

CERTIFICATES AT UM, EXPLORED



STORY BY SABRINA PHILIP
PHOTOS BY TORI KUEHL

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TOP PHOTO CONTRIBUTED BY
CORAL SCOLES-COBURN

FEBRUARY 19, 2026 | VOLUME 128 | ISSUE NO. 18

MONDAY

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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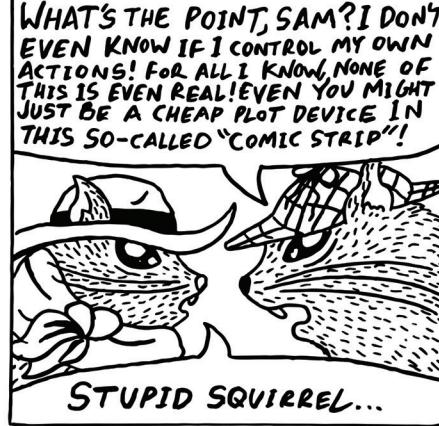
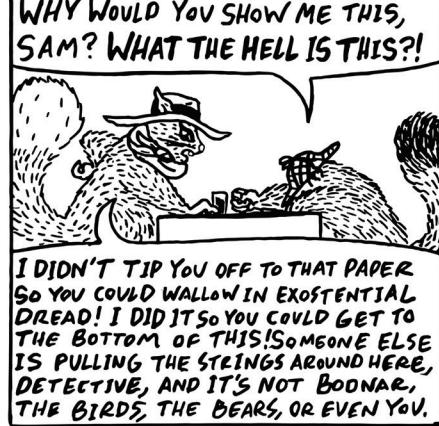
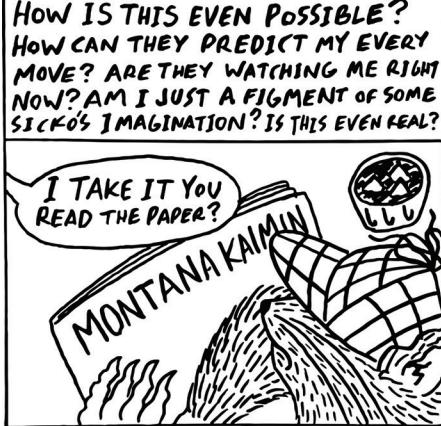
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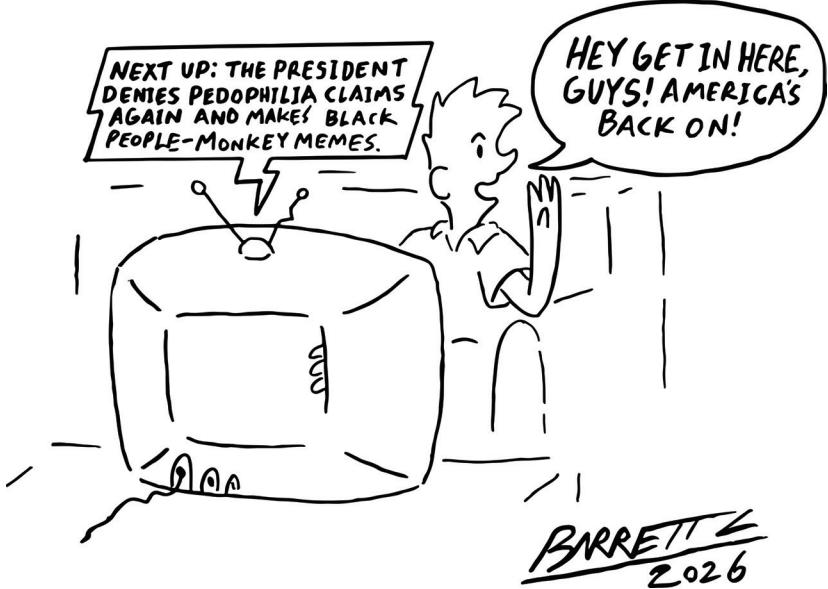
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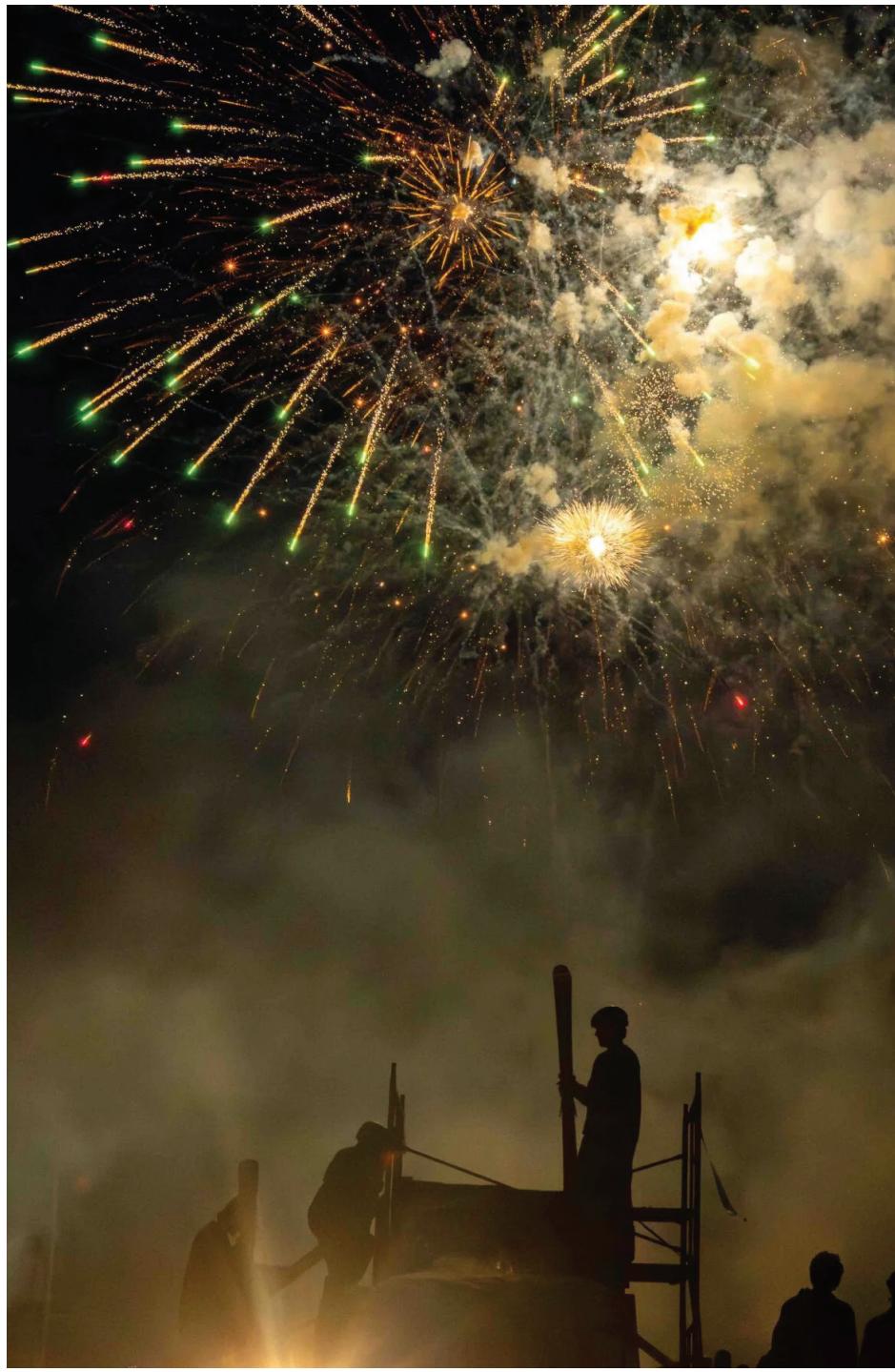


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KAIMIN'S
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POLITICAL CARTOON



Questions for Montanans



Fireworks go off to end a winter pep rally on Feb. 14. The University of Montana Freeride Club hosted a ski and snowboard rail jam during the event to help fundraise for their club, in which participants competed for prizes.
WILL LADYMAN | MONTANA KAIMIN

Dear people of the great state of Montana,

Hello! I am a third grade student in Northern Virginia. Our class is learning about the United States and I will be teaching our school about the state of Montana. In late May, I will create a display for our State Fair that I hope will make you proud.

Although I have gathered facts about your state from books and websites, I want to learn about Montana from the people who actually live there! I am hoping that you would be willing to share information or items to help me learn more about Montana. You might consider sending items such as postcards, pictures, souvenirs, or other unique items that show your state's pride. Here are a few questions:

Why do you live in your state? What brought your family there?

What does your state look like?

What do people do for fun?

What types of food do you eat? What traditional food/recipes does your state have?

What animals live there?

Do you have a state athletic team?

I need to gather all of my information by the first week of May. You can mail items to the address below. If you can participate, I will send my note of thanks to your editor after our State Fair. I really appreciate your help!

Sincerely, Luca

Address:
Miss Campbell's class
The Langley School
1411 Balls Hill Road
McLean, Virginia 22101

An additional note from Miss Campbell: We are so grateful for the many items we receive from around the country for our State Fair project. While it is not possible for our third graders to personally thank each person for their package, we hope you will look for a note from our students in a future publication of this newspaper.

- Luca

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

SUDOKU

Difficulty: Easy

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

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:

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

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In local news...

JACK SNOW | NEWS EDITOR

jack.snow@umontana.edu

APPROVAL GRANTED FOR NEW MILLER CREEK SEPTIC SYSTEM

The Montana Department of Environmental Quality approved Missoula's proposal to remove some of the septic systems on the south side of town last week.

The estimated cost of this project is over \$1,386,000, and the MDEQ will be accepting public comment on the assessment and decision until March 13.

The MDEQ conducted an environmental assessment of the City of Missoula's plan to remove two septic tank effluent pumping systems and replace them with traditional sewer mains, according to the Missoula Current. The two current systems are used by the Birdie and Lamoreux subdivisions, as well as the Maloney Ranch subdivision along Lower Miller Creek Road.

The Lamoreux-Birdie, installed in 1993, and the Maloney Ranch system, installed in 2003, are degrading. The pump and control parts are outdated, becoming unreliable during power outages.

In its assessment, the MDEQ found that replacing the pumping systems won't have a significant negative impact on the environment, and in fact might be beneficial. The two current systems may contaminate the surrounding groundwater in the event of a tank failure.

RYAN ZINKE OPPOSES BIPARTISAN HOUSING BILL

Rep. Ryan Zinke was one of nine house members to vote against a bipartisan housing package last week.

The Housing for the 21st Century Act is made up of many proposals and is intended to help with housing affordability, according to NBC Montana. The act garnered overwhelming support and passed 390-9 after being touted by supporters as a big

step toward fixing America's affordable housing crisis.

According to Zinke's staff, his opposition was based on earlier drafts of the act.

"Mr. Zinke voted 'no' based on a prior version of the bill that mandated federal zoning standards which would not be good for Montana," said Zinke's Chief of Staff, Heather Swift, in an email. "That provision was removed last minute. He supports the bill and hopes to see its quick passage in the Senate."

MONTANA GAS PRICES RISE BUT STAY LOWER THAN NATIONAL AVERAGE

The average price of gas in Montana rose for the first time in five months, but still remain much cheaper than the national average.

According to Patrick De Haan, head of petroleum analysis for GasBuddy, average gasoline prices in Montana have risen 2.1 cents per gallon in the last week, and today average \$2.72 per gallon. "Prices in Montana are unchanged versus a month ago and stand 32.0 cents per gallon lower than a year ago," De Haan said.

Most Missoula gas stations set their prices to around \$2.69 per gallon as of Monday morning, according to KGVO. That figure is 10 cents lower than it was a week ago.

However, the national average price of gasoline has risen 2.6 cents per gallon in the last week, averaging \$2.87 per gallon today, according to De Haan, which puts the average up 4.9 cents per gallon from a month ago.

Despite Missoula's decrease, Montana as a whole is now ranked 30th among all states for gas prices, two spots higher than last week.

The rise is expected to continue, according to De Haan, who said that the price bump may accelerate in the next few weeks as seasonal pressure builds.



OBAMA POSTS CLARIFICATION FOR ALIEN COMMENTS

Former President Barack Obama sparked conversation after saying that aliens are real in a recent podcast, but clarified that he's seen no evidence that they've made contact with humanity.

During an interview, podcast host Brian Tyler Cohen asked Obama, "Are aliens real?"

"They're real," Obama said. "But I haven't seen them. And they're not being kept in Area 51. There's no underground facility — unless there's this enormous conspiracy and they hid it from the president of the United States."

The conversation quickly went viral, prompting Obama to post a clarifying statement on Instagram last Sunday.

"I was trying to stick with the spirit of the speed round, but since it's gotten attention let me clarify. Statistically, the universe is so vast that the odds are good there's life out there. But the distances between solar systems are so great that the chances we've been visited by aliens is low, and I saw no evidence during my presidency that extraterrestrials have made contact with us. Really!"



This week on the Kaimin Cast ...

You may have noticed a small band of students walking around campus performing the song "Hey Baby" in classrooms and handing out cards to a special someone. As part of a fundraiser for the University of Montana's National Association for Music Education chapter, these Singing Valentines could be bought and delivered for friends, partners and staff before Valentine's Day. They brought joy, embarrassment, and fun breaks to the day as classmates sang along and phones were brought out to record the deliveries for the special recipient.

"Just make people smile, really. That's what I like about it. I really like it when people start joining in. We'll start clapping and they'll start clapping or you know just when they start laughing or smiling," junior Kat Macheck said.

If you missed the tunes and want to hear more from the Singing Valentines, check out this week's Kaimin Cast, "40 performances of love," by heading to our website at montanakaimin.com.

- Grace Golbach,
audio editor



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

MARCO RUBIO SPEECHES AND MEETINGS SPARK CONTROVERSY

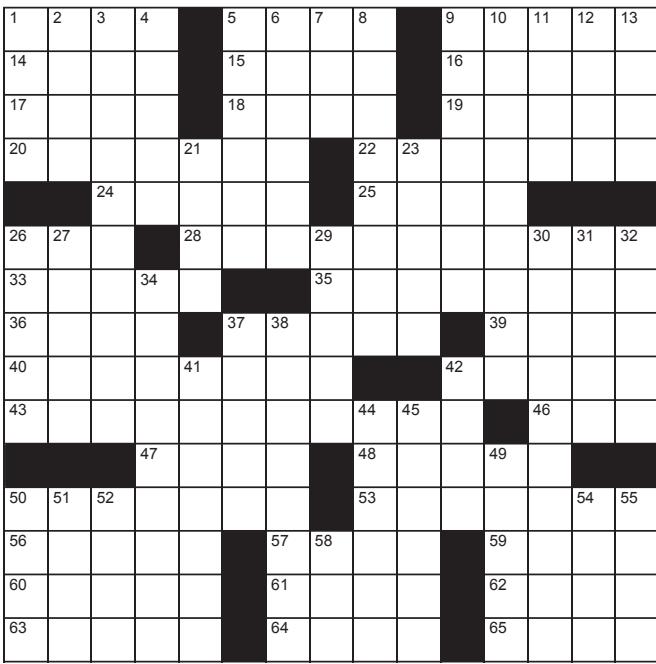
Secretary of State Marco Rubio delivered a speech to European leaders in Munich last Saturday, but recent meetings with Putin's allies have raised questions about where America stands in global issues.

"For us Americans, our home may be in the Western Hemisphere, but we will always be a child of Europe," Rubio said to applause.

The statement seemed to be a step toward mending recent tensions between America and Europe, but some observers were unconvinced, according to NBC.

"Our allies no longer trust us," Sen. Mark Kelly wrote in a post on X after Rubio's speech. "I know there was celebration at the end of the Munich Security Conference. Unfortunately the champagne corks were popping in Beijing and Moscow."

On Monday, Rubio went on to meet with Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, who many regard as Putin's closest ally in Europe, and proclaimed a "golden age" of U.S. relations.



ACROSS

- 1 Fill-in worker
- 5 Chooses
- 9 Mentally quick
- 14 Summon, as a cab
- 15 Sure anagram
- 16 Comaneci of the balance beam
- 17 Links org.
- 18 Become frayed
- 19 Secluded valleys
- 20 Robust walker
- 22 Lift up
- 24 Ticket category
- 25 Cairo's river
- 26 Posed for a portrait
- 28 Stingy
- 33 Mr. Eastwood
- 35 Optional course
- 36 Therapeutic plant
- 37 Man-goat of myth
- 39 nostril wrinkler
- 40 Pasta favorite
- 42 Sidewinder, e.g.
- 43 Do in, as a politician
- 46 Albanian money
- 47 Santa's reindeer, e.g.

DOWN

- 1 Conclusion starter
- 2 NYC "river"
- 3 Seasonal movements
- 4 Tartan cloth
- 5 "Animal Farm" author
- 6 ____ Vallarta
- 7 Airport screening org.
- 8 In a calm way
- 9 Like a sleeping baby
- 10 Texas island city
- 11 "The very ____!"
- 12 Pocket particles
- 13 Soldier's stance, with "at"
- 21 Heating conduit
- 23 Long-term prisoner
- 26 La ____ opera house
- 27 Words before well or forgiven
- 29 Take hold
- 30 Powerful ocean surges
- 31 Conjure up
- 32 Former Yankee Jeter
- 34 Strips in a darkroom
- 37 Rope fiber
- 38 Cartoon artist
- 41 Futile
- 42 Splinter group
- 44 Ethically indifferent
- 45 How bowstrings are strung
- 49 Kapolei greeting
- 50 Casino freebie
- 51 Winglike
- 52 Runner's distance
- 54 Like some jokes
- 55 Head-shaker's sounds
- 58 "Tarzan" extra

Answers to Previous Crossword:

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

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Horse-o-scope

BEE REISWIG | ARTS & CULTURE REPORTER

bee.reiswig@umontana.edu

Thump-thump. Thump-thump. Thump-thump. What's that I hear? It's a beautiful, elegant pony running in. The Chinese zodiac calendar marks us as officially in the Year of the Horse, and according to chinesenewyear.net, the horse is confident, agreeable and responsible. But that's certainly not true for ALL of us. What type of equine are you?

PISCES (FEB. 19-MARCH 20):

Tennessee walking horses are pretty unique. They've got a smoothness to their gaits that can be hard to find in other horses. Whatever comes your way, Pisces, you take it in your stride. You're chill as a whole, but sometimes it gets easy not to put your whole effort into what you're doing. Keep trying, Pisces!! I promise it's worth it.

ARIES (MARCH 21-APRIL 19):

Ooooh, the first word that comes up to describe lusitanos is "noble." So fancy!! You really are, though. Noble, generous and pretty fearless. After all, you were bred for war and bullfighting in Portugal. You definitely are willing to take a leap for anyone you meet — but please make sure you're getting some YOU time as well!

TAURUS (APRIL 20-MAY 20):

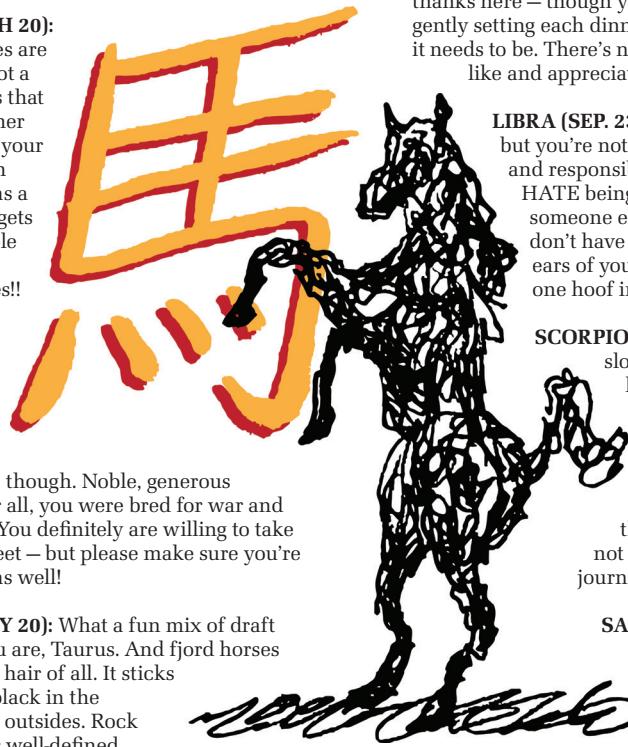
What a fun mix of draft horse and light horse you are, Taurus. And fjord horses have some of the coolest hair of all. It sticks up like a mohawk with black in the middle and white on the outsides. Rock on!! Keep exploring your well-defined sense of fashion. And don't let your stubbornness get in the way of greatness, you never know what could happen if you keep your options open!

GEMINI (MAY 21-JUNE 20):

You're a little mystery. Emphasis on the LITTLE. Gemini, you're a Shetland pony. You've worked hard in the Scottish coal mines for decades, and now you're set up like props for children's parties. Sometimes you're sweet as pie — other times, you're like a little whirlwind of evil. Try to find a better balance this year.

CANCER (JUNE 21-JULY 22): Quarter horses are so versatile, Cancer. You can get all dolled up for a barrel race or chill out on a trail ride. You've got a good head on your shoulders, and you get along with most people. I'm sure you've had some hard times on those trails (little kids realllyyyy shouldn't be given those reins to pull), but I've heard you're a great fit for equine therapy.

LEO (JULY 23-AUG. 22): Arabian horses have a stunning, signature dished head, but you've gotta be more than just



BARRETT CLEMENT | MONTANA KAIMIN

surrounded by your favorite people. You can get a little wild, but hey, where's the fun in life without a little risk?

CAPRICORN (DEC. 22-JAN. 19): You've got a mind for work and you are committed to it, Capricorn. Your head is set straight ahead. Nothing will get in your way. You're a Clydesdale, Cap, sturdy and ready for wherever your goals take you. You do let loose every once and a while, though — like at the Super Bowl, watching a Budweiser commercial ('cause everyone knows the commercials are the best part). Enjoy yourself a little more this year!

AQUARIUS (JAN. 20-FEB. 18): You've got a good balance going for you, Aquarius. You know how to work hard, but you play hard too! And your hairbrush is never toooo far away from you. You're a Friesian horse, beautiful AND brainy. Enjoy those long, luscious locks. Leave some for the rest of us! You're pretty easygoing, for sure, but make sure it doesn't slip into people pleasing.

a face card. And luckily for you, you're loyal as fuck. If anyone talks shit about your friends, you've got the blackmail and follow-through to take them out. And if they talk about you ... well, being sensitive isn't anything to be ashamed of. I'm sure your friends appreciate you, Leo, but make sure you don't get possessive this year.

VIRGO (AUG. 23-SEP. 22): You may not be as flashy as your Capricorn cousin, but man, shires are such great horses to be around. You do your work quietly. There's no need for thanks here — though you may deserve it!! You're careful, gently setting each dinner-plate-sized hoof exactly where it needs to be. There's no need to walk on eggshells, people like and appreciate you as you are — I promise!!

LIBRA (SEP. 23-OCT. 22): Sorry to disappoint, but you're not really a horse at all. Cool-headed and responsible, you're the perfect mule. You HATE being alone, and you're great at following someone else's lead. And if that's because you don't have a ton going on between those long ears of yours, well ... that's okay, Libra. Keep one hoof in front of the other.

SCORPIO (OCT. 23-NOV. 21): Woah, Scorpio, slow down!! You're a thoroughbred, a little hot-headed and always off to the races. Though you certainly have your sweet moments, overall you can be a bit much. Make sure you don't have your blinders on to the important things in life. Take a chill pill! It's not about the finish line, it's about the journey.

SAGITTARIUS (NOV. 22-DEC. 21): The open plains in front of you. The breeze flowing through your tussled hair. You're a mustang, Sag, and you relish in your freedom. Don't let any man keep you down. Explore the world

UM reviews proposed cuts to women's, gender and sexuality studies

COLBY SUKO-CLARK | NEWS REPORTER

colby.suko-clark@umontana.edu

The University of Montana's provost is reconsidering the proposed cuts to the women's, gender and sexuality studies program after students and faculty questioned the purpose of the changes.

UM has proposed cuts to multiple programs across the University, from the English master's program to Irish studies and the Chinese minor programs. The most recent addition was cutting funding for WGSS.

"It's nothing personal, it's all about the data," said John DeBoer, the vice provost for the University of Montana. The data pertains to enrollment numbers of classes and programs to make sure they can be kept up for the next four years. However, this reason has left some questioning why they are being cut.

"These programs are essential," said Josie Miller, a graduate student of the English master's program. Miller spoke at the Feb. 5 Faculty Senate meeting about the cutting of the programs. There, multiple students highlighted the fact that the University was already acting on the cuts, before the Senate had approved of them.

"They are using you as a rubber stamp, which is detrimental to the purpose of the Senate," Miller said. The Senate has to approve of the cuts for them to actually take effect. However, emails had already been sent to the teachers that told them to start preparing to leave before the Senate's official decision. Another problem that Miller noted was the effects of the cuts.

While Montana State University does have a program, UM is the only Montana college with a major in WGSS. UM also has an LGBTIQ+ studies certificate, which helps the program stand out from others.

"We have around the same number of students as we did last year," said Elizabeth Hubble, the former director of WGSS. Enrollment has stayed steady with 30 students studying WGSS. The program includes a minor which has 11 students, and the remaining 19 students are for the major or LGBTIQ+ studies certificate.

However, according to InfoGriz, there is only one student in the minor program. "I can think of at least ten students off the top of my head that are in the minor," Hubble said. This was further supported by the co-director Danielle Cooney, who shared that there were in fact 11 students enrolled in the minor.

According to Hubble, this is not the only incorrect information being spread. "The Missoulian has the numbers wrong," she said in reference to an article that outlined the proposed cut to WGSS. "We received \$20,000, and last year it was \$60,000," Hubble said. That 60% cut could cause some major changes to the program.

"That is below my minimum pay level, so I can't work," Hubble said. This is because Hubble has a certain pay that needs to be met, but the budget cuts are under that payment amount. Not only will Hubble have to leave the program, the program will have to transition to one director. This would also mean cutting classes and getting rid of the LGBTIQ+ studies certificate, which was recently approved.

"It was passed just last year, they didn't even debate it at the Board of Regents," she said.

This decision surprised members of WGSS. "I am baffled by it," Hubble said. The shock comes from the fact that the University has worked well with WGSS in the past.

Last year, House Bill 121 was passed to change gender neutral restroom signs to be gender specific. Hubble mentioned that it made a lot of the students that were transgender scared and confused. Within weeks, the University met with students in the University Center with students and changed some bathrooms for single occupancy without a gender specific sign to give all students bathrooms. That kind of support also applies to the teaching for WGSS.

Most of the classes and teachers for the WGSS program are a part of other programs. "All African American history classes are a part of the requirements," Hubble said. This also includes 29 faculty members who come from other departments.

"We need to protect our most

vulnerable students," Miller said. The vulnerabilities come from the controversies that have arisen in recent years. One issue was a heated debate about transgender athletes, which led to confrontations on the University campus.

Last year, UM students protested against transgender athletes competing in a different gender group than the one that they were assigned at birth.

"People were yelling at anyone who passed," Hubble said. "Students came crying to me." Students who were yelled at came into the safe area that WGSS has for members of the LGBTQ+ community.

"We have students who come in, who aren't in the WGSS program," Hubble said. The safe space, in room 138A in the Eck Liberal Arts Building, is open for people to come in and have a space to talk without worrying about being judged. This is one of the many things WGSS does in addition to classes.

WGSS also has scholarships for students which would be affected by the cutting, should the University go through with the decision. However, there is still a chance WGSS will not lose funding.

The provost met with the two co-directors of WGSS, Cooney and Hillary Powell.

"It went better than the other talks," Cooney said. While the provost office is certain about the other programs being cut completely, they are taking a different approach to WGSS.

"They are taking it back to review the cuts," Hubble said. This means that the provost office will look back into the proposed cuts and decide whether or not the cuts are correct.

"This sends a message about the University's priorities," Miller said.

Hubble noted members of the LGBTQ+ community that have moved away from Montana due to personal safety concerns. "We all know people who have left this state, because they don't feel safe here," Hubble said.

The first WGSS program was started in San Diego in 1970, and Missoula started the women's studies program in 1976. Since then, the department has added the words gender and sexuality to the name. The department's history is a robust one, which has raised concerns over cuts being proposed in the first place. "What is the message it's sending to students?" Hubble said.



Graduate assistant Shae Barber helps her women's, gender and sexuality studies majors with their capstone project on Feb. 13.

WESTON FUDGE | MONTANA KAIMIN

UM Oval medallion project coming to a close

SYDNEY MOATE | NEWS REPORTER

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The University of Montana is working toward the installation of a new centerpiece for the Oval two years after the removal of the last centerpiece.

For two years, the space in the center of the Oval sat empty. Now, artist Bradley Allen is putting the final touches on a fresh bronze medallion and installation is expected by the end of the month.

Jameel Chaudhry, the director of UM Facilities Services, said the original idea for a new medallion came from the president's office. The old centerpiece was cracked and had risen up, creating a lip a few inches above the ground.



Brad Allen polishes the medallion cast in UM's Facility Services building on Feb. 13.

WESTON FUDGE | MONTANA KAIMIN



Brad Allen sands down imperfections in the medallion cast in UM's Facility Services building on Feb. 13.

WESTON FUDGE | MONTANA KAIMIN

"It was not ADA accessible, someone in a wheelchair could go right over it," Chaudhry said.

The last medallion was taken out two years ago, at the same time the bricks on the Oval were replaced for similar reasons.

First, Allen made a few designs and a committee for the project voted on which one would be used.

Chaudhry, who has been with UM for 30 years, said the main delays in the project were over where the medallion would be made before being sculpted by Allen and what it would be made from.

According to Chaudhry, Allen looked at several foundries, factories that produce metal castings, in Montana but couldn't find one in the state that could make it in one piece without having to weld sections together once it arrived at Facilities Services on campus. Industrial technology company Matthew's International eventually cast the medallion all in one piece at its foundry. Chaudhry said that was the part of the process that took the most time.

The delays are normal, according to Chaudhry, who said, "That's just the nature of artwork."

Allen and the committee chose to construct the medallion out of silicon bronze. It was the most expensive option, but more durable and sustainable over

time than stainless steel and other metals.

Concrete was poured in the center of the Oval on Feb. 10 as the base for the medallion. As of Feb. 13, the grout and the epoxy still need to be placed. This will be about another week worth of work, according to Chaudhry.

Allen is a professor in the school of visual and media arts and has worked at UM for 21 years. With a background in casting metal, it's common for him to help with repairs on plaques and sculptures around campus.

"I have a working relationship with Facilities Services for anything they need fixing, metal or design based," Allen said.

On designing and working on this project, he said, "It's been more of a process than a sentence I could say. I was asked to make a design that could last 100 years."

Allen said the UM administration wanted something to match the architecture on campus, not something that looks like a sign.

He described his design as a "University anchor with a marker of inclusion." The bear tracks in the design represent student footprints accumulating and walking across it.

But Allen intends for future additions to the medallion to have themes of the Indigenous history of the Missoula Valley. Allen and the committee started conversations with the Salish Cultural Council.

Allen said the committee wanted to represent Indigenous culture from across Montana, but those conversations would take years. Instead, Allen sees the medallion as a baseplate and more can be added over the years as conversations develop. He included a blank ring around the outside where more can be bolted on top.

"I left room on the design for expansion and change," Allen said. "Opinions might change, tribal entities might change. I don't want to make an unchanging thing."



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CERTIFICATES AT UM, EXPLORED

BEERS, BEES AND BEATS

STORY BY
SABRINA PHILIP
PHOTOS BY
TORI KUEHL

At first glance, there is not much that beer, bees, psychology and audio have in common. That is, unless you are a student at the University of Montana, where these topics are among the hundreds of certificates offered on an undergraduate and graduate level.

The University has a variety of certifications built into different schools across campus and ranging in credits. From brewing sciences to online beekeeping and more, students can explore their passions on a deeper level or try something completely new.

When asked about their field of study, students often answer first with their majors and minors, leaving out the certificates they've acquired along the way. According to John DeBoer, the vice provost of academic affairs, the completion of a certificate is an important tool students can use in their careers, and is a tool in appealing to employers.

One of the things DeBoer has focused on since taking the role of vice provost in 2023 is cleaning up the certificate program at the University, and making sure the certificates offered are ones that students engage with. He said the courses are consistently altered, added or removed, which he said shows the uniqueness of each program to teach a very specific learning outcome.

Certificates at the University can be taken at an undergraduate or graduate level, and do not necessarily need to accompany a major or minor. For students who aren't pursuing a full degree, they can take a certificate program at the University. Others either pursue it on top of their

majors or minors or pick a certificate that is in a completely different school.

"A certificate allows you to take some of that coursework and package it into a really specific set of learning and skills that is legible to employers and legible to graduate schools that students might be applying to," DeBoer said.

Students in different programs at the University can take a certificate at a variety of colleges. This allows for student flexibility, and while some require prerequisites, most are open to any undergraduate or graduate student on campus, depending on the level of schooling it is designated for.

BUSY BEES

According to Mary Blazensky, a retired second grade teacher of 28 years, her students were the ones who initially called her "Mrs. B" because of the length of her last name. When she first created her product, Mrs. B's Honey Mustard, she used a local commercial beekeeper's honey until she learned how to use her own through one of the University's online certificates, beekeeping.

Started in 2012 in part by Scott Debnam, an adjunct professor at the University, the online beekeeping certificate is open to all.

"There was a lot of interest in hobby beekeeping in the early 2000s," Debnam said, explaining how beekeeping got started at UM. "The professional beekeepers were concerned that diseases could spread between operations or aviaries. They said, 'Can you do anything to educate the hobbyists?'"

Following this inquiry, Debnam said they soon started offering face-to-face classes, but realized people would only drive about 100 miles for a face-to-face class.

After initially educating everyone interested "within 100 miles," they made an online course, which he said took about a year to make.

After making the transition to online, Debnam considered the attention span of those enrolled in the course and created engaging content that includes cartoons, videos of professors in the field, online forums and opportunities to ask questions.

The certificate has seven courses included within it, all focused on different levels and elements of the craft. The program includes three levels of advancement — apprentice, journeyman and master — and involves two pathways — a master beekeeper certificate or a commercial beekeeping certificate.

"The master beekeeping program teaches you how to keep bees just for the sake of keeping them," Debnam said. "We mentioned a little bit about products. Because even a hobby beekeeper, their colonies will produce lots of products, lots of honey. The average honey yield in the state of Montana is between 60 pounds and 90 pounds, depending on the year. That's a product. The master beekeeper will teach them how to manage that."

Debnam explained the commercial beekeeping certificate is different because you learn how to manage bees in order to make a profit.

"Commercial beekeeping is geared toward specialty operations like queen



Scott Debnam removes old queens from the queen band rearing," Debnam said. "Believe it or not, most commercial beekeepers make more money off of pollination services than they do off honey production. Then, of course, we teach honey production."

According to Bees for Development, queen rearing involves developing new queens by beekeepers for a variety of purposes, which can include the need for



Blazensky at the UM Apiary on June 8, 2025, in Missoula. **CONTRIBUTED | CORAL SCOLES-COBURN**

new colonies, to replace an older queen and more.

Debnam explained that in honey production class, students learn how to produce honey for profit along with learning how to harvest pollen and beeswax.

Debnam said the demographics of the course include nontraditional students,

estimating the typical age being those in their mid-30s. One of those students is Blazensky.

"When I retired in 2021, I knew I wanted to be a beekeeper," Blazensky said. "Not knowing really anything about beekeeping, I knew, at that point, that I would probably only have a few hives, and I wanted to sell my honey via a product. And so I created a

recipe, 'Mrs. B's Honey Mustard.'

After learning about the University's course through a bee magazine ad, she started taking classes and was amazed by the rigor of the courses. She said she appreciates Debnam for a "fabulous teaching style that really speaks to my learning style."

Blazensky has already completed the

commercial track, and is currently working on the master's track along with retaking classes in order to strengthen her skills involving queen bees. Her biggest takeaway, she said, is the need to be responsible with the bees along with the multiple different facets in which you can participate in the world of bees.

"They have taught us so much," Blazensky said. "We feel like we're kind of one up on the responsibility factor of being educated and taking care of these animals, not just for their honey, not just for their propolis or their pollen, because we should be taking care of these animals. That's the number one thing."

The importance of beekeeping was echoed by Debnam. Highlighting the amount of commercial production in the state, the culture of beekeeping is defined by Montana's climate. According to Montana.gov, there are currently about 650 registered beekeepers in the state of Montana.

"Montana's one of the largest commercial beekeeping states, so it was easy to make a commercial beekeeping course, right?" Debnam said. "For the master beekeeping side, Montana has harsh winters, so teaching people how to get bees to survive the winter is a big challenge. Now, we also offer summer programs sometimes that are face-to-face. Missoula's a big draw."

Debnam's goal of the class is to send his students, like Blazensky, into the world with a new perspective on bees, one that honors their existence and longevity.

"I'm not teaching these people to keep bees," Debnam said. "I'm teaching these people to take care of my friends. I don't want my friends to be dying all over America. Bee losses have been pretty high over the last few years. I know that I am alleviating that, and my students will tell me, 'I kept bees, and they all died. I took your class, and now I'm doing great.'

While certificates like this focus on a specific skillset students can channel into a career, others focus on ideas and specific strategies within a field that expand beyond a certification course.

LEARNING TO CARE

The list of certificates doesn't just cover trades and hobbies. Some prepare students for situations they may encounter after college. The trauma studies certificate, offered in the College of Education and in the counseling programs, is one of those.

Maegan Rides At The Door is the director for the National Native Children's Trauma Center at the University of Montana. According to Rides At The Door, the certificate was created to provide more extensive training for those interested in trauma care.

Rides At The Door shared the importance of the course through her own perspective. When she herself graduated from the counseling program, she could diagnose



Michael Musick, a professor of sound design and immersive media at the University of Montana, sits in a sound studio available to sonic arts students on Jan. 28.

people with PTSD. She said the importance of understanding what trauma is, and being able to use a "trauma lens" to gain a more knowledgeable world perspective is a skill that is important today.

Rides At The Door said a motivating factor for this certificate was the commonality of trauma training done around the country. She said people usually experience trauma training after they graduate, leaving them to have a "mix of knowledge" about trauma-informed care.

"The more and more we have been doing that, it makes more sense to try to provide something here at the University before people leave into the workforce so that it's not after the fact," Rides At The Door said.

The program is unique in that it helps those who take the course to stand out as more valuable and attractive to employers. While a student enrolled does not need to have an extensive background in trauma studies, the certificate works to enhance people's knowledge and be more informed in their careers.

The certificate was designed in part to be helpful for teachers because of its classification in the College of Education. This intention impacted the decision to

make the program a 15-credit course due to the ability for teachers to earn a pay increase with a certificate that has this amount of credits.

Rides At The Door explained the course centers around trauma, and is focused on educating graduate students on the impacts of trauma on individuals, families and communities. In addition, the course includes teaching the skills needed to be able to recognize signs and symptoms of trauma and behaviors in context.

"What we see this doing is not just enhancing people's knowledge, but being able to equip people to have a trauma lens," Rides At The Door said. "It's a way of being able to perceive situations, behaviors and people in context, and applying that lens is really the magic that happens when implementing trauma-informed care."

Rides At The Door described the certificate as taking courses to learn how to understand situations with intention and a helpful perspective, considering a situation's context and determining the most productive and considerate response.

The certificate is a graduate-level certificate, and a Bachelor of Arts is

required to take it. Rides At The Door said because of the connection to the counseling department, counseling students have been at the forefront of students enrolled, along with other students in the social sciences.

"The more that we can stay in connection through challenges, the better understanding that we can have for each other. Not just professionally, but personally," Rides At The Door said.

Another certificate centered around connection offers a new perspective on listening: sonic arts.

YOU HEAR THAT DEGREE?

Started within the last 10 years, the sonic arts certificate is described as a program that gives students the opportunity to understand sound on a deeper level, one that emphasizes its importance and the role it plays in the world.

"When we're thinking about sound, it's not quite like our eyes, where we have to focus in a direction," said Michael Musick, a professor of media arts. "We always have sound coming in around us. Also, unlike our eyes, our ears never blink. It's really interesting to think about that even when we're sleeping, we're still kind of processing sounds on some level."

According to Musick, the certificate allows students with less experience in sound to develop a deeper understanding of how it works and how to use sound to express yourself.

"It's an opportunity for you to get into a deeper connection with your own listening skills," Musick said. "It's an opportunity for you to think about how sound might feed back into your own work, but also as a human in society."

The sonic arts certificate exists along with two other certificates, sound production and sound design, both of which are built into the sound design bachelor's of fine arts program. Classes within the certificate include an introduction to sound class, called "Sound Production and Design Fundamentals," as well as three other classes, "Sound for Film," "Visions of Film" and "Sound for Digital Media."

"The goal really is to think for the certificate, how does it benefit your other types of skills you're picking up?" Musick said. "Anyone who might find themselves in a production or creative field, certainly having some ability to at least collaborate with your sound partners, this certificate gives you those skills for anyone in the sciences."

According to Musick, having the skills to create content and information using sound is now a critical skill in the "content creating world," and through the certificate, "We're at least making sure that individuals know how to work the sound side of that and can choose the platforms that are appropriate for them with those types of pieces," Musick said.

A student using this knowledge to carry out this mission is Renee Slay, a junior from Missouri in the sound design program.

With a goal of going into electronic music and possibly becoming a producer, learning about frequencies through the program has helped her prepare to meet her goals.

"You're changing the way the frequencies interact with each other. You're able to create some really cool sounds. So if I'm going to help other people produce their music, knowing how to carve out those sounds will be really helpful in the electronic world," Slay said.

For Slay, the certificate enhanced her student experience and helped her find her purpose by allowing her to highlight her creative side.

"There are no strict rules in this program," Slay said. "You can create whatever you want, and it's opening me up in a whole new way, where I thought my sound had to sound a certain way or be a certain way to be appreciated. So many sounds are appreciated in this program."

The sonic arts certificate allows students to understand the world through the lens of listening and manipulating their environment to change their perspective.

Another certificate that more deeply educates a student's perspective concerns a Missoula staple: beer.

BREWIN' UP A CERTIFICATE

What certificate at the University includes a professor whose title is described as "Brewmeister Extraordinaire"? None other than the brewing sciences program offered through the College of Science. Centered around chemistry and biochemistry, the program teaches students the science behind fermentation and brewing beer.

According to Sean Flynn, a professor of brewing science in the chemistry department whose title is described as "Brewmeister Extraordinaire," there are two brewing certificates at the University. These include the 17-credit certificate of technical studies in brewing sciences, and the 33-credit certificate of applied science in brewing sciences.

"It is all of the science requisite for understanding the intricacies of brewing, the deeper level science of brewing that many of the brewers out there do not know," Flynn said. "It's a good spot to start or to just go straight into brewing."

According to Flynn, the certificate of applied sciences explores brewing sciences on a deeper level, and includes a variety of chemistry and biochemistry classes.

The certificate of technical sciences focuses on introductory classes. Flynn added that the school also offers a 300-level class focused on beer production at a chemical level for students studying chemistry.

Flynn explained that these certificates, and the beer class, are especially valuable in Montana due to not only the beer culture in the state, but also due to the climate, which creates an ideal place to grow different elements of beer itself.

"Montana is just kind of steeped in beer culture because of the barley that's grown in Montana," Flynn said. "Barley's a huge part of the identity of Montana. We have a guy who comes out every year for this class, and he just talks about barley the entire time. You have hops in this region also. Go up to Kalispell, and you've got some hop farms up there. I think there are two or three that I know of. So you've got all the ingredients that you need, and then you've got a really great culture."

In 2025, the U.S. Department of Agriculture reported that Montana ranked first in the country for barley acres planted, with a total of 760,000 acres.

The beer-making community in Montana adds to the importance of brewing sciences in the state, according to Flynn. He said that breweries in the state are like a "family." In coming to Missoula from Milwaukee, a renowned beer town, Flynn found that there are better qualities of breweries in Missoula.

Flynn said these programs at the University allow students to have an advantage in the world of brewing, and said if had known a quarter of what he was



Ryan Drew, head brewer at GILD, shows what malt looks like while giving a tour of the brewery on Feb. 5.

teaching in the classroom, he would have moved faster through his brewing career. He said the excitement around brewing has kept the option at the University, something he hopes students channel into their lives after taking the class or pursuing the certificate.

"I hope they enjoy learning it, and walk away knowing a little bit more about beer," Flynn said. "I would love it if they found a passion for beer and decided they wanted to move on into the brewing industry."

SO, WHY CERTIFICATES?

These unique certificates represent only some of the hundreds that the University has to offer, and just as John DeBoer, the vice provost of academic affairs, said, the topics offered are consistently changing and being updated.

"There is a good way for a student who has a particular interest to expand their learning in a way that is leading toward a very specific post-graduation outcome," he said.

DeBoer emphasized the importance of certificates, how it adds to a student's learning experience and highlights the experience of the University's faculty.

"Certificates, if they're done right, speak



The three-vessel brewhouse at GILD, which consists of a hot liquor tank, a brew kettle and a mash-lauter tun, on Feb. 5.

to the unique expertise of the faculty on campus," DeBoer said. "What those faculty are willing to do is dedicate time to add value to the already valuable degrees that we're offering. So, when it's done right, certificates are a reflection of the expertise that we have at the University."

For even more unique certificates, read the extended feature on montanakaimin.com

UM's International House celebrates the Lunar New Year

BEE REISWIG | ARTS REPORTER

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The International House is tucked away on the edge of campus. It looks just like any other house at 5:30 p.m. in Montana. People walking past might have a hard time seeing the event.

Inside, the house is filled with chatter. A pot of water boils in the small kitchen. Weaving through the packed house, one can see groups of people smiling and laughing while grabbing food. Red paper and ink lay out on the living room table with a few people crowded on the couches.

It's the University of Montana's International Students and Scholars Lunar New Year Celebration, which took place last Wednesday, the latest of its new initiative to host Intercultural Labs.

The Intercultural Labs have been going on since last semester, with nights focused on the North African region, Japan and Vietnam. This specific event featured a presentation about the 12 zodiac animals – this year is the Year of the Horse. Additionally, the event offered Chinese calligraphy and a variety of New Year foods including veggie rolls, shrimp dumplings and tempura and chicken and cilantro dumplings with a few different sauce options.

The Chinese calendar is split up into 24 seasons, each spanning approximately 25-day periods. The first of these, sparked by the Lunar New Year, is Start of Spring. Throughout this time, people celebrate and eat well to prepare for the upcoming plowing and sowing season, according to Chinese language department leader Zhen Cao. The next season, Rain Water, is the start of the agricultural year.

Mai Aboushanab, a 23-year-old human sciences biology senior who was born in Cairo, is the leader of the Intercultural Labs. She's worked as the International Student Engagement Assistant at the Global Engagement Office since last semester.

"Creating a space like this here at UM, essentially you're bringing people from around the world, you're bringing Montana students to come, to connect and to learn, to build a stronger connection," Aboushanab said.

Aboushanab works for around two weeks to plan these events before contacting a scholar to educate attendees.

"I like to step out of my comfort zone," Aboushanab said. "For me, for example, I've had no experience about Lunar New Year at all ... it's just a theme that I was curious about."

She reached out to April Nyu, a visiting scholar from Taiwan currently teaching a class about Taiwanese culture. The class will discuss food culture and the relationship between Taiwan and China, among other topics.

"When you think of Taiwan, the first thing you think of is boba tea," Nyu said. "One of my classes talks about 'Is it a good thing to only use boba tea to show our identity? Or should we use another thing? Or should we use different things to show our culture?'"

The event allowed some people to connect with their culture in a way they hadn't in a while. David Tu, a researcher in the forestry department, came to reminisce about his childhood in Beijing.

"I haven't attended such an event in a long time, and I also haven't gone back to my hometown for many years," Tu said. "So I just try to find if I can have the same feeling as before ... There are so many people, and most of them are away from their hometown. So I guess they share the same feeling as me."

Others, like president of the China Table Club, Gillian Gilbert, used the event as an opportunity to explore their passions.

The 20-year-old senior in Central and Southwest Asian studies, alongside Nyu, taught fellow students Chinese calligraphy on traditional red paper – which symbolizes good luck for the new year.

People also often write couplet poems and put them on their doors for good fortune, according to Gilbert. Students were able to try their hand at their own, whether guided by Gilbert and Nyu or by copying the printed pages provided to them.

"It brings different parts of the world here, to our campus," Gilbert said. "It shares a little bit about different cultures, and lets people have those experiences."

Programs like her minor, Chinese language, also focus on expanding students' education beyond the U.S. The program is potentially being cut at the end of the semester, according to Zhen. The professor, who has worked here in a non-tenured position since 1989, takes pride in the program he runs by himself.

"[The curriculum] is why we attract students from out of state," Zhen said. "They come here because they've heard we have a good Chinese program, and that we teach both Traditional and Simplified Chinese."

Zhen usually recommends that students learn Traditional Chinese, since it's more complex to write, but easier to learn.

Traditional Chinese was used in the New Year's couplets written by students at the International House event. Zhen hopes that he will be able to keep teaching Mandarin, despite threats to his program.

Aboushanab hopes to reach more students through the International Labs.

"I would love to see more Montana students," Aboushanab said. "It makes me happy to know that someone would come into this house and step out with a little bit more info about that certain culture that they never knew about."

According to Aboushanab, the next Intercultural Lab will focus on Ramadan, the holy ninth month in the Islamic calendar, during which many Muslims fast.



Students practice Chinese calligraphy at the International House's Lunar New Year celebration on Feb. 11. **TORI KUEHL | MONTANA KAIMIN**

Montana photojournalist shows all sides of the story

BLUE ROGALSKI | ARTS REPORTER

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The sun goes down behind the backdrop of Montana's mountains, illuminating a dirt road and bison in the foreground with a soft golden glow. The photo is striking in its evocation of calm.

Tailyr Irvine is a photojournalist dedicated to reflecting what she says is real life. She took photos for over three years for a new exhibit in the Missoula Art Museum, titled "Beyond Bison, Returning Land to the Original Stewards."

Irvine began her passion for storytelling in order to combat stereotypes surrounding Native Americans' contemporary lives, particularly surrounding poverty and suffering. "The way to combat ignorance is through education," she said. A connecting factor of her work is tackling complex issues and showing a well-rounded and three-dimensional version of the story.

In 2023, Irvine received an environmental reporting grant from a nonprofit organization supporting conservation efforts, Vital Impacts, for her project focusing on the change of stewardship to public lands, acknowledging that many lands were taken illegally. She began "Beyond Bison" in the same year and completed it in 2025.

"I had a story I wanted to tell for a while on the bison range and using the bison range as a blueprint to what Land Back looks like on a smaller scale and what it means when tribes manage the land," she said.

Irvine said this story was difficult to capture

in the traditional way that a story would be photographed, because animals are animals, and they're going to look the same no matter what the land management looks like.

"I started thinking about stewards of land, like why people are asking for land back, what makes them the person to take care of it," Irvine said. "I started focusing on that on my reservation ... exploring our traditions to show how we're tied to the land."

In her process for this series, she spent time looking at the way people use the land for access to food and tradition, the way people form a relationship with the land.

"It was very important to me that my work be published locally," Irvine said. Through the Missoula Art Museum, these images are free to access and are completely open to the public. "I think a lot of times, the images I take go out into The New York Times," she said. "This story's all about access to the land and I wanted to give access to the images. It was really important to me that we have it be local."

Brandon Reintjes, the executive director for the Missoula Art Museum, said that the staff was very happy that the museum was a place to have these photos on display. "We were honored," he said. Irvine told them that she had an obligation to reflect the photos within her community in a space where people were welcome, Reintjes said.

"We try to do more than just put the work up on the wall," he said. "So it's going to be the focus of the tribal schools program coming up, and Tailyr gave a workshop."

John Calsbeek, curator at the Missoula Art Museum, said that Irvine has been highly involved in the exhibit. "She's a great artist to



"Peel," a 2022 photograph from the exhibition.

TAILYR IRVINE | CONTRIBUTED

work with in a show like this," he said. "She's up for anything and she's excited to do all the things that she can do."

Irvine was born and raised on the Flathead Indian Reservation. After leaving the reservation to attend college, Irvine said she noticed a lot of ignorance among her peers and the media's portrayal of Native American people. "For me, it started in college when I went away to Washington state for the first time," she said. "One of my dormmates asked questions like, did I live in tipis and ride horses to school? They just had no idea what it was like."

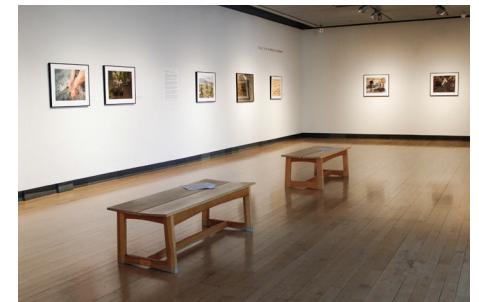
She later transferred to the University of Montana to study journalism. It was there that she discovered her love for photography through a media literacy course. She was deeply touched by the intense emotion that sparked in her by looking at photos from 9/11. "Even so many years later, I still feel that emotion. That's what I want to do is create images that make people feel," she said.

Irvine said that coming in contact with stereotypes about Indigenous communities made her isolated and uncomfortable. "For me, that was really isolating. It was a really tough transition from being on a reservation to being the only Native in a room," she said. She made it part of her mission to make it less difficult for students that followed behind her.

One way in which she ensured this was by participating in the foundation of Indigenous Photograph, a database that showcases Native American photographers. This database can direct editors to portfolios and other materials that photographers have so that it is easier to find and hire Indigenous photographers. "It came from that feeling of isolation, like there weren't a lot of Natives connected in journalism," Irvine said.

Irvine said that originally, editors complained that they couldn't find any Indigenous photographers, but would love to hire them, and this database was a response. She said that for the people that founded it, it started as a resource for editors, but turned into a resource for their own ability to connect with other photographers.

After photographing for 10 years, she's



Irvine's exhibition in the Missoula Art Museum.

MISSOULA ART MUSEUM | CONTRIBUTED

looking for the whole picture. "I hope my photos reflect part of life and culture we don't get to see," Irvine said. "I hope they just reflect what life looks like for people, whether they're Native or not. I want them to reflect who they are at this time in life."

Reintjes described Irvine as "this crazy power house." He said that she took many more photographs than are shown in the exhibit, but the museum and Irvine selected those that would be shown in the exhibit.

In another photo, Irvine depicts the stark contrast in a harsh line between a densely forested area, full of lush greenery, and its next door neighbor, a sparse area lacking the abundance of vegetation. The contrast is evident and conveys the change of management in its difference.

In her freelance work, Irvine said she wants to depict people as people and aims to show "communities people can relate to because we're all humans and that's part of my goal."

Part of Irvine's process and way of achieving this is to make her subject feel comfortable with her. Sometimes, to start off, she doesn't pick up her camera, but rather spends time getting to know the person she will be photographing. "I try to see what life is like for them and show that in photos," Irving said. "I try to not let one moment define who they are and show a bunch of moments to kind of piece together a whole picture."

Irvine said that Native American people are stereotypically portrayed in the media using the four Ds: drinking, dancing, death and drumming. "I think a lot of these kinds of stereotypes that come from poverty porn that papers have shown since forever," Irvine said.

In reality, Irvine said, we have a very small glimpse of what Native America is really like and she hopes to expand that portrayal and accurately capture its nuances. "To show more of the contemporary side, to show, yes, communities are impoverished, but why? And what does it look like when it's not messy houses or a poor town?"

What she really wants is the most accurate portrayal she can get. "I want to tell the stories exactly right," Irvine said.



"Bison Range," a 2024 photograph on display at the Missoula Art Museum. TAILYR IRVINE | CONTRIBUTED

Sports | Matt Upton serves

Griz tennis' lone freshman steps up

DILLON RICHARDSON | SPORTS REPORTER

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The University of Montana's men's tennis team is just a couple of weeks into its spring season, and a team full of international talent has only been further strengthened with the addition of freshman Matt Upton.

Upton, from the southwestern part of England, has had a slow start to the season after catching the flu, but won his first singles match in over two weeks on Saturday, as the team defeated Whitman College 6-1.

Upton said that even though he struggled with illness, he is in a good spot to improve.

"I've struggled a little bit at the start [of the season], but I think I'm in a good position to keep pushing upward, and it can only get better," he said.

Upton hopes to win Freshman of the Year in the Big Sky Conference, but believes there are things he needs to improve on.

"Definitely the serve and improving physicality, imposing myself a bit more," Upton said. "Getting a little bit bigger, a little faster and tougher."

As a team, Upton said the goal is to win the Big Sky Conference for the second-consecutive year, and as a part of the team pursuing that goal, Upton said he is having a great time.

"Everyone's been really welcoming and happy to have me here," Upton said. "I'm really enjoying it."

Upton said that he enjoys Missoula, and finds it different from the U.K.

"The scenery is really nice here, and I like it's super calm," Upton said. "There's a lot more things you can do outside. You don't have to be inside so much."

Even though Missoula is nice, Upton said his main reason for choosing UM was tennis, adding that his interactions with head coach Jason Brown were very positive.

"I had a great connection with Jason, and I think it's a really good environment to get better and improve," Upton said.

Brown spoke highly of his recruitment sessions with Upton.

"I really try to recruit guys who love tennis, and it was obvious this guy loves tennis, maybe as much as I do, which is a

lot," Brown said. "I really liked his parents, liked what they were about, and I thought he'd be a perfect fit here. He was a little undersized as well, so I knew there was a lot of upside potential as well."

Brown said that the first year in college tennis is tough, but Upton has been great so far.

"I mean the fall was brilliant," Brown said. "Freshman year is tricky in college tennis, you travel a lot of places, you sometimes play kids who are five or six years older than you."

Even though Upton had a rough start to the season, Brown said, "It'll be just fine in the long run."

Brown said that Upton has done a great job fitting into a team that has a lot of different personalities on it.

"It's an interesting part of bringing an international group together, but Matt's hit the ground running," Brown said. "If you don't like Matt Upton, you don't like anyone."

Brown added that he thinks Upton is learning a lot from some of the upperclassmen.

"[Upton's] soaking in some of the leadership from some of the older guys who've done some cool things here, won a lot of matches, won a conference championship," Brown said.

For Upton to improve, Brown said he needs to play more matches, because the talent is already there.

"It's just going to be a matter of getting more experience, the tennis is great," Brown said. "I told him when he came, 'You'll lose matches as a freshman you never lose again.'"

Brown said he believes that Upton is going to be a star in the near future.

"I truly believe Matt Upton will be a Big Sky Conference MVP," Brown said. "He's gonna be the best player in this conference. It's gonna take a year or two of development, but he's putting the work in and together we'll make it happen."

The team is on the road for the next few weeks before returning home on April 3 to kick off Big Sky Conference play against Weber State University.



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University of Montana makes history with flag football team

ABIGAIL STENKAMP | SPORTS REPORTER
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On Wednesday nights, women of all majors sit in a circle inside the Adams Center, lacing up their athletic sneakers.

Their coach, Rajiem Seabrook, walks in carrying two sacks of supplies over his shoulders; one with pink footballs in it and another with pennies and flags. He fist bumps every single player, greeting them with nicknames.

This is how Seabrook kicks off practice with the University of Montana's women's flag football team. Despite the club being new to campus this semester, the dedication this team shows to its sport has captured the attention of many.

"Football is everything," said Ainsley MacKenzie, vice president of the club and a secondary education student from Portland, Oregon. "We are out here training multiple days a week, rain or shine, out in the cold. Just because we're not one of the big names of the school yet doesn't mean we're not gonna be."

When it comes to football there are two main types, flag and tackle. American Football, including NCAA football and the National Football League, is tackle football.

Flag football involves a seven-on-seven setup where players wear a waist belt with flags, strips of fabric, attached to them. When the player with the ball on offense gets a flag pulled by the defense on the other team, that is where the ball is down and establishes the starting yard for the next play.

UM is the only collegiate women's flag football team in the Northwest. Seabrook, who also coaches the Sentinel high school team in Missoula, said he thought that now is the time for a team to be established at the collegiate level. He approached Tucker Sargent, the assistant director of clubs at UM, to start up the club.

"We just sat down and started planning," Seabrook said. "I had the vision, he had the access, so peanut butter met jelly and here we are."

This program gained many participants within its startup.

"I'm super excited about women's flag football," Sargent said. "We have gotten a massive response, somewhere in the 20s, of girls participating this year."

One of the things that determines what university a high school senior athlete attends is if they can continue to play the sport they love.

"This team presents another opportunity for [Missoula] girls to stay home," Seabrook said. "A lot of these girls wanted to play post-high school and several of them were ready to transfer and go to other schools for college, and this program kept them here."

From the women who competed in high school and know the sport inside and out, to those who haven't played before, the club has a good mix of skill levels.

Emma Pate, a member of the club and freshman education major, said, "I think there is so much variety on our team of experience

and, like, background, but we have one thing in common, that we're all trying to make each other the best that we can be."

Two quick claps echo off the walls and stands they practice near. This simple cheer is a way to call out when a player does something outstanding, makes a big improvement or overcomes a barrier during practice.

"I love the community, it's so cliche to say, but it's so real in our sport," Pate said. "Having your girls have your back to help push you to get better, not just for encouragement, but having that competition within your team is so important to me."

Seabrook said the program is ready for anything.

"Anytime you are trying to build something in its infancy, sometimes you're not gonna get that support and we're okay with that, no matter what we got from each other," Seabrook said.

When it comes to women's and men's flag football, Seabrooks said there are differences such as the rapidity of the game and how players move. "I mean throwing and catching is always going to be there, but it's different because of the way the game moves and flows."

Despite the International Women's Flag Football Association being created in 1995, it wasn't until recently when the sport started to gain popularity and get recognition. In 2026 flag football was added to the NCAA Emerging Sports. It will make its Olympic debut in 2028 in Los Angeles.

"I think what we're doing here is really special, and I think that it's going to open a lot of avenues for women in sports," Pate

said. "It's just like new and exciting and very dynamic and powerful."

The University of Montana team will face off the University of Colorado boulder in its first game in Billings on March 28. The team has also set up the ability to play in New Jersey on April 18. However, what is standing in the way of them competing is money in order to travel there.

"All of these readers have a sister, have an aunt, have a mom, have a grandmother, who don't know anything about this, but would love to support this program in a bunch of different ways," Seabrook said. "As we kind of crawl out of our grassroots, inaugural season, we get more support, cause these girls, they are ready. That's what a lot of people don't understand, we only have one game right now, but dollars to donuts, if we had to play these girls, we are ready."

Seabrook has an inspirational saying that he tends to end practices with: "Every practice, every day, every time we show up, we're getting 1% better."

Dani Wilson, a freshman student from Reno, Nevada, said, "His words make me feel like every time I show up to practice, I am making progress, even though it may not feel that way. His positivity just makes a world of a difference."

The team practices multiple times a week and has an active Instagram. To women who are looking to get involved, Seabrook said, "Our roster isn't closed. If you want to, it's never too late to join. Come be a part of something. Don't watch history be made, make history with us."



Quarterback Savannah Haselroth throws the ball in warmups of the women's flag football practice on Feb. 11. Their first game is against the University of Colorado in Billings on March 28.

WILL LADYMAN | MONTANA KAIMIN

SPORTS BRIEFS

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BOBCATS TAKE THE SERIES

After both the Men's and Lady Griz basketball teams lost to the Montana State Bobcats in Bozeman during the first half of the series, the Griz hoped to even the score and win at home.

However, after a tough battle, both UM teams came up short yet again.

The men's team began the game off with a quick start, only trailing 38-37 to the Cats by halftime, but they lost grip of the game after being outscored 44-34 in the second half, ending the game with a final score of 82-71.

UM was led by Money Williams and Te'Jon Sawyer, who combined for a total of 47 points throughout the game.

The Griz started the game making seven out of 10 3-pointers in the first 10 minutes, but lost control of the ball, completing the rest of the game with only one goal from behind the arc.

The Lady Griz saw the game pull away from them quickly, ending the first half with a score of 48-22. While the team saw a new spark after halftime, it wasn't enough to stop the Cats from taking home the win with a score of 72-55.

MSU shot 10-16 in the first quarter, while the Lady Griz shot only 3-16. This defeat handed the Lady Griz its fourth loss in a row.

RECORD-BREAKING TEAM

In Pocatello, Idaho on Feb. 14, the Griz track and field team broke four program records, adding to six other broken program records, the most in a single season.

Erin Wilde broke her own record in the high jump of 6'0.5".

Mikenna Ells ran a 400m in 53.76 seconds, breaking the record that was held by previous Grizzly, Kourtney Danreuther, for 14 years.

Cooper Henkle started the show for the men's events as he broke the record in the weight toss with a score of 62'11.25".

Finally, Kevin Swindler finished out the event for the Griz after completing a pole vault of 17'6.5".

"Overall, I thought we had a really productive weekend in Pocatello," said Doug Fraley, head coach of the UM track and field team. "Obviously the highlights are the school records, but there was a lot of maturity and learning the facility from our team."

Gallery | Prom, prizes and pokes



Taylor Burlage performs with The Dead and Down at KBGA's Lovesick Ball on Feb. 12 in Missoula.



Decorations at KBGA's Lovesick Ball, which was hosted at the Zootown Arts Community Center.



A couple enjoys music from Malcolm Contreras and Soup Du Jour at the Lovesick Ball.



Malcolm Contreras and Soup Du Jour perform at the Lovesick Ball.

TORI KUEHL | PHOTOGRAPHER

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An audience gathered for a night of live music and dancing in a room decorated to resemble a high school's gym on prom night for KBGA's Lovesick Ball on Feb. 12.

The Lovesick Ball is an annual concert at the Zootown Arts Community Center, organized by the staff of KBGA, the University of Montana's student-run radio station.

Malcolm Contreras and Soup Du Jour, a local band, opened the show. Members Lane Ulberg, Cooper Godfried, Llwyn Clark-Gaynor and lead vocalist Malcolm Contreras set the mood for the night with their sound, which ranged from shoegaze to bedroom pop, as the crowd arrived.

The Dead and Down, an indie roots-rock band from Southwest Montana, headlined the

show. The crowd cheered as they stepped on stage and played songs from their 2024 album, "No Broken Bones."

Audience member Isabel Emmert-Nolte described the performance as "beautiful," as the crowd danced.

The Lovesick Ball also offered activities beyond the music.

Attendees could buy tickets for two raffles focused on local businesses. Some of the prizes for the first raffle included four tickets to the Missoula Butterfly House and Insectarium, Ear Candy Music merchandise and \$80 in gift cards to Slant Street Records.

"We're a local radio station and we like to keep it in Missoula as much as possible," KBGA's outreach coordinator Pippin Bridgeman said.

The second raffle was a bit more unique. Attendees could submit one tattoo idea for

\$2 or three for \$5 at the event, and members of the KBGA staff would volunteer to get the winning ideas tattooed on their body, according to KBGA general manager Aspen Nord.

"People really love to throw a terrible idea in a basket and make someone get a tattoo, so that's a really good way to raise money," Nord said.

KBGA typically hosts four events throughout the year, Dead Air, Lovesick Ball, Skoden Indigenous Bash and GayBGA. The money raised at these events supports KBGA as well as several local organizations, depending on the show.

"At the end of the day it's really fun to get here and to see who shows up to these events and to get to put local musicians on stage," Nord said. "Bringing people together in a time where so many people are being torn apart I think is super important."