM currently has 100 open staff and faculty positions it needs to fill. Kuntz attributes position losses over the past few years to budget cuts and rising costs of living in Missoula. He said UM President Seth Bodnar convened the Employee Wellbeing Task Force in January. It aims to draft an action plan by mid-March to address the concerns raised by the faculty survey.

Kuntz said the president’s response would be three-fold: the near-term actions the University can take immediately, long-term policy with the Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education and Board of Regents and the disproportionate pandemic impact on women and BIPOC faculty. Near-term actions, Kuntz said, include better accessibility and communication of faculty benefits, establishing best practices for work-life balance and speeding up the process to fill open jobs.

Anthropology professor and UFA board member G.G. Weix expressed skepticism over the survey’s methodology. She was concerned the data didn’t differentiate between online versus in-person educators. Weix also raised





SOURCE: "Pandemic Stress among UM Faculty, Insights from the faculty workload survey," University Faculty Association and Faculty Senate.

concerns about a survey run by UM faculty members themselves.

"The survey probably should have been designed and run by someone outside the faculty," Weix said. "The faculty have an interest in presenting a certain view, and they used the survey to do exactly that. A social science survey should always be designed with objectivity in mind."

The provost's office — home of the top academic officer and the direct supervisor of the deans who oversee faculty — convened a task force within the week after the Jan. 26 president's cabinet meeting to address the survey's findings.

**"We were dealing with lost dreams of how to put anything in the future together anymore. Everything got canceled so quickly." - Coreen Duffy**

The provost's office is centering Employee Recognition Day nominations around COVID-19 service. Before COVID-19 and widespread Zoom use, meetings used to be 50 minutes long. But on Zoom, there's been more of a tendency for meetings to go for a full hour. The provost's office said it is moving away from hour-long meetings as the norm again, as another measure to immediately address the survey's results.

The office is drafting a more comprehensive action plan to address the concerns from the survey, according to the provost office's Director of Operations Claudine Cellier.

"During the pandemic we haven't been able to come together and connect socially," Cellier said. "We're hoping in the coming months for ways to create new opportunities for people to come together and renew a sense of belonging in the university community."

### The burdens they bear

Mark Kayll, a 28-year veteran in UM's math department, said this academic year has been his most taxing. Kayll only used Zoom once before going remote in spring 2020, but is now well-versed in running his discrete mathematics courses online with his document camera displaying examples. But he said he spent the week after the spring 2021 semester incapacitated. He couldn't muster the energy for simple household chores.

"The exhaustion for the 2021 academic year was a slow build. When fall first started, I thought 'OK, I've got this, I can do this. It's not ideal, but I can do it.' But at the end of April, I was so tired. I've never been so tired after a year of teaching," Kayll said. "I was just a zombie around the house when finals were graded, and I attribute it to the extra lift of the HyFlex model."

HyFlex refers to professors teaching class in-person and on Zoom simultaneously. The practice gained popularity during the 2020 academic year, when the University encouraged a Zoom option for every in-person course. Kayll, like many other professors, found it impossible to divide his attention between both formats at the same time.

"It quickly gets to the point where the people who aren't in-person become sort of lost. I know

there were plenty of diligent students out there Zooming in, but I felt very little connection and that was tough," Kayll said. "It was OK for the first few days, but after several weeks of that, it became disappointing and really draining on my energy that I try to maintain in my classroom."

Weix, the anthropology professor who has been teaching at UM for more than 30 years, taught four different ways in fall 2021. She is calling on the provost to recognize the importance of teaching assistants when UM is encouraging flexibility. Though many professors at UM don't have TAs, she said they're crucial in helping professors manage all the teaching options.

"I wouldn't say I did well juggling it. I would give myself a C-plus, but I gave it my level best. If I have a TA, then I can have someone who runs the hybrid remote link while I'm standing in front of the classroom. Having a TA to help with that process is crucial," Weix said. "The most difficult thing about teaching during the pandemic is trying to teach all these modes simultaneously. You either have to have TAs, or you have to be superhuman."

Despite teaching many students online, Weix recognized the isolation of online learning and created opportunities for socially-distanced meetings. She met every week outside of the Iron Griz with her three South and Southeast Asian independent study students, despite it being out of the purview of the course description.

"I was so concerned that they had no social contact with anyone, so I had to help where I could," Weix said.

Paul Haber, a political science professor for 30 years at UM and former UFA president, opted not to teach on Zoom or online at all when

students returned to campus in fall 2021 because of frustrations with the online experience. But that meant students who only wanted to be online couldn't take the upper-division classes Haber teaches.

"I decided to pay the price of not giving that flexibility in service for maintaining higher educational experience for my students," Haber said.

Even though Haber exclusively taught in-person after spring 2021, he still struggled to communicate with students through masks. He taught classes wearing a cloth mask barely containing his voluminous beard, and he said despite communication issues, he felt compelled to support students outside of their academic needs more than ever, even though he wasn't specifically asked to do so.

"Education depends on good communication, so masks made a challenging job even more difficult. Aside from that, students are struggling a lot more than they were before the pandemic on all fronts, like financially and psychologically," Haber said. "I think you have to meet students where they're at, and I don't feel it's right to just walk around those challenges."

More than 80% of faculty responding to the survey stated students needing additional support had a somewhat or strongly negative impact on their mental and emotional well-being.

UM choral director Coreen Duffy, who's been at UM since 2018, started feeling the pressure to provide extra availability and consultations to students from the pandemic's outset. She made her classes fully asynchronous — meaning the class didn't meet at a set time — to accommodate students who returned home and were essential workers in spring 2020. She began using her chamber chorale Zoom meetings as informal social gatherings for her students after their summer 2021 choir tour of Europe was canceled.

"We were dealing with lost dreams of how to put anything in the future together anymore. Everything got canceled so quickly," Duffy said. "Suddenly we were all dressed up and had nowhere to go, so our Zooms were a way to see each other. A lot of us were very deeply quarantined at that point and not seeing anybody, and it was great to see each other's face and it helped to pick up people's spirits. We really missed each other."

Duffy returned to campus contending with extreme anxiety to preserve her students' safety and her reputation as a choir instructor. She said she was part of Facebook groups with other choir professors and students who felt choir programs shouldn't be back in person at all because of the risk of COVID-19 spreading. But Duffy's program did come back in-person in the fall 2020 semester. Duffy was creative in continuing to teach — even providing her own keyboard and microphone for outdoor ensemble rehearsals.

"When we first came back, I felt really alone and terrified because most of my colleagues in major collegiate choral programs were virtual. I was mostly afraid of our choir becoming a super spreader and causing a media uproar," Duffy

said. "There was already so much bad press regarding choirs and singing, while around the country, places were allowing in-person sports indoors, sometimes without masks, but they weren't allowing kids to sing."

### What's next?

UFA members' biggest concern in their mask mandate discussion did not involve their personal safety. Instead, it was the fate of their students who may not feel safe continuing in-person learning once masking in classrooms is optional.

"There's all kinds of considerations that I think have not been thought of. There are going to be quite a few students that are happy with the mask policy and don't want it to go away," Kayll, the math professor, said. "There's all sorts of risks the current policy addresses and working under those rules and suddenly lifting them without much of an exit strategy seems somewhat reckless."

UM administration directs all students who are no longer comfortable with attending their in-person classes to work with the Office of Disability Equity for assistance, but professors like Duffy whose classes have no Zoom option are at a loss for supporting their immunocompromised students.

"I think it's too soon and putting everybody in danger. It's too late for someone to drop out, but if they feel unsafe there's little that can be done," Duffy said. "My hope is that I will ask everybody to continue wearing masks for rehearsals and that they will. If there are some who refuse, there's nothing I can do about it."

The UFA members expressed concern with the rollout and support for teachers who may be shifting class formats and significantly increasing their workload. But they agreed the advice of public health officials should take precedence in COVID-19 restriction decisions, instead of the OCHE directives.

Many UFA members raised the issue of the mask mandate's inclusion in their syllabi. UM administration, according to Kuntz, directed faculty to avoid treating syllabi like a contract on this issue, reassuring UFA members that they aren't being asked to drastically change how they operate classes halfway through the semester.

Even with their concerns, many UFA members are confident that the UM administration will consider public health in their decisions moving forward. In making these decisions, members stressed that administration must collaborate with faculty, in accordance with the UFA's collective bargaining agreement.

"It can't be considered in a public health vacuum, and it's imperative that the administration gives detailed instructions on how this process is going to operate to dissipate the kinds of challenges and decisions that faculty needs to contend with," Haber, from political science, said. "The way to ensure they have a smooth rollout is not to do it suddenly and to work collaboratively with the UFA, as well as to be very clear on the options that faculty and students have."



"I don't mind it being lifted because the masks are a little annoying. If we are lifting it, it seems like things might be getting better."  
**RYAN WRATSCHKO, FRESHMAN**



"With the whole omicron thing, I feel like maybe we should wait a bit more and still wear masks indoors in classes and whatnot."  
**JAN SOSTRE, SENIOR**



"This pandemic is still going on, and there are still a lot of problems, so it seems a little early."  
**RYAN ZIMMERMAN, SOPHOMORE**

# ASK THE UC

*Do you think the mask mandate should be lifted right now?*



"I think it should be lifted, we've spent so much time in person together on campus anyways."  
**JACOB COUCH, SENIOR**



"I haven't been paying attention to cases, but if they're going down it's probably good."  
**SHAWNALEE VOYLES, SENIOR**



"Cases are still going down, but I feel like if you are still sick you should still mask up, especially in classrooms."  
**ZOE KING, JUNIOR**



"I think that we're going to have to start managing this just like the flu because it's going to stay with us forever, so I think it's fine."  
**MAGGIE WOODS, JUNIOR**



"It's likely that all of us are going to get it over this semester, so by freeing ourselves up as quickly as possible it's only going to expedite that process."  
**JACOB PERIUS, JUNIOR**



# UM’s removal of mask mandate reveals a cold calculus

CONTRIBUTED BY:  
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I took the multiple sclerosis diagnosis pretty well, all things considered. Yeah, MS sucks. But I knew I had people to rely on, and not just my amazing friends and family. My professors and administrators had shown sympathy for my neurological problems and a willingness to be flexible and compassionate.

As I weighed the complicated calculus of treatments that I’d have to be on for the rest of my life — a weaker injection with few side effects against a more effective pill that would leave me immunocompromised — I knew the University of Montana had my back.

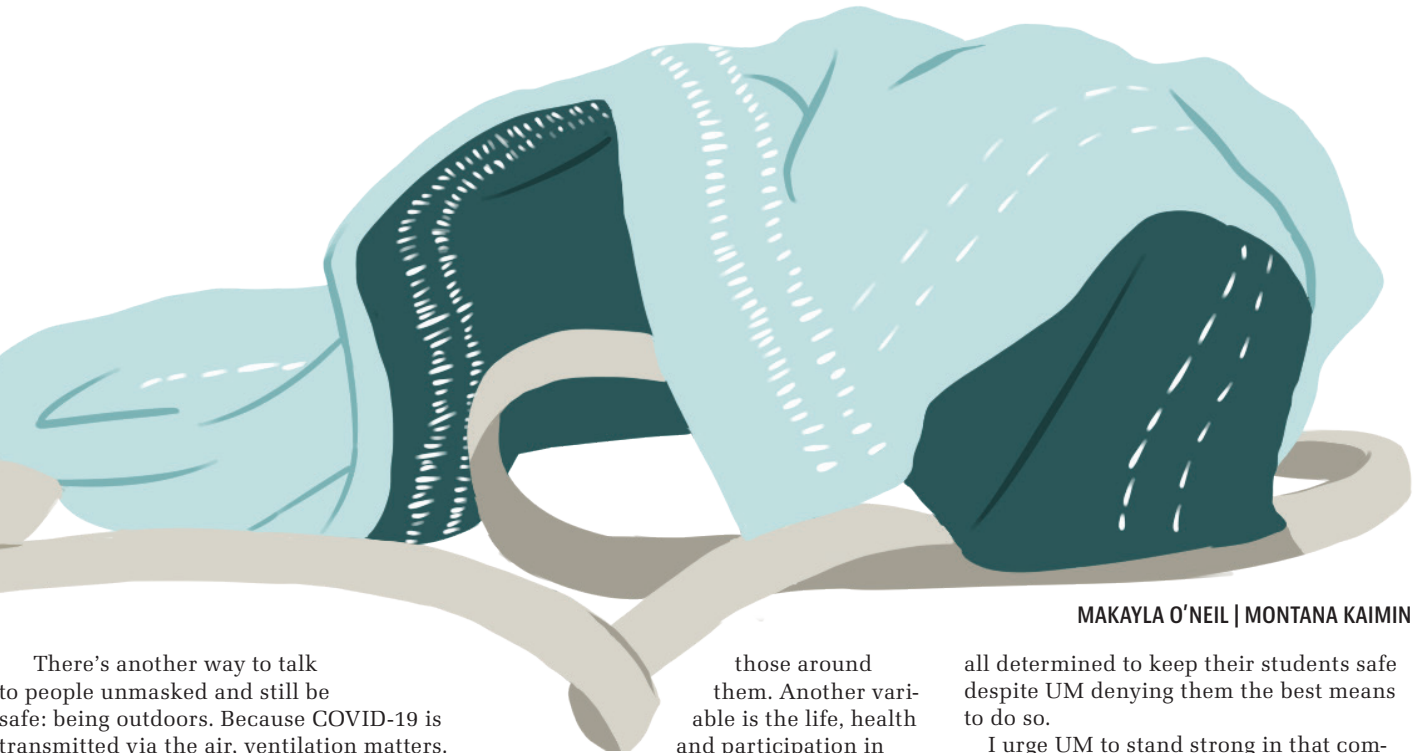
The greatest symbol of that support was the mask mandate, instated independently of the Montana University System, that to me represented UM’s commitment to making sure its most vulnerable could participate in University life.

Two days after I was diagnosed, I got the news that the mask mandate would be going away.

The University hopes the mass immunity of people like me who’ve had the COVID-19 vaccination will make masking unnecessary. But a quick look at any graph of cases since the pandemic began will reveal numbers higher than before we had vaccines.

To be clear, the COVID-19 vaccine works. It’s very effective at keeping people from catching and spreading the virus. But only if they’ve had the vaccine. The University cannot count on the vaccination rate of its student body when it won’t even collect data on it, let alone mandate COVID-19 vaccination. It can only estimate based on the county rate of 60% fully vaccinated.

While a 60% vaccination rate is decent, it’s not herd immunity, so the vaccine will not stop community spread. Those who choose to remain unvaccinated and the institutions that enable that choice have made other mitigation measures — such as masking — necessary if we want to keep numbers low and people healthy.



MAKAYLA O’NEIL | MONTANA KAIMIN

There’s another way to talk to people unmasked and still be safe: being outdoors. Because COVID-19 is transmitted via the air, ventilation matters. Which makes it all the more baffling that UM has chosen now to repeal the mask mandate, when its second-best means of reducing classroom transmission is totally off the table.

Without a mandate, we must count on classroom HVAC systems to keep us safe. Considering some multi-story buildings at UM don’t even have elevators, I have my doubts about that happening. Of course, teachers could open some windows — if they’re willing to brave the howling wind outside or the chance of a bird flying in.

I do understand why the University and some students want the mask mandate gone. Any mask mandate is an infringement on personal liberty, and it’s unproductive to pretend otherwise. Yet we accept all sorts of infringements on our personal liberties with the intent and purpose of serving a higher need. For instance, seatbelt laws.

It is the responsibility of an institution such as UM to weigh the costs of a mask mandate against the reduction of risk it promises. Like my decision on what treatment to pursue, it’s a calculation with many variables.

One variable is the personal liberty and quality of life of those who don’t want to wear a mask despite knowing it’ll protect

those around them. Another variable is the life, health and participation in public spaces of the immunocompromised and elderly.

It disheartens me to see UM weigh personal choice so heavily that the right to choose selfishness is placed above the health of those who have no choice in their vulnerability. At the very least, I hope UM chooses to also value the personal choice of its faculty and allow them to mandate masks within their own classes, so they can offer the compassion and vulnerability their employer won’t. To do otherwise would be a slap in the face to the people who make up the backbone of UM.

Ultimately, I’ll be fine. I have options that leave my immune system intact, and I’ll probably take them. But others are not so lucky — immunocompromisation usually isn’t opt-in. It’s an incredibly alienating feeling to have potentially lifesaving compassion ripped out from under your feet.

That compassion is what compelled me to write this. I do not pick up a pen every time a government or business removes its restrictions — I’ve learned to not expect them to prioritize the needs of the vulnerable. But amid all UM’s foibles and flaws, I have seen great compassion and leadership from individuals and the University as a whole. Even now, my professors are

all determined to keep their students safe despite UM denying them the best means to do so.

I urge UM to stand strong in that compassion and continue to create a community where everyone takes action to protect those around them. I urge UM to take the stance that vulnerable lives matter more than a numbers game. I urge UM to accept the responsibility it must accept when the choices of those who live and work here have ramifications for everyone around them.

There is no individual in a pandemic. All we can truly do alone is die.

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# UM’s production of ‘Machinal’ shows how theater tech tells a story

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When watching a play, it’s easy to focus on the performances by the actors and actresses. After all, it’s they who tell the story the audience came to see. However, there is more than one way to tell a story, and the UM theater department’s production of “Machinal” uses intricate sets, lighting and costumes to bring its story to life.

Written in 1928 by Sophie Treadwell, “Machinal” is based on the real-life trial of Ruth Snyder, who was found guilty of murdering her husband and put to death the same year the play dropped.

“Treadwell was appalled,” theater professor and director of the play Bernadette Sweeney said. “The media’s dominant coverage of the story sensationalized the trial without really making any effort to consider the emotional motivations for the crime.”

“Machinal” is told in a series of nine episodes, each recounting a different stage of the events leading up to the murder and trial, with the nameless main character being played by a different actress in every episode.

“The playwright has said this could be any young woman, so we did this to emphasize that idea,” Sweeney said. “This really could be any of us.”

At its core, “Machinal” is about the pressures women face to meet the expectations society has laid out for them, Sweeney said.

“A lot of the play deals with the isolation of the character and the sense of being alienated by an increasingly mechanized society,” Sweeney said. “Of course, we’re seeing that even more now with technology in the digital age.”

The themes of isolation and entrapment went on to inspire the various technical elements of the play. For instance, the set features five enormous columns painted to look like steel, each curling in on the performers. Aaron Barton, a third-year MFA student, designed the set as his final project.

“I looked at the script, and there was a lot of symbolism regarding hands,” Barton said. “We wanted something industrial, so I decided to design a giant hand coming up and grabbing her, keeping her from going elsewhere. Like trying to capture a firefly.”

The hand is perfectly subtle and easy to miss while watching the play, which makes finding it all the more rewarding.

“I like doing things that are not obvious at first,” Barton said. “I like things that just make people have to figure out what it is instead of just being blatant and in your face about it.”

Also incorporated in the set is a series of screens, used to play projections created by another MFA student, Hannah Gibbs, who designed the lighting.

“We went through and worked to find the

kind of imagery that would tell the story in between the scenes, and used the projection screens to set the feeling of the moment and the environment for those places,” Gibbs said. “We use a lot of windows to draw attention to that back wall and place it in the physical scene itself, as well as to create some pretty dynamic imagery to move the audience between the episodes.”

Sprawling cityscapes and neon signs are just a few of the realistic elements featured in the “windows.” Gibbs’s lighting design works similarly.

“We tried to use shadows and angles to create a closing-in effect,” she said. “I like the idea of using shadow and light to tell the story. We really wanted to push a black-and-white aesthetic, where you aren’t relying on color to tell the narrative, but rather letting the amount of light or lack of lights itself do the work.”

The lighting design helps highlight some of the striking costumes seen throughout the play, designed by senior MFA student Morgan Brooks. According to Brooks, all of the characters aside from the woman at the center wear dark, muted colors, whereas the protagonist’s color scheme evolves throughout, from cream to dusty rose to a deep purple.

“Purple represents the point of breakage, as it’s such a dominating color,” Brooks said. “She’s gone on this journey, and it culminates in the trial scene with that purple dress.”

The costumes and sets alike were created from, essentially, scraps. “Machinal” was designed through what’s called a “pull purchasing” strategy. Nothing new was bought, instead it was all recycled from within the theater department.

“How it works is we pull a costume piece from storage, alter it, and put it on stage,” Brooks said. “Most are altered beforehand, quite a few were dyed.”

One of the altered pieces Brooks is most proud of is a dress created from a purple slip under a gray flapper dress, featuring an ornamental peacock.

The sound design was hired from outside the department and contracted to former UM student David Mills-Low.

“Sound is so important to the play, and it turned out incredible,” Sweeney said. “David invoked sound to create the world of the play.”

Between sets, lighting, costumes and sound, with the help of impassioned performances by the 14 UM cast members, the story of “Machinal” unfolds into a chilling portrait of a woman trapped in a world that’s against her.

“Together, we tried to focus on emphasizing ‘the Machine’ and the machine of the world around the young woman and how it’s dragging her down and impacting her,” Gibbs said. “We were all trying to create our own distinct way of showing how the machine was sucking her into society, keeping her in this space. ... I think it’s very relevant to today.”



Joshua Griffith rehearses for “Machinal” by Sophie Treadwell at UM’s Montana Theater, Feb. 22. The play is showcased in a nine-part series about the murder trial of Ruth Snyder, who was found guilty of murdering her husband and put to death. **NATE SANCHEZ | MONTANA KAIMIN**



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# The cult appeal of curling in Missoula

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Curling has been a part of the Winter Olympics since 1998, and mentions of the game appear in poetry and writings dating back to at least 17th century Scotland. But despite the antiquity, it regularly lags behind when it comes to fan attention, and only seems to gain more widespread notice during Olympic years.

Curling doesn't have the same competition structure as most other organized sports, and instead is a game of fandom and dedicated amateur club teams that organize their own tournaments and exhibition games.

"It's like intramural, to a casual extreme. It's usually not very competitive," said Meredith Stewart, a USA Curling certified instructor based in Montana.

Those interested in the sport have the option to join the Missoula Curling Club, which plays a robust season of weekend events and participates in Bonspiels — curling tournaments — in the Northwest. The Missoula club has to operate around the schedule of other interests at the outdoor Glacier rink and has a hard time expanding. Sharing that space means they often end up playing games that start at 11p.m.

Despite the obstacles in scheduling, the Missoula club remains dedicated and meets weekly to engage in friendly competition and spread the gospel of curling with whomever is interested.

The learn-to-curl event in Missoula on Saturday, Feb. 14 brought in an estimated 120 people as part of Glacier Ice Rink's week of Olympic games, a series of programs introducing the public to each of the ice-based winter sports.

The club players are mostly parents and professionals using the rink as a chance to socialize with friends and get their kids outside. Nearly half of all hands present cradle cans of Kokanee or Coors and friendly chatter is only interrupted by loud bellows of directions called out to active sweepers.

"We have had highly unsuccessful learn-to-curl events where we've had, like, three people show up," Stewart said. "The Olympic events definitely increase the interest level."

Even the tools for the game are storied and hard to come by. The granite used for the stones are mined from two specific quarries, one on a Scottish island, the other is Wales. An artisanal rarity makes them quite expensive. Sets of stones are passed down from older clubs or traded like precious heirlooms.

Jack Minnich was a founding member of the Whitefish Curling Club before moving to Missoula and joining the local curling club 12 years ago. He said getting stones can be a complicated task.

"Some North Dakotans loaned us two full sheets to start the club," Minnich said.

Each stone weighs around 45 lbs, so shipping a set is impossibly expensive for amateur clubs. Minnich and his teammates met the North Dakota club in the middle of nowhere to exchange the stones like a shady drug deal.

"We drove over halfway and they drove over halfway," Minnich said. "We loaded them in the truck from one to the other."

The University of Montana had an ASUM-sponsored intramural team until about a decade ago, when the players mostly graduated and there wasn't a fresh wave to carry the brooms.

Although some universities sanction clubs or teams, there currently is no varsity league in the U.S.

Some of the Missoula club members act as coaches for the first-time players. They explain the rules and techniques and organize short rounds of play. The rookies slide around the ice and listen to the coaches,



**ABOVE:** Curler Kyle Brekke of team Dead End Denim sends a stone down to the playing end of the ice as part of The Missoula Curling Club's mini-league night tournament at Glacier Ice Rink's outdoor arena, Feb. 26. The Missoula Curling Club is a local amateur group that plays a season of weekend events and participates in Bonspiels, or large tournaments, in the Northwest.



**RIGHT:** Drew Murray, left, and his teammate Evelyn Hays of the Dog Park team sweep the desired path in front of the curling stone.

ASTON KINSELLA | MONTANA KAIMIN

but nobody is acting competitive. It's obviously just about fun.

Sadie Russell, a nurse practitioner who lives in Missoula, said it wasn't her first time, but she came back because she enjoys the game.

"[This is] the happiest I've felt since the pandemic started," Russell said.

Most of the curious newcomers were locals, just killing some time on a Saturday night. But at least one couple came all the way from Great Falls just for the chance to

try their hand at curling, suggesting that the cult appeal is felt far and wide.

"I didn't work with the Great Falls couple, but it was kind of cool that they drove all the way," said Harmen Steele, Vice President of the Missoula club.

"I told them there was a Helena club," Stewart said. "But they came here."

The Missoula club meets every weekend at the Glacier Rink and will host a Missoula Bonspiel, which has not yet been scheduled.

# Disney on Ice to Grizzlies on Ice: Pandemic brings professional figure skaters to UM

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Justin Hergett calls himself a "good friend" of the character Woody from the Toy Story franchise. Disney on Ice, for which Hergett performed on an international tour in 2019 and early 2020 before landing in Missoula, doesn't allow its entertainers to elaborate on their relationships to the characters.

"I can say that I was 'friends' with Woody and I was 'friends' with Mr. Incredible occasionally," Hergett said. "But it's very funny when you go to the actual Disney World and one of [the performers] that was a character will go up to the person that is also that same character and just talk to them. Most of the time the people at Disney will get the reference."

Hergett grew up on the ice. Originally from Great Falls, he graduated from Florence a year ahead of his class in 2018, already on the cusp of a career as a figure skater. His sister, Kendra, is also a professional figure skater.

"I was the annoying, bratty little brother," Hergett said. "And I was like, 'Well, if you're going to do this, I'm going to do this.' So I kind of just copied her."

The August after leaving high school, Hergett claimed first place in the Light Entertainment event at the U.S. Figure Skating Association National Showcase Competition. Two months later, Disney hired him.

From August 2019 to March 2020, Hergett traveled to nearly two dozen cities in the U.S. and Canada — from New York to Chicago to Quebec City — as "friends" with a variety of Disney characters.

While on tour, Hergett began honing his skating skills with his co-worker, Sydney Kosiak. The pair came to the University of Montana in 2020. They continue to work on the ice together, practicing routines either on the Oval rink or the Missoula Fairgrounds.

From Gloucester, Massachusetts, Kosiak first started to train at 10 years old when her mom saw an ad in the newspaper for a coach giving private lessons. Kosiak said her mother had performed with the touring ice show, The Ice Follies, when she was younger.

"She loved it, and then she wanted to skate with me and it kind of snowballed from there," Kosiak said.

While working for Disney on Ice, Hergett



**ABOVE:** Sydney Kosiak performs at Glacier Ice Rink as Montana prepares to face Montana State in hockey on Oct. 15. Kosiak performed with Disney on Ice for six months, and boasts other accomplishments in the figure skating world. **KENNEDY DELAP | MONTANA KAIMIN**



**RIGHT:** Figure skater Justin Hergett came back to Montana after COVID-19 halted his tour with Disney on Ice. Now a student at UM, Hergett studies Entertainment Management and skates at Glacier Ice Rink every week. **RIDLEY HUDSON | MONTANA KAIMIN**

and Kosiak traveled to a different city nearly every week, performing in up to three shows a day. The work was tiring but rewarding, they said.

In Quebec, Hergett remembered, some of their shows needed to be sung in French. On the 40 minute train ride to the venue, many of the performers would put in earbuds and go over the lines repeatedly, trying to memorize the syllables.

"I don't know French, not at all. I don't even remember the words to the songs anymore," Hergett said. "It was apparently pretty obvious our first show that most of us hadn't done our research."

Then at its height, their continent-spanning, career-making tour was cut short by the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"It was right around St. Patrick's Day," Kosiak said. "I remember everyone was dressed up and they were like, 'Do not go out.'"

Hergett said they were in Minneapolis at an opening night meeting with the performers, when a manager told them about the rapidly escalating situation.

"He was like, 'You know, there's this thing called COVID. We don't know how serious it's going to be. We'll send you home for about two weeks,'" Hergett said. "There was the two weeks obviously. Then two months, and then two years."

After the pandemic threw a wrench into their career paths, the pair stuck together and returned to Hergett's hometown, where they enrolled at the University of

Montana. They are now both in their last semester at UM.

Hergett turned his focus to studying showbusiness and is now working toward a certificate in entertainment management.

Kosiak studies elementary education. Last semester, for UM's first hockey season in a decade, Kosiak's life on the ice was as one of the team's two cheerleaders, beside her friend Carly Dahms. She said Dahms introduced her to the role.

Through the last two years, Hergett and Kosiak have spent as much time practicing their skills and choreographing new performances as possible in preparation for when they plan to start touring again. Soon, they said, they hope to reconnect with their old Disney "friends."



# Baby, let's ice boogie

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Ice skaters of all ages and experience levels showed up to Glacier Ice Rink last Friday to get down and boogie for a night of Disco Skate. The night featured colorful disco lighting and dance music from the '70s and '80s for skaters to jam to.

The attendance for the event was capped at 150 skaters according to Glacier Ice Rink's Executive Director Laura Henning. "It's definitely bringing in new people to the rink, which is kind of fun to see," Henning said. "These are not our regular skaters, so that's nice." She said

the outreach to new skaters is thanks to the return of the Griz hockey team getting students and the broader UM community to the rink.

For some, the opportunity to dress up in their best disco fits was reason enough to be there. For Jeannie Morse and Seth Hughes, this was the case. "He likes any reason to dress like this. He has a tub of gear and outfit options," Morse said. "I had to rush to Goodwill to try to find something to go with his outfit."

Caspen Black, a regular at Missoula's rink, used the night's disco theme as another opportunity to get on the ice. "I am at the rink as much as I possibly can be," Black said. "Disco is perfect music for skating."



**TOP RIGHT:** Savannah Harms, left, and Emilie Harms boogie on the ice. Savannah and Emilie said the highlight of the night was playing games on the ice. "I loved the limbo, I loved the guy who popped his booty in the limbo," Savannah said.

**MIDDLE RIGHT:** Harms, center, runs through the Hustle at center ice. Glacier Ice Rink staff led the group through the dance with everyone showing off their grooviness.

**BOTTOM RIGHT:** Eric Bergoust needed a minute to get used to being on the ice, but then he was ready to boogie. Born in Missoula, Bergoust is a bit of a hometown celebrity. He has been to four Olympics and won a gold medal in freestyle ski jump at the 1998 Winter Olympics in Nagano, Japan. Bergoust now enjoys skating with his daughter at Glacier Ice Rink.



**ABOVE:** Caspen Black takes every opportunity to get on the ice, so when Glacier Ice Rink put on Disco Night, Black was there and ready to practice some moves at center ice.

**RIGHT:** Seth Hughes came to Disco Night decked out in his best '80s gear ready to dance the night away with friends. "It's been a blast," he said.

