

MONTANA KAIMIN

Nine hundred seventy-five days



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Cover design by Mackenna Gleave

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Kiosk



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

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KAIMIN KOMICS: SE 2 EP 8



BARRETT CLEMENT | MONTANA KAIMIN

BARRETT

SUDOKU

Difficulty: Easy

Edited by Margie E. Burke

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

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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:

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



Charging into spring

Junior Corbin Luce practices pole vault in UM’s indoor training facility on Jan. 20. Luce placed eighth at the 2025 Spokane Indoor Challenge last weekend with a jump of 4.43 meters.
HENRY DOELLINGER | MONTANA KAIMIN

Why cover sexual assault?

When I first started working on this week’s feature with my main source, Sofia Beers, we had lengthy conversations about what covering a topic like sexual assault should look like for a student newspaper.

She told me the impact of former reporting and how damaging it had been at the time to her identity, and her anxiety over releasing a story with her name attached was understandable.

But after many conversations, Beers and I both came to the conclusion that there is power in sharing one’s story, especially when it presents itself as an anomaly.

As student journalists, we are constantly adapting to a world of media that is ever-changing in its coverage. One of those changes is in how we cover violent crimes, but progress is slow. Learning to put trauma-informed and victim-centered stories first can be challenging, but when done correctly, it can be rewarding — it just takes more diligence than anyone, including me, thinks.

Like with any well-reported, in-depth piece of journalism, sharing these stories can have

power — especially when it comes to change. Covering these kinds of topics can be difficult. Reading them can be too. But it is important that we pay attention to what is happening in our community and work together across advocates, legal experts, administrators and students to build a space that supports survivors.

We know sexual violence is an epidemic. It happens on campus every day. Recognizing it as such is a first step, Aislinn Addington, director of the Student Advocacy Resource Center, told me. But putting funding, energy and attention toward it are the next ones.

It’s not an easy thing to face. As Beers said, it is uncomfortable. But pretending these kinds of things don’t happen is worse.

We at the Kaimin wanted to include Beers’ letter to the editor to allow those like her to be heard. It is time we listen.

-Claire Bernard, editor-in-chief

Like it? Hate it? Let us know.
Email us your opinions at
claire.bernard@umontana.edu

Letter to the editor

Throughout the process of reporting, I was not shy about sharing my experience with the people around me.

In doing so, I realized the only unique thing about what happened to me is that I got even a shred of “justice.” It made me realize the scope of the problem and how many women there were in my life that I didn’t know had overcome the same thing. During a span of three years, I met dozens of people who considered themselves survivors, none of which had been able to seek criminal justice.

I’m choosing to attach my name to my experience because, although I felt a staggering loneliness throughout my time reporting, in hindsight I know there are more people around me that can empathize with how I feel than those who can’t. Sexual abuse is pervasive, and in 2025, we deserve better than what we’re getting.

We as students deserve better than the University “making strides” while crucial programs for survivors remain poorly funded. As Americans, we deserve better than a justice system that accepts its practices are damaging to victims of crimes, yet does nothing to mitigate those damages.

My experience reporting was wrought with disappointment and fear, but in the worst moments I remembered those who did not have the privilege of my circum-

stances. I recalled messages I’d received from other survivors young and old, saying that seeing me find any success in reporting made them feel like they got a little justice too. It made me realize that although my rapist spending 30 nights in jail isn’t justice, it doesn’t mean there hasn’t been any.

Justice is knowing that I can use my story to make it easier for the next person who decides to report — it’s hoping that a girl like me will read this article and find comfort in knowing that she is not alone and that someone is fighting for her. I really believe a better world is possible, one where justice is more concrete than I see it now. But I don’t think that world is achievable unless we all do our part to advocate for and listen to survivors.

The fear of sharing this story in such a public way has been paralyzing, but change comes at a cost. It is up to us to advocate for ourselves, our peers and the generations that follow. Without uncomfortable conversations and calling out the systems that make this process so challenging, we cannot hope for better. Not enough has changed and I hope that the University and the Missoula County Courthouse hear me when I say we deserve better.

- Sofia Beers

UM given gold rating for sustainability; TikTok banned from app stores; Neural Injury Center receives grant and new leadership

UM AWARDED FOR SUSTAINABILITY

The University of Montana has received a gold rating from the Sustainability Tracking, Assessment & Rating System.

STARS is the association used to measure participating campuses' levels of sustainability with a focus in five different areas: academics, engagement, operations, planning and administration and innovation and leadership.

More than 1,200 universities participated in the ranking as a way to show efforts in becoming sustainable and using previous rankings as a baseline to improve upon. UM was the first in its region to participate, receiving a silver rating in 2014. This year is the first time UM has received gold, only making bronze and silver in the past.

Montana State University in Bozeman first participated in 2019, receiving silver. In 2023, it was awarded gold.

"Earning our first STARS Gold rating is a moment of immense pride for the University of Montana," Eva Rocke, the University's sustainability director, said to UM News. "This recognition reflects the collaborative efforts of our entire campus community to advance sustainability across academics, operations and beyond."

The mission of the sustainability association is to help universities become more sustainable by providing support and resources to enact operations and education.

"STARS was developed by the campus sustainability community to provide high standards for recognizing campus efforts," executive director of the sustainability association, Meghan Fay Zahniser, said to UM News. "UM has demonstrated a substantial commitment to sustainability by achieving a STARS Gold Rating and is to be congratulated for [its] efforts," Zahniser said.

(Corbin Vanderby)

TIKTOK BANNED FROM APP STORES

TikTok was officially banned from app stores Saturday night after five years of debating from lawmakers.

When users opened the app, they were presented with a pop-up stating "Sorry, TikTok isn't available right now." The message went on to address that President-elect Donald Trump has "indicated"

he will work with the company to reinstate the app once he is in office.

On Sunday, TikTok was again available to users who still had the app downloaded. The pop-up was replaced with one welcoming users back and thanking Trump for his efforts to save the app.

According to AP News, the company owning TikTok posted on X stating that Trump has given "the necessary clarity and assurance to our service providers that they will face no penalties providing TikTok to over 170 million Americans."

Although the app is working again, it is still unavailable on all app stores.

With more than 170 million users, according to the Pew Research Center, TikTok has become an app used by the majority of U.S. adults under 30. However, on Friday the Supreme Court unanimously upheld the ban against TikTok on Jan. 19, unless its owner, ByteDance, sells it to a U.S. company.

The app first started in September 2016 and merged with its competitor Musical.ly in August 2018 to become the well-known app TikTok, rapidly taking off as COVID-19 kept everyone home. In January 2023, the Montana Commissioner of Higher Education banned TikTok across all Montana universities' devices and networks.

In an interview on Saturday with Rachel Scott from ABC, Trump said he would delay the ban, saying, "I'm the one who is going to be calling the shots. Most likely, I'll extend for 90 days."

Read the full story online at montanakaimin.com

(Emily Messer)

NEURAL INJURY CENTER FROM UM RECEIVES NEW LEADERSHIP AND \$4.8M

The Neural Injury Center, a research group from the University of Montana studying concussions and other brain injuries, often in student veterans, just hired a new leadership team and was awarded a \$4.8 million research grant.

The grant came from the U.S. Office of Naval Research and will have the center developing monitoring techniques as well as rehabilitating the neural performance of naval aviators.

The new director of the center, Brian Loyd, is an associate professor from the School of Physical Therapy and Rehabil-

itation Science. Andy Kittelson, another professor from the school, will join Loyd as associate director for research.

Loyd and Kittelson both have research experience in neural injury and performance and their research could impact both active duty and veteran military members as well as older adults and rural populations.

(CV)

The fitness trends: One Missoula class catches on



OULA | CONTRIBUTED

In 2025, fitness looks different. Influenced by social media trends and celebrities, people across the country are finding new ways to get their sweat on. Oula, as in Missoula, is a dance fitness class founded in 2010 to be a body-positive, inclusive space. It has expanded nationally, but found a strong fan base in its home community and at the University of Montana. "You can bring your baggage into an Oula class and work through it," instructor D'Et Hefington said. "You don't have to leave it at the door." Fitness classes like Oula are helping people manage their mental health and body image amid ever-changing beauty standards.



New episodes out every other Monday. Scan for the latest.

POLICE BLOTTER

ABBY WILLIAMS

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Welcome back to another semester, Grizzlies! I hope you all had a fun and refreshing winter break and enjoyed seeing friends and family. While some of you went home and enjoyed a nice dinner and opened presents, some of us stayed in Missoula and got ourselves on the naughty list. Here are some of Santa's least favorites from Christmas break.
WEDNESDAY DEC. 4 — QUALITY CONTROL

We started off strong with some good 'ol vandalism in parking lot G, resulting in criminal mischief. You guessed it, there were no cameras or suspects! Which one of you lucky students got some spray paint for Christmas? Seems like some of Santa's elves tested them out for you. Quality control, you know?

WEDNESDAY DEC. 4 — EMAILS WITH A BOW

It seems what a lot of you really needed for Christmas was an email from IT with a bow on top to warn you of the effects of stranger danger! There were three phone frauds over the course of December. This is why I don't pick up the phone for anyone unless they are a saved contact. I don't know how you people see the words "spam risk" and greet the other end with a cheery hello. But maybe that's just me.

WEDNESDAY DEC. 11 — CHRISTMAS SPIRIT

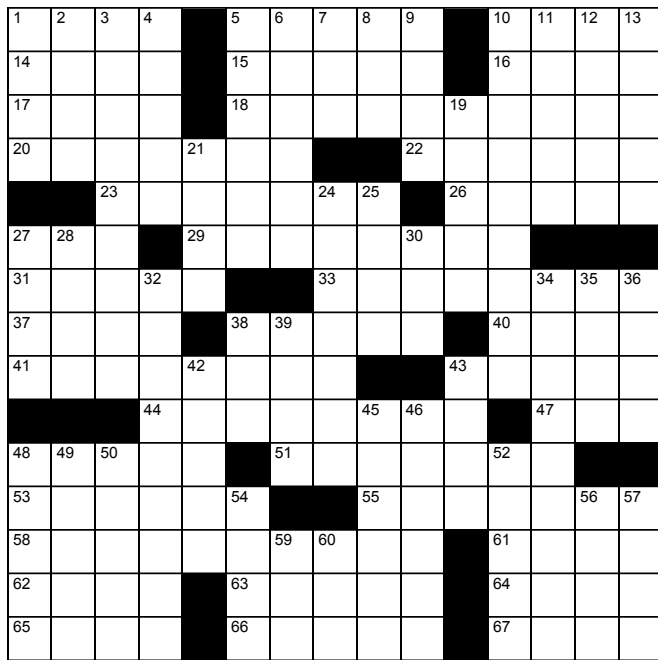
A resident of Jesse Hall started the Christmas spirit off strong with a minor in possession charge. To be fair, sipping on some alcohol and watching the snow fall from the comfort of my dorm room seems nice, but how do you get caught in a dorm over Christmas break? Your resident assistant must have it out for you. What a scrooge. I think he needs the ghost of Christmas past to visit him.

FRIDAY DEC. 20 — STOCKING STUFFER

Somebody decided to open their stockings early and enjoy a blunt in Lot I, while under the age of 21. C'mon man, you could have at least driven off campus first. Go somewhere with a better view, and deal with city police like a big kid. Maybe Santa will have your minor in possession charge under the tree for you on Christmas day. Make sure to frame it! I'm joking.

The Weekly Crossword

by Margie E. Burke



ACROSS

- 1 Up to it
- 5 Mover's challenge
- 10 Task for Perry Mason
- 14 USPS concern
- 15 Key
- 16 Enthusiastic
- 17 Facts, briefly
- 18 Sparkling
- 20 Kind of diver
- 22 Geriatrics focus
- 23 Dieter's no-no
- 26 Like notebook paper
- 27 Triumphant cry
- 29 Male hormone
- 31 Rock Hudson flick, "___ Come Back"
- 33 Willing to go along
- 37 Haiku, e.g.
- 38 Long suit
- 40 Molten rock
- 41 Toothed wheel
- 43 Up and about
- 44 Producing tears
- 47 Bit of advice
- 48 Use an SOS pad
- 51 College life
- 53 Carl Sagan series
- 55 "Thinking Out Loud" singer Ed
- 58 Pick up speed
- 61 Jazz singer Simone
- 62 Pained sound
- 63 Zealous
- 64 Places for props
- 65 Component
- 66 Bodega, for one
- 67 Qatar's continent

DOWN

- 1 In the thick of
- 2 Thorn in one's side
- 3 Candy in a roll
- 4 Wed secretly
- 5 Urban bird
- 6 Cuba, e.g.
- 7 Rope-a-dope boxer
- 8 Surfing site
- 9 Palindromic emperor
- 10 Busch Stadium team
- 11 Flu variety
- 12 Barely burn
- 13 Sharp-___
- 19 Corby of "The Waltons"
- 21 Capone trademark
- 24 Severe
- 25 1959 film, "___ Like it Hot"
- 27 Mont Blanc's range
- 28 Kind of skirt
- 30 "Scram!"
- 32 Compensation
- 34 AA and AAA
- 35 57, to Caesar
- 36 Tombstone lawman
- 38 Dog registry org.
- 39 Red Cross supply
- 42 Actress Channing
- 43 On the calm side
- 45 Tony, to Jeannie
- 46 Cleave
- 48 Rascal
- 49 Winter drink
- 50 Acting award
- 52 Rainy bunch
- 54 Matches, as a wager
- 56 Pro's opposite
- 57 "Hidden Figures" org.
- 59 Squeal (on)
- 60 Long ___

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Answers to Previous Crossword:

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

Horoscope

Maybe next year?

KAIRI LISING

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We all try to start out the New Year with our best foot forward, but let's face it, we're all human and we all suck at being good at things, including bettering ourselves. But hey, they say the first step is recognizing our faults. So recognize we're all lazy, unhealthy, antisocial and probably dying. Yay! Happy New Year!

AQUARIUS (JAN 20-FEB 18): You've decided — it's time to LOCK IN. You got a new planner and pens, even a new backpack. You're ready to make this semester your bitch. First day of school comes and your professor is going through the syllabus. 10 page essay? Group work? Attendance? Nevermind. Cs get degrees.

PISCES (FEB. 19-MARCH 20): You're so full of shit your eyes are brown, Pisces. Doctor's orders, this year you gotta eat healthy. Greens, beans, tomatoes, potatoes. It feels good, doesn't it? To have fiber for once. But what better feeling than trying those new nuggets from Taco Bell? It's okay, girl. Me too.

ARIES (MARCH 21-APRIL 19): At least one book, that's all your resolution is this year, Aries. Face it: your attention span won't even get you to the end of this sentence. So, you started with something easy, the latest BookTok smut. Well, as expected, you never finished it. And you didn't even get to the best part!

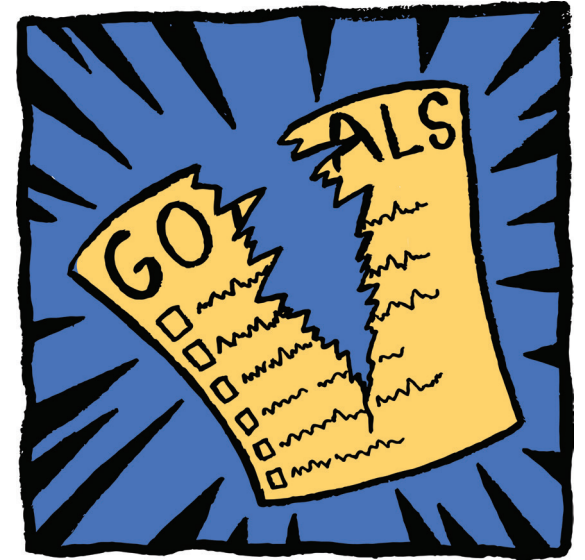
TAURUS (APRIL 20-MAY 20): Taurus, your bank account is looking dusty, so your New Year's resolution is to spend less money. It's been a hard year on your pockets, so your solemn vow must stay true. Well, you're a boldfaced liar, Taurus, because Gary's just opened in the Food Court. At least the burgers are only \$6?

GEMINI (MAY 21-JUNE 20): It's time to finally have the body-ody-ody of your dreams. No more soft Gemini, it's jacked Gemini time. Unfortunately, the gym is where dreams come to die, and after one mile on the treadmill, you're down for the count. Maybe get an inhaler first.

CANCER (JUNE 21-JULY 22): After a year of being too lazy to go out with your friends, you've made it a vow to get out more this year. You're gonna go wild! Your friends call you up for a night out on the town and you say yes. But as the minutes tick closer to the time, you realize your bed looks so much better. Oh well, you have a "tummy ache" again.

LEO (JULY 23-AUG. 22): You've become a full-fledged iPad baby, Leo. TikTok is compromised, so you're quitting, cold turkey. No more screens, no more mindless scrolling. It didn't last very long, since word on the street is a new app is in town: Xiaohongshu, the Chinese version of TikTok. Now you're back to scrolling — but at least you're learning Mandarin.

VIRGO (AUG. 23-SEP. 22): You're a hard worker, Virgo. So hard that you haven't left your cave of a desk in days. After wiping the crust from your eyes, you realize it's time to finally do it. Your New Year's resolution is to



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touch grass. You step outside and your lungs take in the freshest air you've had in a long time. Then you hear a notification from your computer. You rush back inside, leaving the outside world behind. So close, Virgo.

LIBRA (SEP. 23-OCT. 22): After not being able to go up a flight of stairs without coughing, you've decided it's finally the year, Libra. You're going to quit vaping. You drop your candy-colored vape in the trash and never look back. You're looking forward to bigger and better things, like a pack of menthols. Maybe next year?

SCORPIO (OCT. 23-NOV. 21): You've done some self-reflecting and you realized something, Scorpio. You've become a huge nihilist. I mean, how could you not? The world is literally on fire. Despite that, your resolution this year is to be more positive. It's a shame it didn't last very long when you opened your phone this morning and looked at the latest headline.

SAGITTARIUS (NOV. 22-DEC. 21): This year you've decided to stop putting it off — it's time to learn a language. You download Duolingo, once again, and tap away. That little green bird can only do so much encouraging before you do the inevitable — close and delete the app, again. At least you know how to say "my dog is brown" in German.

CAPRICORN (DEC. 22-JAN. 19): You've made it your resolution to go out and see the world. The only thing you know about the world is your bedroom, so it's time for a change. You open up your Dorito-covered laptop and search Google Flights for the cheapest, farthest flight. But after looking at the price tag, you close your laptop and go back to bedrotting. In this economy?

How three bills are dire to the University's "survival"

EMILY MESSER

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The University of Montana is taking its top initiatives to the state legislative session this year to advocate for further funding, infrastructure and employee pay.

Dave Kuntz, the University's spokesperson, went to the capitol earlier this month to lobby for multiple bills for the University. Before the session started on Jan. 6, Kuntz partnered with the Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education to determine what initiatives UM would bring forward and negotiated items such as the budget with the Governor's Office.

"It'll be a failure if we don't get all three of those things passed," Kuntz said.

The infrastructure bill, House Bill 5, known as the Long Range Building Program, encompasses an \$18 million library remodel, a \$14 million music building renovation and a \$3 million roof replacement throughout campus. Jennifer Cavanaugh, the associate dean of performing arts, said the music building completed phase one of this renovation a year and half ago, which was privately funded, and updated choir and instrumental rehearsal space and two student practice rooms.

Cavanaugh said the second phase will depend on the final amount funded by the state, along with some fundraising. So far, the plan is to focus on the second floor of the building to update classroom spaces and the music education room.

"The building is very old, it was built in the '50s, but it's gone through small upgrades over the years," Cavanaugh said. "That's kind of where we want to put our energy for phase two, really utilizing the funds to support student outcomes."

Cavanaugh said she imagines a third phase of this project that would include upgrading the faculty studios and possibly a fourth phase to give the recital hall an aesthetic facelift. She said these renovations are currently under discussion and will depend on the amount of funding allocated by the state.

While Cavanaugh said an expansion to the building was not a part of the proposal that went forward due to the budget, they would like a gathering space for students to feel like they can build community. She said right now they have about 150 majors, 40 minors, and more than 750 non-majors that are involved in some aspect of the program.

"We are bursting out of this building, and we really hope to have space that is for the entire campus," she said. "We're just not there right now, but that would be a dream and a hope down the road. It's important to note that this building is utilized by thousands of people who are not University of Montana students."

Along with the music building upgrades, the University is working on a proposal for a renovation on the top floor of the Mansfield Library. The top floor would become similar to the first floor with natural lighting and a variety of furniture to provide students with study options, according to Barry Brown, the interim dean of the Mansfield Library.

"The Mansfield Library's embryonic dream is to transform Level 5 of the library into a student centered, beautiful, multi-purpose, active learning environment with stunning views of the surrounding mountains and landscape," Brown stated in an email to the Kaimin.

Kuntz will also advocate for the employee pay plan, as outlined in House Bill 13. This includes a wage increase of 2.5% or \$1, whichever is greater, based on the employee's base pay every two years. Jay Stephens, the vice president for People and Culture, said salary funding comes from tuition, grants and state allocation.

"Any money we can get for our employees is fantastic. We have an expensive cost of living here in Montana, and so it's a relief for the employees that work here," Stephens said. "It's recognition of the hard work they do and the contributions they make, and then it's also good in terms of helping us recruit more people."

Another top priority for the University is to advocate for continued state allocation funding which is a part of House Bill 2. The University received about a \$66.5 million state support base in the 2024 fiscal year, and this year it has negotiated a 6% increase from last year. However, this increase will be distributed by the Board of Regents between the entire Montana University System.

"That really helps UM as we continue to grow to be able to hire employees and pay for pay raises to keep folks, to do some facilities upgrades to better serve students, just really operational opportunities," Kuntz said.

Kuntz also said another priority for the University is to advocate for an online law school program, which the legislature is interested in funding up to a million dollars to create. According to Kuntz, there is a



Dave Kuntz, UM's spokesperson, in his Brantly Hall office on Jan. 17. Kuntz will be traveling between Missoula and Helena to represent the University of Montana during the legislative session.

DIEGO HERNANDEZ | MONTANA KAIMIN

shortage of prosecutors and public defenders across the state, leaving lawmakers interested in funding this project to remove the geographic burden for students.

"That's the goal behind that money, is it's hopefully providing incentive to get more geographic diversity engaged in the law school with the hopes that it'll address some of these workforce challenges that are facing the public legal sector of our economy," Kuntz said.

Finally, Kuntz is lobbying to continue funding Cyber Montana, which is about a \$3 million cybersecurity initiative that helps train employees and students across the state.

This will be Kuntz's third year going to lobby for the University, and along with playing offense on bills, he said there are always bills it perceives as bad for the University and plays defense on. Kuntz said he has not seen any of those bills yet this semester.

"It goes smoothly, once you get an understanding of the cadence and how legislation works through the process, it's actually really simple," Kuntz said. "It's just taking the time to learn that, luckily, I've been exposed to the process for quite some

time, so [I'm] really comfortable with how a bill becomes a law and how to advocate for or against something."

For any of these bills to be passed into laws, the Montana House first completes a read in and a committee hearing and then can amend it. Following this, the Montana Senate reads the bill and holds committee hearings. The bill can go two ways. Either the Senate amends the bill and sends it back to the House for it to be approved or denied, or the Senate passes it without any amendments.

After approval from both the Senate and House, a bill becomes enrolled and is signed by the Speaker of the House and the President of the Senate. The governor decides to veto or allow it to become a law, according to a Montana Legislative Services Division.

The legislative session meets every other year and runs from the first Monday in January to mid May.

Emily Messer is a news reporter for the Montana Kaimin and can be contacted at emily.messer@umontana.edu. For more stories from Messer and other reporters, visit online at montanakaimin.com.

What the LA wildfires mean for Missoula

SABRINA PHILIP
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Since massive wildfires began to break out in Los Angeles and Ventura counties in the beginning of January, the effects have spread much farther, reaching the minds and worries of Montana residents.

The recent death toll has risen to 27 people and devastation has affected all areas of life for Los Angeles residents. Thousands are being evacuated with their homes and belongings ablaze, but the strong and dry Santa Ana winds have prevented an end to the chaos fueling the fire.

The Palisades Fire, started on Jan. 7, continues to consume at a rapid pace.

Many Southern California residents evacuated quickly and left with uncertainty as they attempted to collect pets, sentimental belongings and best the traffic-filled streets, often abandoning their cars in the middle of the freeway to find a temporary home.

"I got the alert on my phone, and we evacuated Tuesday night," Ava Zlidenny, a senior at La Salle College Preparatory High School, said. "It was very chaotic leaving LA. We stayed in a hotel in Pasadena for the night and then went to a different hotel ... now we're in a rental house for I don't know how long."

Fires with such a large human toll have hardly been seen before in Montana.

"The closest thing that comes to mind was a few years ago in Denton, Montana," Philip Keating, assistant fire chief of the Missoula Fire Department, said. "They had a windstorm that came through with a fire start and burned through the town. It burned a lot of the residents out. But obviously, it was on a much smaller scale and not really compared to what they're dealing with down in California."

Multiple firefighters from the West, including the Missoula Fire Department, have joined the firefighting efforts, bringing extra trucks and gear, a bigger water supply and relief to local firefighters who have been working to bring an end to the loss. According to Keating, Missoula

sent two fire trucks down, and the Montana Task Force sent 10.

"We've had an engine, a type three engine, down in California, for roughly about the last two months, just because of the California staffing shortages and weather conditions, and when this fire started, we sent another engine down the next day," Keating said.

Other first responders have also been involved in the fight, providing support to the public. Police officers have been working to prevent theft from evacuated homes, and hospital personnel have been helping burn victims and those who have suffered as a result of the flames.

Despite the efforts, many criticized the city on social media for what they deemed a lack of efficiency, communication and more, but officials are urging people to remain patient and trust in those handling the fires.

"These are first responders that have devoted their lives to providing their service to the community and they're doing the best they can with the resources they have," Keating said. "Mother Nature sometimes wins, unfortunately, and that's just the name of the game. Everything is replaceable except for people, so if we need to back people out and keep them safe, then they're all doing the best they can."

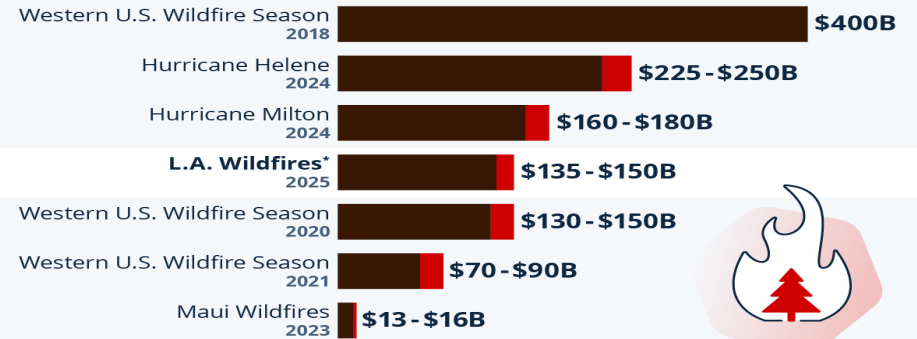
Multiple GoFundMe donation pages have been set up for those who have lost their homes. Celebrities ranging from Elon Musk to Snoop Dogg have been visiting Los Angeles to provide hope and volunteer by delivering meals and collecting donations.

As of Monday, the Palisades Fire is 59% contained and the Eaton Fire is 87% contained. Conditions are improving slowly and some who were previously evacuated have been allowed to return to their homes.

Sabrina Philip is a news reporter for the Montana Kaimin and can be contacted at sabrina.philip@umontana.edu. For more stories from Philip and other reporters, visit online at montanakaimin.com.

L.A. Wildfires Among the Costliest in Recent History

Estimated total damage and economic losses associated with recent natural disasters in the U.S.



* Latest preliminary estimate as of Jan. 9, 2025. Estimates includes direct costs (e.g. property damage) and indirect costs (e.g. wage losses and supply chain disruptions)
Source: AccuWeather



statista

Above is a chart depicting the cost of the L.A. wildfires in comparison to previous natural disasters.
<https://www.statista.com/chart/33752/total-costs-and-economic-losses-of-natural-disasters-in-the-us/>
CONTRIBUTED | STATISTA

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*She wasn't going to report
her assault to the police.
Then it happened to
someone else.*

Story by Claire Bernard

FROM THE MOMENT SOFIA Beers first reported her rape to the University of Montana Police Department, her story, body and future no longer belonged to her. She spent more time on the phone with detectives than her friends. Her classmates picked apart her identity. She woke up almost every morning physically ill from dread.

Although her rapist, Andrew Beckett, had been expelled from the University after a quick Title IX investigation, legal proceedings dragged. The trial was delayed twice. Beckett pleaded not guilty. Beers' hope drained away.

But after years of back-and-forth between the prosecutor and defense teams, Beckett changed his plea to guilty.

Three years after her assault, Beers suddenly had an opportunity to share the crime's impact at the courthouse. And she would look her attacker in the eyes while she did it.

Walking into the courtroom, Beers was about to witness something less than 3% of rape survivors get to see: a conviction. Because of barriers like social stigma, a lack of adequate resources and fear of retaliation, sexual assault is significantly underreported to police. When it is, only about 1% of rapists are convicted or serve prison time — and it is often an incredibly emotional

undertaking for the victim. According to experts, trials can take almost as much of a toll on the victims as the initial attack, retraumatizing them in the process.

Seeing Beckett plead guilty wouldn't bring back the three years of Beers' life she spent ensnared in the case. It wouldn't end the nightmares. But Beers knew if it would prevent her rapist from harming anyone else, it would make the time spent alienated, exhausted and anxious worth it.

She spent weeks working on her victim impact statement, thinking about what she wanted to say when she finally saw Beckett again. Beers donned a blue dress that, for months, hung in her closet untouched, waiting for the sentencing. On the way to the courtroom, she listened to a playlist curated just for this day.

Beers volunteered to give her statement first. She took the stand and looked out over the courtroom. There were thousands of women who would never get a chance to share their experiences, and Beers felt the weight of their stories, along with her own, on her shoulders. When she glanced at Beckett, Beers made sure to look him in the eye. Then, with a deep breath, she began to speak.

Warning signs

They had a journalism class together.

Beckett sat a couple of rows behind Beers. A few weeks into the 2021 fall semester, she saw his profile on Tinder and decided to swipe right. She already knew him in person, so she felt comfortable agreeing to a date.

He took her for a walk around the park where he told her about playing baseball and working for his high school newspaper. He kept trying to pull her onto the ground where he was sitting to make out, which Beers found strange, but not threatening. She refused him. They were in public and barely knew one another.

Beers didn't find herself particularly

hundreds y-five days

enamored by Beckett, but she was 18 and going through her first breakup. She was sad, bored and lonely.

They went on a few dates. “I think you’re cute, but my friends will make fun of me if I’m seen in public with you,” Beers recalled him telling her.

She cried as she walked back to her dorm.

A week later, Beckett pulled Beers aside after class. “Let me make it up to you,” he told her. She begrudgingly agreed, and they headed to his dorm room to watch a movie.

It was mid-afternoon. His roommate was there. The room smelled like feet and weed. The floor was sticky. They lay down on Beckett’s bed. The adult cartoon series “South Park” played in the background.

Beckett started to kiss Beers. He kept whispering to her how he wanted to have sex. She told him, “No.” She told him she didn’t want to.

His roommate seemed to be asleep when the rape began — at the very least laying on his bed with his eyes closed. Beers could not speak, could not move. Her body pressed against the wall. The room was dark.

After Beckett finished raping her, she pulled her clothes on, ashamed and frightened. Beckett asked Beers if she thought his penis was big. Her stomach twisted.

The assault lasted less than 10 minutes. It would impact Beers for the rest of her life.

‘I thought that was the end of it’

Beers went home, confused and afraid. She didn’t understand what had happened, even though she knew something was wrong.

She couldn’t escape the violation she experienced. She thought about it constantly, dreaming about the room, his

hands on her neck, his roommate lying only a few feet away.

A couple of weeks later, Beers told two of her friends about the assault while in the car.

“That’s a crime,” one of them told her, but they didn’t know what to do about it. As freshmen, they were unfamiliar with the resources on campus and in Missoula. They knew the Student Advocacy Resource Center existed, but not what it did.

One in five women and one in 16 men experience a sexual assault while in college. Around 23% of transgender or non-gender-conforming individuals have been sexually assaulted while in college.

A week later, Beers ran into advocates from the resource center during a protest on campus. After hearing about its free therapy services, Beers walked in looking for help.

“I need to speak with a counselor,” she told the office. She was brought into a room to tell her story. The counselor asked if she wanted to speak with a police officer.

“No,” Beers responded. “Absolutely not.”

But she asked the center to notify her if anyone else reported an assault by Beckett.

“I thought I would never hear from them again,” she said. “I thought that was the end of it.” Beers tried to be a 19-year-old girl who did “normal” college things, like joining a sorority and speaking with male professors one-on-one without having panic attacks. But even when she slept, she was haunted.

Two weeks into October 2021, Beers received a call from the resource center. She was sitting at her desk in Pantzer Hall. Another woman had come in. Beckett met her at a bar in downtown Missoula and later raped her in her dorm room.

Beers hung up the phone and vomited on her desk. Then she put on her shoes and started walking to the University’s police department. She was about to do something less than 20% of survivors of sexual assault on college campuses do. She was about to file a police report.

Sexual assault as an epidemic

College campuses are often a hot spot for sexual assaults. Students, especially incoming freshmen and transfers, are at the highest risk of assault in the first four months of college, from the beginning of the fall semester to Thanksgiving break, known as the “red zone.”

According to Halle Nelson, spokesperson for the National Sexual Violence Resource Center, perpetrators may target college students, especially underclassmen, through opportunities like hazing or excessive drinking and may take advantage of their unfamiliarity with campus or its resources.

For Aislinn Addington, director of

the Student Advocacy Resource Center at the University of Montana, changing the statistics on sexual assault begins with changing the way administrators approach it. Recognizing sexual assault as an epidemic and supporting survivors with trauma-informed approaches are all positive strides toward change, she said. But Addington said funding for sexual health education, consent training and other prevention efforts is often minimal.

“How do we best support our students ... while also putting effort, energy, funding, toward making a culture change?” Addington said. “[We are] working on that balance of both fronts. It can be tough, and we need to focus on it. We need to prioritize it, and we need to put funding behind it.”

Montana, which had the third highest national number of total reported sexual offenses in 2024, requires sex education for K-12 education. However, there is no requirement to include consent in the curriculum.

While sexual assault on campus is common, reporting the crime to law enforcement is not. Hesitancy to report often stems from a myriad of fears, including victim-blaming, distrust of law enforcement and retaliation from the perpetrator.

Only an estimated 10-20% of survivors will report to police.

“The survivor experience is neither universal nor linear,” Nelson said. “But if survivors choose to report their assault to law enforcement, they may experience a form of re-traumatization.”

Statistics grow even smaller once sexual assault is reported. The Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network estimates that out of every 1,000 sexual assaults, only 28 will lead to a felony conviction. Out of 310 police reports, only 50 will lead to arrests.

When convicting rape, like murder, the evidence must go beyond a reasonable doubt, and the burden of proof is on the survivor. Reliance on circumstantial evidence and social stigmas around false reporting can also create juror bias — even though only 2-8% of reported rapes are proven false, the same percent as almost all other crimes.

Andrea Haney, a prosecutor with Missoula County who worked on Beers’ case, added that many cases don’t ever make it to trial, sometimes due to plea deals

or because of a lack of sufficient evidence.

“There are a great deal of challenges that arise in the prosecution of cases. Trials are difficult and they’re hard fought,” Haney said. For Beers, the fight was only just beginning.

‘If it was handled better, I would’ve stayed’

After reporting to the police, the next months seemed to blur by.

Two investigations opened simultaneously: one by University police and another from the Title IX Office, which ensures students and faculty can attend class and work free of discrimination and harassment.

Title IX has the power to investigate complaints that go against the code of conduct. Survivors can choose to file an official complaint and open an investigation or go through an informal resolution process.

Beers’ case led to a formal investigation. Unlike criminal cases, which need evidence to go beyond a reasonable doubt, Title IX only requires highly probable evidence to impose consequences.

The investigation found Beckett responsible for violating conduct. By the end of November, he was expelled from campus.

But his physical removal did little to ease Beers’ anxiety. She was ridden with guilt and frequently isolated herself. She spent most of her time physically ill or exhausted. She didn’t feel safe on campus. She was too frightened to go to class. As a result, her grades plummeted.

As she started her sophomore year, Beers felt like she had lost her autonomy. Beckett had been officially charged with two counts of sexual intercourse without consent. Beers’ assault was suddenly everywhere.

Local news outlets reporting the assault used language like “allegedly,” since Beckett had not yet been convicted. People constantly speculated about the crime. When the Kaimin released an article about the case, Beers skipped class.

Initially referred to as “Jane Doe” in the news and court records, intimate details about the case left Beers feeling exposed. Her story felt sensationalized, but more than anything, it didn’t feel like hers anymore. She felt like a pawn: of the newspapers, of the prosecution and of the investigation.

Then there was the mountain of appeals. In order to keep her scholarship — and explain her suffering grades — Beers filled out an academic appeal every semester.

Her late transfer into UM meant she’d

never taken the mandatory bystander training. Like her academic appeals, Beers had to routinely explain why she couldn’t participate.

With every appeal and form filed, Beers re-lived her assault over and over again.

Dave Kuntz, spokesperson for the University, said students can always get “supportive measures” by working with Title IX and the Equal Opportunity Office. Alicia Arant, associate vice president of Conflict, Resolution & Policy, said her office works to provide students with the best solutions, including changing class schedules, writing letters or applying for housing accommodations.

Kuntz said there is no way to circumnavigate the scholarship appeal process. Once Title IX works with faculty and students to find solutions, “the responsibility is on the students and the faculty member to make sure they’re on the same page as Title IX keeps an eye on it and makes sure that it’s within the bounds of what the shared goals are,” he said.

By the end of her sophomore year, Beers searched for an escape plan. In the end, she decided to drop out and take a year off.

“If the University would’ve handled it better I absolutely would’ve stayed at UM,” Beers said. “I couldn’t really unsee the way that the University had treated me and the way that the University treats other survivors ... I didn’t want to give [it] any more of my tuition money.”

Beers loved the University of Montana. But she never felt like it loved her back.

Thirty days

While Beers dealt with the trauma of her assault and the subsequent fallout, Missoula County Deputy Attorney Andrea Haney built a case. And the defense team relentlessly campaigned to destroy it.

In May 2022, Missoula County officially charged Beckett with two counts of rape. Although Haney was not the one who originally filed the charges, the county thought there was enough evidence to try and prosecute. Two women who didn’t know each other but shared similar reports within a close timeframe was especially strong evidence.

But filing charges was one thing. Actually getting a conviction was another. In June 2022, Beckett pleaded not guilty, officially taking the case to trial. The defense team, led by attorney Peter Lacny, took a common strategy: discredit the survivors at every turn.

At first, it subpoenaed a fraternity party list to see if the survivors, who were both sorority members, had met there prior to reporting their assaults. UM complied with the request. Then the team subpoenaed for



Sofia Beers, at 18, poses for a photo during her freshman year of college. **SOFIA BEERS | CONTRIBUTED**

the actual reports of the assault from Title IX and SARC. Next it fought for access to Beers’ mental health records. Finally, in January 2023, the defense pushed to split the cases into separate trials.

In April 2023, the judge denied the defense’s request for the records and the split trials.

All the while, Beers prepared for the trial in the dark.

She rarely received updates from the prosecuting team and found her assigned advocate from the county was often misinformed or behind on updates. Beers discovered new information about her case from reading newspapers or inquiring herself.

Haney said she never wants to speak about the stresses survivors are under

because she isn’t in their shoes, but that there are long periods in cases where there are no updates because things aren’t happening.

For Beers, the lack of progress made it feel like it would never end. The case seemed to drag on forever. A trial with a jury was set for July 10, 2023, but was canceled. The new one would be on Jan. 29, 2024, but the date came and went without one.

Beers tried to put her energy into other things. She started a support group for survivors based around art. She decided she wanted to attend Montana State University in Bozeman. She did something every day that scared her because reporting her assault had been the scariest thing of all.

Beers participated in the Miss Montana



Sofia Beers standing in front of the Missoula County Justice Court before giving her victim impact statement on May 10, 2024. **SOFIA BEERS | CONTRIBUTED**

USA beauty pageant, giving her a new platform to advocate for sexual assault survivors. Being surrounded by strong, intelligent and accomplished women comforted Beers. She's competed every year since.

In January 2024, talks began about a plea deal. Haney asked the survivors what they wanted the case to accomplish. Both survivors agreed a plea deal would be the best solution. Beers knew she wanted Beckett to serve time, but there were other stipulations, too.

He would have to undergo counseling and register as a sex offender. He would have to pay restitution to the survivors. Negotiations went back and forth until, finally, a decision was made.

Beckett would take an Alford Plea, a

guilty plea where the defendant maintains their personal innocence, but agrees if the case was brought to trial, the evidence would most likely end in a conviction. Not every state allows Alford Pleas and several don't allow them for sex crimes. Haney said the Alford Plea is still "absolutely" a guilty plea in the eyes of the law.

For two felony counts of sexual intercourse without consent, Beckett was looking at up to 40 years in prison and \$100,000 in fines.

Beckett would serve a six-year suspended sentence. He would be sent to prison if he failed to pay restitution, register or reoffended. He would pay \$20,300 in total to the survivors. In the end, for the rape of two women, he would only spend 30 days in jail.



Sofia Beers' headshot for the Miss Montana USA beauty pageant. **SOFIA BEERS | CONTRIBUTED**

'My femininity is not my weakness'

The morning Beckett pled guilty, Beers woke up like she usually did: sick with anxiety. But instead of being soaked in dread and hopelessness, Beers felt anxiously excited. She wasn't just seeing the light at the end of the tunnel, she was finally standing in it.

Before she entered the courtroom, she prepared herself. After years spent wondering what she would say to Beckett when she saw him again, she was terrified she'd have a physical response.

But when she finally turned her gaze to her attacker, she felt only pity tinged with disgust.

Beers took the stand and looked over the courtroom at her family and friends who had come to support her. But she wasn't there for them. She wasn't even there for Beckett. She was at the stand for herself.

"It has been 975 days since I found myself pressed to the cold wall of your dorm room, embarrassed and afraid," Beers began.

Nine-hundred and seventy-five days since Beers' life had been redefined by her rape. Beers had lost her childhood, her college education and her bodily autonomy. But at the stand, her life took shape again. The assault and the case had transformed her, but it could no longer destroy her. Instead, it made her kinder. Stronger. A better advocate.

"Through moments of cruelty at the hands of you and your defense and others, I learned about what I can control and more

importantly, what I cannot," Beers said. "I spent more time in the sun. I spent more time in the quiet. I spent more time with myself than I have ever had to, and it made me realize that men like you will always try to make women like me out to be less than we are."

Beers tore her gaze from Beckett and swept it across the courtroom. Her friends were crying. So were her parents. But Beers did not cry.

"It is important to me that you know I am not just here for me today," she said. "I am here for the countless women I have met over the last two years who told me they didn't get justice and seeing me pursue it made them feel like they could."

Beers was there for the women who could've run into Beckett elsewhere. The women who could've become her.

The most difficult but most rewarding moment of her life was almost over. Her voice held steady.

"Ultimately, Andrew, you and this are an insignificant speck of dust in the timeline of my life," Beers said. "I will go on to accomplish great things. Not in spite of you or this, but because that is who I am."

Before she finished, Beers thanked the women who worked on the case with her: the prosecutor, the detective, the Title IX coordinator and her attorney.

"Thank you for showing me that my femininity is not my weakness," she said.

There would be good days and bad days in the months to come. There would be a panic attack at the gynecologist's office. The bitter disappointment over the short sentence. The nightmares.

But she had begun to be more gentle with herself, to forgive when her body reacted in the only way it knew how. More than anything, Beers knew there would be space to grow. There would be time to heal.

Beckett might have seen his future shrinking in that courtroom. But as Beers stepped away from her rapist, she saw hers opening.

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SARC Office Line: 406-243-4429
YWCA Missoula Support Line: 406-542-1944

UMPD Non-Emergency Line: (406) 243-6131

National Sexual Assault Hotline: (800) 656-4673

SARC is open 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday in the Curry Health Center Room 112. For more information call or email at sarc@mso.umt.edu.

Why is it so hard to come back to school after winter break?

ELIZA CAREY

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After an intense 15-week-long semester, the winter break college students get is a much-needed pause. But in nearly five weeks, the brain begins to fall behind due to reduced neural activity, according to clinical psychology student Katelyn Melcher. This leaves many students with a sluggish feeling upon returning to the classroom and getting back into the swing of things when the spring semester comes around.

Melcher, a third-year doctorate student at the University of Montana, said, “Students build up stamina of the amount of time they are required to sit in class and study, but over the break, your brain has lost some of that stamina and is not ready to sit and pay attention all day.” She said the main reason students struggle upon returning is the lack of routine they had over the break.

“A good example is sleep and how it’s super easy for students to shift their sleep schedules over break. Then, all of a sudden, the semester starts, and they have to be there at a certain time the next day,” Melcher said.

It’s important to acknowledge the positives of a long break. It gives the brain and body time to recover and bounce back from weeks of hard work, but for students who need to retain their academia, this break can feel extremely tough.

“There are ways to gradually shift your sleep schedule, but that’s usually not what happens, which is why students struggle right when they come back,” Melcher said.

In an Instagram poll conducted through the Kaimin social media team, of 139 students, 80% voted “yes” to having more difficulty focusing in the classroom and getting back into a routine after winter break.

Alexa Schlichenmayer, a sophomore from Henderson, Nevada, studying integrative physiology, said she spent most of her break relaxing and spending time with family, which is exactly what it is meant for. Without a doubt, there are many moments of downtime where we often get stuck in cycles of scrolling on our phones and spending too much time in bed.

“If I’m doing ‘nothing,’ I’m likely on my

phone either in bed or hanging out with my roommates,” Schlichenmayer said.

Schlichenmayer said she is excited to have a routine again. “When I’m not actively taking classes I feel lazy and bored, so even though I’m a lot more stressed out during the semester, it makes me feel more productive and motivated,” she said.

Another reason why it feels so difficult to come back to school after winter break may actually have to do with the age of college students.

Melcher explained that from what is known about the brain, it does not fully stop developing until the ages of 25 or 26, and some of the last things left to develop are functions in the frontal lobe. “This includes executive functioning skills, judgement, studying, being organized, thinking through things and being able to plan. So, those are skills that people are still developing at the collegiate age,” she said.

Schlichenmayer said she thrives on procrastination. “I will intentionally wait until the last possible moment I can to get things done, even if I know about it prior. I think I just use the stress as motivation, which really isn’t a good habit,” she said.

Melcher said preventing this issue may not be entirely possible since the change in pace is inevitable. “One thing we recommend students is that they are reading and writing, even if it isn’t academic, so they don’t lose those skills or stamina,” she said. Melcher said Seasonal Affective Disorder also makes a big impact behaviorally in the winter. “The transition from summer is different because most people are outside getting plenty of sunshine and Vitamin D, but over winter, and typically if you live out here, it’s cold, it’s dry and there’s not a lot of sun.”

She suggested making plans to get together with friends and engaging in winter activities to move your body for overall health to combat this. Read more about how to get out of a winter slump in this week’s “How-To” column.

Eliza Carey is an arts reporter for the Montana Kaimin and can be contacted at eliza.carey@umontana.edu. For more stories from Carey and other reporters, visit online at montanakaimin.com.

How to get back into the groove

SAMANTHA DUNNE

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After a month of eating loads of homemade Christmas treats, your grandma’s divine lasagna, going to bed late and waking up just in time to pick up your little sister from school, you’ve found yourself back at school and needing to get back into a routine. Where do you even start? These are a few things that you can do to get back into the groove of school and start the semester off right.

Set goals for the semester — Having goals gives you something to follow and allows for some structure in life. The goals you set can range from big to small and can be for a variety of different things. Some of the tried and true goals include study habits, health habits and self-care. It helps to write down what you want to achieve and break the goals into smaller steps. That way they feel more manageable.

Sleep — I don’t know about you, but my sleep schedule has been all over the place this past month, and I’m ready to have some consistency. Having a good sleep schedule is critical for maintaining focus, energy and your overall well-being. If I’m being honest, there is no way that I will be going from sleeping in late to waking up at 6 in the morning immediately. Talk about setting myself up for failure! To help with this adjustment, every morning set your alarm five to 10 minutes earlier than the previous morning, starting at 7:30 a.m. Now, a key part of this plan is to also go to bed at a consistent time to get the recommended 7-9 hours of sleep. So, for me, if I want to wake up at 6:30 a.m. I should be going to sleep between 10:30-11 p.m. But, let’s be honest, friends happen, so there may be a late night or two. Just try to be consistent.

Reset living space — The combination of finals and packing for a month-long break was not a pretty scene for me, and I know that I did not leave my room as clean as it could be. In fact, I think I might have a towel sitting on the floor, from where I spilled water and frantically cleaned it up. Having a clean and organized space helps to have a healthier and clearer mindset. Over the first weekend, take some time to declutter your desk and drawers, deep clean, change sheets, do the laundry and ensure that all the supplies you need are stocked. Having everything you need within reach eliminates any excuses or distractions that might keep you from doing what really needs to be done: school. Whether you left in a hurry or were able to clean your place before leaving for break, take a moment to reset your living space.

Prioritize your health — Health should always be important, so make sure to allow time for exercise, eat balanced meals and prioritize sleep. My diet has been all over the place while eating at home. I know that in order to feel more energized and be more

focused for school, it is important to limit the amount of processed foods I eat and have three balanced meals a day. Exercising is also a big part of my life. It helps ground me for the day and gives me energy so I am able to focus and get things accomplished. I know that by getting back to the gym I will also start to feel more like my energized academic self.

Ask for help! — Don’t be afraid to ask for help. If you are struggling with school, getting back into dorm life or feeling homesick, remember that you’re not alone. I was finally brave and chatted with a friend about how I was feeling. We came up with a plan which included body doubling to help me get through it. For those of you who don’t know what body doubling is, it is where you have another person with you in the room while you are doing your own thing so you don’t feel as alone.

If that doesn’t help, please remember that there are resources available to you on campus including Curry Health’s counseling services. Asking for help is a sign of strength, not weakness.

Getting back into the groove won’t happen overnight, and I know it won’t be easy, but with some intention and effort you’ll be back in the groove of school again, soon. Some important things to remind yourself of are to be patient, focus on the present and enjoy the adventure. Happy first week back and good luck to you this semester!



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'A Complete Unknown' ain't the flick you're looking for, babe

KEELY PROEBSTEL

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How far can a biography stray from accepted reality before it ascends to the realm of mythos? That's the core struggle at the heart of "A Complete Unknown." Does it want to be a sincere biography of Bob Dylan as a flawed being, or does it want to be another thread in the tapestry of Dylan as a mythical world-changing balladeer?

The story of Dylan is long and complex, filled with half-truths, certainly not helped by the man's self-professed tendency to make himself up as he goes. With a career spanning more than 60 years, it's difficult to distill it into the essential rough beats, but let's give it a shot.

Born in Minnesota in 1941, Dylan (then Robert Zimmerman, by far a less iconic name) fell in love with country and rock 'n' roll as a child, began performing as a teen and moved to New York City in 1960, immediately ingratiating himself in the burgeoning folk music scene and ascending to relative stardom. The rest is history, as they say. This is around the time "A Complete Unknown" begins.

In the movie, Bob Dylan (Timothée Chalamet) just shows up in New York City, meets Joan Baez (Monica Barbaro), signs with her agent, meets Sylvie Russo (Elle Fanning), falls in love with Sylvie, starts an affair with Joan and falls out of love with Sylvie. Then he performs a brand-new, electric guitar-focused set at the Newport Folk Festival to the despair of his fans, burning all the goodwill he had built up with folk legends Pete Seeger (Edward Norton) and Woody Guthrie (Scoot McNairy). And it's fine, it works, it's a serviceable biopic.

One of the cornerstones of the movie's marketing (and award-show campaign) is its supposed "realism." Dylan was a heavy influence on the production, from pre-screenwriting consultations and table reads all the way to literally signing the final script and telling director James Mangold to "go with God," whatever that means. It is perhaps surprising, then, that the film tells Dylan's story in broad, fictionalized strokes.

Much has been said about Chalamet's performance as Dylan, from his attention to detail to the fact that he learned how to play guitar for the role. He even sang on the film's soundtrack, a 23-song greatest hits/tribute album fusion. It's clear that Chalamet dedicated a lot of time to perfecting his impression, from his body language to a pretty good (albeit cleaner) mimic of his singing voice. It's award-bait behavior of the highest caliber, sure to land Chalamet at least a couple

of nominations.

For all the effort, though, it feels less like you're watching Bob Dylan so much as you're watching Timothée Chalamet pretend to be him. Chalamet's Dylan feels like less of a real person than the other characters, especially in the big dramatic moments that move the plot forward. Maybe that's intentional, though, given all the deviations from reality the film necessitates to create the mythology of Bob Dylan.

Then there's the little details, perceptible only to old school folk super fans; for example, Bob first meets sometimes partner, sometimes enemy Joan Baez in the kind of Greenwich Village bar her real-life counterpart regarded as being for posers.

There's more jarring changes, best exemplified by Sylvie Russo. Russo serves as a

distilled, fictionalized version of Dylan's early lover and muse Suze Rotolo. While Dylan's desire to protect (now deceased) Rotolo's reputation is noble, the character of Sylvie lacks most of the power and influence of the real person she's meant to represent. Rotolo was, frankly, a badass activist working for civil rights and protesting nuclear war before it was cool. It was her influence that made Dylan into the activist he would later become. Movie character Sylvie is just a vessel for angst, a tool to create a hamstrung love triangle with Joan, lingering on long after the real Rotolo had ditched him.

While every character is part of this fictionalized Dylan-as-creative-genius mythos, from father figure/folk gatekeeper Pete Seeger to wasted Dylan fanboy Johnny Cash, characters based on women get a particularly

brusque portrayal.

Besides the aforementioned doing dirty on Rotolo, the film also has little to say about Joan Baez and Pete Seeger's iconic-in-her-own-right wife Toshi. "A Complete Unknown" wants its audience to think that Joan was a nobody until Dylan came along, propelling both their careers in tandem. That's just false. In 1961, the year when the film begins, the real-life Baez had already been crowned the "Queen of Folk" for a while. Just a year later, she'd grace the cover of TIME magazine.

Toshi Seeger fares even worse. The film's sole reference to her revered, illustrious career as a documentarian is the occasional shot of her holding a camera. She's little more than "Pete's wife," and while Seeger is portrayed as being adoringly in love with her, that's also her sole trait and purpose in the film. Her character only exists to dispense words of wisdom to her husband about that Dylan kid and to look sad during the film's climax.

It's worth noting that Mangold's original vision for the film was as an ensemble drama, focusing on a number of legendary names in the history of New York's folk scene. Knowing that, it's hard not to feel robbed by the film we actually got. It's easy to imagine a film where Dylan "going electric" is a side dish, not the main course. Maybe Mangold could've woven it together with Baez's frustration over her fading career, Pete Seeger's endless drive to keep traditional folk music alive, Toshi Seeger's struggle to be taken seriously as a Japanese-American woman making documentaries and Rotolo's civil rights and anti-nuclear activism. Instead, we got "The Bob Dylan Show," featuring his merry band of supporting characters that aren't notable in their own right. Actually, maybe that's art imitating life. Be honest, would you have heard of Joan Baez or Pete Seeger if it wasn't for the buzz around this film?

"A Complete Unknown" will probably get Timothée Chalamet his first Oscar, and almost certainly get Bob Dylan a new generation of fans. It's not really a faithful biopic, nor does it really have anything to say about Dylan. It's not a feel-good movie, it's a feel-not-bored-for-two-hours movie. Maybe it's worth it to see it in theaters if you really, really want to hear Chalamet's withering Dylan impression in the highest sound quality possible. If that's not you, though, save it for streaming.

5.5/10

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Lady Griz look to defense and home crowd for comeback

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Coming off a 23-10 season, the Lady Griz have struggled as graduations have decimated the offense and left the 6-10 team grappling for an identity.

“We have a lot of good pieces. How those pieces fit together has been what we’re still trying to figure out, I think, which is crazy at this time of year,” Head Coach Brian Holsinger said in a Jan. 15 interview.

Holsinger himself took a personal leave from the team on Jan. 16, with associate coach Nate Harris stepping up as an interim leader. His departure came on the tail end of a three-game losing streak where the team played venerable defense but failed to surpass 50 points on offense. The team’s first game with Harris at the helm saw the opposite, where the Griz allowed Weber State 70 points, but put up 74 itself, highlighting the Griz’s game-to-game inconsistency.

Holsinger partly attributed this to the players adjusting to new roles after major graduations last year. Two of the biggest shoes to fill are Maggie Espenmiller-McGraw and Gina Marxen. The talents respectively put up the most and third most single season three-pointers in program history last year. Another big loss was five-year veteran Carmen Gfeller, who led the team in the locker room and in scoring average while also being instrumental on the defensive end.

Forming the core of this year’s team are three key returners, who despite spirited play, have struggled to match the heights of last season. All three have seen a significant drop in shooting percentage.

Such is the case with returning senior Dani Bartsch, who grabbed the most rebounds in program history last year while posting 50 threes and leading the team in minutes and steals. Her minutes have lessened this season, as she’s come back down to earth defensively and her offense has proven inconsistent.

Mack Konig’s offense is also down from posting 55 three pointers last year, though she factors in as the team’s most valuable offensive and perhaps all-around player. She has 50 more points this season than her next closest teammates, while leading her squad in minutes.

The last of the three key returners is MJ Bruno, who has made up for her drop in field goal percentage by volume of shooting, although her physicality has produced more personal fouls this year.

The top five players in minutes are



MJ Bruno, a senior from Spokane, Washington, attempts to move toward the net during a game on Jan. 16. The guard was an instrumental player in the 74-70 win against the Weber State Wildcats. **MARLEY BARBOEISEL | MONTANA KAIMIN**

rounded out by transfer Tyler McCliment-Call, who has given the team some offensive juice with 20 three pointers, and true freshman Avery Waddington, who received 19 Division 1 offers out of high school. She has proven why, averaging the fourth most minutes and posting the second most points on the team while being excellent at both ends of the court.

There’s certainly no shortage of good players as the Griz have been able to maintain continuity on their roster and stay on the right side of the transfer portal for much of Holsinger’s tenure. But even with all the added and maintained firepower, the team losing approximately half of its offense to graduation and its returners struggling to repeat on career years has depressed the Grizzlies’ offense.

One of the team’s highlights from last year, three pointers, are down from 10.8 to 8.2 per game, accounting for a lion’s share

of the team’s seven point drop in scoring average. This, combined with an unforgiving nonconference schedule featuring the likes of the Minnesota Golden Gophers, which put the defense down to start the year, has resulted in opponents outsourcing the Lady Griz by five points per game on average.

In spite of this, the defense has solidified over the past month. This has been seen particularly in conference play, with the Griz not allowing an opponent to put up more than 70 against it since early December.

“I think we’re just still figuring ourselves out,” Waddington said. “We’ve gotten better on defense, so now we’re trying to figure out our offensive end. But I think we’re going to be okay, and we’ll push through.”

This hope is strengthened by the bulk of the team’s conference schedule being in front of it and its strong 5-3 home record.

The Griz’s high point this season was an 82-68 home win against the Washington

Huskies. Looking solely at home games, the Griz have averaged an excellent 73.5 points. This is in comparison with 56.3 points against admittedly tougher opponents on the road and in neutral site games. The discrepancy is notable, regardless, with Bartsch praising the fans’ ability to kill opponents’ momentum, and considers them the sixth member of the core.

Looking forward, the Griz have five home games and 11 contests total until the Big Sky Conference playoffs in March. With its current status as sixth in conference, the Griz would skip the first round and start in the quarterfinals.

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Stop freakin', go skiin'

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Okay folks, it's the dead of winter and you just got back from your tropical (less dreary than Missoula) winter vacation. You realize the near-permanent overcast is ruining your psyche and you need a serotonin boost. Well, look no further than the mountains and Montana's winter tourism economy.

Whether you've never felt the adrenaline rush of strapping some plastic to your feet and flying down a steep mountain, or you're experienced in downhill skiing and boarding, this guide will help you decide which of the hills close to Missoula you want to check out.

Lookout Pass

It's arguably the most popular hill for students on account of its dirt cheap college student season pass. Lookout offers the best chance to see that person from your 8 a.m. who you kind of know, but never talk to because, well, it's 8 a.m. About 100 miles west, the hour and a half drive is made all the better because it operates on Pacific time, meaning you can leave Missoula at 8 a.m. and still make it before the lifts open at 9 a.m.

Lookout also receives a huge amount of snow. It is the farthest west of the four hills and sees tons of precipitation. It boasts an impressive average of 450 inches of snow a year, enough to make any powderhound drool. Even in bad snow years, it usually fairs better than other mountains.

The one drawback is that Lookout can start to feel small after a while. It has a good number of runs, but after four or five trips, it can certainly start to feel like you've seen it all. I've had several friends complain Lookout doesn't excite them anymore. It's the second smallest in the area and less than 100 acres larger than Snowbowl.

Even if it isn't always a thrill, Lookout has a comfy atmosphere that any snow-seeker would feel welcome coming to for the first time. It was the first ski hill in Idaho, although not the first with lifts, and it has long worked to accommodate folks of all levels. They pay close attention to grooming, so people of every ability can make their way down runs comfortably. They also offer free ski school days for kids in the spring.

Favorite run: Keystone

Lost Trail

Well Lost Trail certainly lived up to its



Ephraim Mortenson, a biochemistry major from Bozeman, flies off a small cliff while descending a slope in Lolo Pass on Jan. 18. **MARLEY BARBOEISEL | MONTANA KAIMIN**

name. Despite my years as a boy scout, I couldn't tell where the hell I was for half my time there. If you don't have a naturally good sense of direction like I do, I wouldn't go to Lost Trail alone. Make sure you have an experienced local or person with a sense of direction when you take to the snow.

Other than the lack of signage, Lost Trail is pretty idyllic. Views of the Sapphires to the north and south into the Bitterroot gives it a dreamy atmosphere on any bluebird day. It's about a two hour drive due south through the Bitterroot, and although it's on the border, it runs on Mountain time.

During the non-holiday season, the mountain is open Thursday through Sunday, allowing for huge amounts of powder to build up. Thursdays feel more like a surf session than a day at the ski hill. The south side of the mountain is a great time, with plenty of blue and black runs to make the seasoned skiers and snowboarders happy.

Unfortunately for the rookies, the whole mountain doesn't have many of the easy runs that folks usually learn on. The section I rode only had two. This brings me to the other unfortunate reality of Lost Trail. The section accessed by chair four, which seems to be some of the most exciting terrain, is often closed due to high winds.

Regardless of the lack of signage and high winds, Lost Trail is sure to lend you a good day and at a pretty good price.

Favorite run: Thunder

Discovery

For reasons unknown, Discovery doesn't seem to be very popular with students. This is unfortunate on account of the fact that it's probably the most well-rounded mountain. At first, I was a little skeptical, but once I explored a bit, Disco felt like a dream.

About an hour and 40 minutes east of Missoula, just outside of Philipsburg, the end of the drive can be a little daunting as it's down several miles of icy Forest Service roads. But, the mountain provides plenty of opportunities for every level. From the lodge, there are plenty of relaxed and gentle runs through open glades that are perfect for folks trying to learn or get comfortable. The rest of the front side has good blues and greens for those trying to progress.

But the back side of the mountain is what really shines for me. I wasn't a daredevil and avoided all of the double black diamonds, but for those brave enough to hit "the fingers" as I heard them called, you'll be in for a treat. The rest of the back side is mostly black diamonds and blues with more pillows of powder than I knew what to do with. I felt like Pablo Escobar the way I was flying through the white stuff. Even my most ungraceful falls left me unbruised.

I will say Disco seems to be a more skier-focused mountain. Most of the folks I saw were on two planks, not one. It's also made evident by the large number of flat spots at the base of runs. Without enough speed, most snowboarders will have to unbuckle.

Regardless, if you're looking to learn to shred or rip some powder, Discovery has all the options.

Favorite run: Center Stage

Snowbowl

Now, I'll be the first to say I've heard a mixed bag of reviews when it comes to the hometown hill. It's not known for getting tons of snow and it'd be dishonest to say some recent safety hazards regarding the lifts weren't on my mind when I started up the hill. But on the glorious powder day I attended, I didn't doubt that I was in heaven.

Thirty minutes from campus, Snowbowl lies in the peaks north of town and offers plenty of terrain for the experienced snow-shredding crowd. With a steep layout and plenty of pillowy glades, Snowbowl will not disappoint the powderhounds and adrenaline junkies. And for those looking for solace in the mountains, fantastic views are like bears on campus in October: frequent.

I started my day running the bowl off the LaValle Creek Chair and found steep and soft runs bordered by trees full of clouds to surf. Although the low coverage at the bottom left something to be desired, the opportunities to carve the main runs and float everywhere else were dreamy.

I had a blast at Snowbowl, but it would be remiss to say it will be great for everyone. On a really cloudy day, or an icy one, the steep hills would probably be the death of me. Its steep elevation already lends to diminished visibility and bad weather would surely make it worse. Additionally, it is certainly not a beginner mountain. If I had to learn there, I probably would have quit after the first run.

Regardless of the aforementioned faults, Missoula's hill is a microcosm of the town itself: crunchy, a little pricey for its size, and full of people just looking to have a good time.

Favorite run: Snowpark

Well, there you have it: one man's unsolicited advice on where to go. Honestly, I had a blast getting to check all these spots out. Look, I'm not gonna judge where you go, just get out, have some fun and support an indie resort while you're at it.

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Students return to a winter campus

WORDS BY **DIEGO HERNANDEZ**
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For many, returning to classes is a bittersweet experience. The early 8 a.m. classes and the grueling hours of studying are only diminished by the thought of seeing all of your friends again.

However, the start of the semester was also marked by the campus turning from a brown dirt patch into a winter wonderland.

Students returning to classes on Thursday were greeted with a new look at their beloved campus. For many students, it also means the start of a new chapter of school, a cold journey as they trek to their classes through the ever-accumulating snow, especially as temperatures this January have reached 11 degrees Fahrenheit.

"I definitely feel a lot more caged ... I'm just excited for springtime," said Wiliam Mishler, a 19-year-old freshman accounting major. "I'm pretty used to the snow. It is cool to see the campus snowy, though," Mishler said, comparing his hometown in Fort Shaw, Montana, to the University of Montana.

While the snow might challenge students' daily commutes, it also allows for cohesion on campus. The winter freeze marks the start of a long-held tradition: the Oval ice rink. The 60-by-85 foot portable rink is only a shadow of what it once was, yet, since 2021, the new rink has been a way that the campus administration has brought students together during the colder months.

Igloos and bonfires have also been set up around the Oval for students' leisure. UM is using these attractions as an excitement builder for future events. The biggest event is the winter Pep Rally, on Jan. 25, at the Oval and in the University Center.

The cold makes life on campus more difficult, but it also marks a shift in the place many call home, one that brings students together whether it's obvious at first or not.

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ABOVE: A snowman in the Oval greets students returning to a frozen campus on Jan. 17. **HENRY DOELLINGER | MONTANA KAIMIN**



TOP: Aerial view of the UM campus after a light snowfall on Jan. 19. **DIEGO HERNANDEZ | MONTANA KAIMIN**



ABOVE: Cale Patenaude, the assistant director of student life belonging and recreation at the University of Montana, walks out of one of the University's warming domes on the Oval on Dec. 18, 2024. **NOAH EPPS | MONTANA KAIMIN**