

# GRATEFUL



THE UNIVERSITY of MONTANA WESTERN

*Foundation*

*Your support makes so much possible*



## THE UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA WESTERN FOUNDATION

was established in 1978 and our purpose has always been to promote educational opportunities at Montana Western. The way we achieve our purpose is by providing scholarships and grants for students, resources for faculty and staff, and capital improvements for the campus and community.

Our purpose has not changed in over 45 years, but our impact continues to grow, thanks to the many supporters who help make it possible.





## DEAR FRIENDS,

We are proud to share this year's Impact Report with our incredible Montana Western Donor Community. We always value the opportunity to spotlight our remarkable students and the impact you have by investing in their future.

Our work is centered on enabling more access to opportunity, which leads to the ability to drive change. Each year, we seek to grow the number of learners the UMW Foundation supports – and help them on their path through higher education. This crucial work would not be achievable without the invaluable support and collaborative partnerships we've fostered with individuals and organizations alike.

Our focus remains steadfast on strengthening support systems for students, collaboratively reinforcing the regional workforce, and strategically planning for the future of the university.

On behalf of the University of Montana Western and the entire Montana Western family, we are pleased to extend our deepest gratitude for your generous support. Thanks to all our valued donors, we have been able to achieve remarkable progress this year in advancing our mission to provide a first-class education and enrich the student experience.

Each gift has had a direct impact on our ability to provide scholarships, enhance academic programs, improve campus facilities, support research, and much more. It is your commitment to the future of higher education that allows us to continue pushing boundaries and preparing students for success.

In this year's impact report, you will see just a few examples of the ways your generosity has shaped the lives of our students, faculty, and the community.

Thank you again for your generosity and belief in the mission of the University of Montana Western. Go Dawgs!

With sincere appreciation,



**Michael Reid**  
UMW Chancellor



**Phil Willett**  
UMW Foundation Board Chairman

# IMAGINE

*if everyone had access  
to education*



A photograph of two young women with blonde hair, wearing black t-shirts with a bulldog logo and the text "BULLDOG FOR LIFE". They are both giving thumbs up and smiling. In the background, a man is seen from the back wearing a black t-shirt with "ORIENTATION STAFF" in red. Above them is a red and white striped awning. The text "ONTANA WESTERN" is visible in the background.

# YOU MAKE THINGS *HAPPEN*

**YOU MAKE IT POSSIBLE** for UMW to support exceptional students with tremendous potential and outstanding faculty who are focused on providing one-of-a-kind education.

Your support has provided the needed resources to enhance campus spaces that will provide unique student experiences.





**ON AUGUST  
16, 2023,** a

groundbreaking ceremony marked the start of construction of the future home of Bulldog Stadium. Today, thanks to the generosity of many alumni and friends, we have completed phase one of construction, and the facility has played host to seven home football games since the grand opening on September 6, 2024.

The impact of the stadium extends far beyond the physical amenities. While the artificial turf, scoreboard, bleachers, pavilion, and berm are welcomed by visitors, the new facility has done so much more for the university and community.

It has brought larger crowds to Bulldog Football games which ultimately has increased the revenue collected at the gate and in the bookstore. It has also had an economic impact on the restaurants, hotels, and businesses in our community.

The recent successes of the Bulldog Football team have raised the awareness of our profile, fostered recruitment for all sports, and have become an inviting rallying point for the entire University community.





# YOUR FINANCIAL SUPPORT *IN ACTION*

**RAINA MORTENSON** was born and raised in Malta, Montana, and will graduate from the University of Montana Western in 2025. Her educational journey took her to multiple universities before she found her true home at Montana Western in 2022. Initially aspiring to pursue a career in education, Raina eventually discovered her true calling in Kinesiology and athletic training. Montana Western's supportive community, led by mentors Professor Mitchell Stevenson and Student Services Director Randy Johnson, helped Raina find a sense of belonging and purpose.

Encouraged by high school friend and ASUMW President Jake Kuntz, Raina quickly became involved in campus leadership, first in the Student Senate, then as ASUMW President for the 2023-24 academic year. Her focus on mental health and student well-being was pivotal, and she joined Peers Advocating Toward Health (PATH), Bulldog Ambassadors, and ACES, all initiatives aimed at supporting her fellow students. Raina's dedication to improving student life led her to advocate for Montana Western's new Student Wellness Center, working alongside former Student Regent Garrett Yeager.

When financial constraints threatened her studies, the UMW Foundation's scholarships were instrumental in keeping her on track. "Receiving a scholarship can change how a student feels about themselves," Raina shared. "It shows that someone cares, that someone is investing in your future." Now, even before

graduation, Raina is already planning to "pay it forward" by establishing her own scholarship for future students.

For Raina, scholarships represent more than financial support—they're a lifeline of encouragement and a reminder that donors' contributions truly shape students' futures.

**"Receiving a scholarship can change how a student feels about themselves. It shows that someone cares, that someone is investing in your future."**



## ACCESS *&* OPPORTUNITY



# JOYCE HUFFAKER

## INSPIRING GENERATIONS

### **IN 1959, JOYCE FRESEMAN (HUFFAKER)**

graduated from Montana State Normal School (now the University of Montana Western) as a promising English education major, ready to make her mark in teaching. Born in Helena and raised in Butte, Joyce ventured to Arizona, where she would dedicate more than four decades to teaching English and AP English in the Mesa School District. Throughout her career, Joyce fostered a love of learning and creativity, mentoring debate teams, sponsoring the National Honor Society, and creating unique, collaborative teaching environments alongside her husband, Jerry Huffaker, also a lifelong educator.

As a student, Joyce was involved in numerous academic and cultural activities, including the Wescolite (school paper), Chinook (yearbook), Debate Club, and the theater group Gargoyles. She also earned membership in prestigious honorary societies and was selected as one of six Who's Who students to represent the class of '59, a testament to her leadership and dedication.

In March 2024, Joyce left an extraordinary legacy to Montana Western—a transformative endowment of over half a million dollars, one of the largest of its kind in the history of the UMW Foundation. This gift, designated specifically for scholarships for future teachers, will generate \$20,000-\$30,000 each year in perpetuity.

Joyce's generosity is remarkable, especially given the modest earnings typical of a teaching career. Her gift reflects her deep gratitude for the

scholarships she received at MSNS, which made it possible for her to complete her education. While she could have chosen to support other institutions, including those where she pursued further studies, she chose Montana Western—a school that, to her, remained home. Her unrestricted endowment will allow the Foundation to support a broad range of aspiring educators, from those with financial need to high-achieving students, empowering them to pursue careers in teaching without financial burden.

The University of Montana Western is honored by Joyce's incredible gift, which will live on through annual scholarships. The ripple effect of her generosity will touch not only future teachers but also the thousands of students they will teach throughout their careers, ensuring that Joyce's passion for education continues to inspire generations.





# ANNUAL PHILANTHROPY

**2023-2024** Fiscal year July 1, 2023-June 30, 2024

OVERALL GIVING TO UMW

**\$2,491,037**

**1,326**

*Donors*

**2,084**

*Total gifts*

## ENDOWMENT ANNUAL SUPPORT *to the* UNIVERSITY

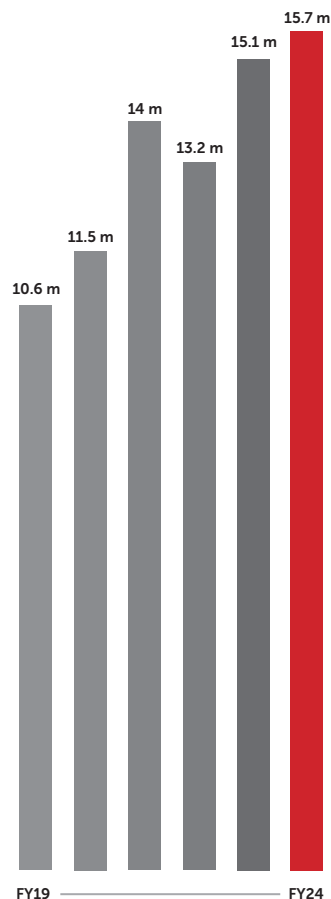
**108**

## TOTAL ENDOWMENTS

*With a market value of*

**\$15,651,365**

**EACH YEAR**, a portion of each UMW endowment is paid out to support the people and programs they benefit. The endowment's principal and any appreciation in excess of the annual distribution, is retained so the endowment can continue to grow and serve as a support to UMW's future.





# \$3,962,830

TOTAL SUPPORT  
DIRECTED TO UMW



CAPITAL SUPPORT

## \$2,574,284

PROGRAM SUPPORT

### \$837,658

SCHOLARSHIP SUPPORT

### \$550,887



#### **SPECIFIC PROGRAM SUPPORT** *Excluding scholarships*

Fund for Experience One	<b>\$31,024</b>
Faculty Development	<b>\$13,473</b>
Business & Technology	<b>\$302</b>
Education	<b>\$8,201</b>
Indigenous Teacher Education	<b>\$107,013</b>
Early Childhood Education	<b>\$6,629</b>
Environmental Science	<b>\$3,897</b>
Equine Studies	<b>\$118,222</b>
Fine Arts: Visual Arts	<b>\$37,561</b>
Fine Arts: Performing Arts	<b>\$36,962</b>
Health & Human Performance	<b>\$4,000</b>
Library	<b>\$667</b>
ASUMW Clubs	<b>\$11,348</b>
Honors Program	<b>\$3,524</b>
TRIO	<b>\$4,180</b>
Learning Center-Career Services	<b>\$2,250</b>
General Alumni	<b>\$9,222</b>
School of Outreach	<b>\$1,808</b>





# Empowering Student Research & Conservation

**A PHILANTHROPIST, A PROFESSOR, AND SOME STUDENTS** merged their passions in a way that could only happen at the University of Montana Western. James (Jim) Kennedy, a philanthropist in Madison County, offered to support the study of Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) affecting deer, elk, and moose (all members of cervid family) on his ranch. Southwest Montana is a “hotspot” for CWD, an intractable epidemic responsible for decimating herds at an alarming rate. It was not until Professor Kyle Richardson joined the faculty at UMW in 2022, with his background in Disease Ecology, that Jim’s funding opportunity met with institutional capacity. A gift of \$25,000, made by Jim Kennedy to the UMW Foundation in support of field research on CWD enabled Dr. Richardson to plan and manage a unique two- year internship CWD research project. Jim and Sarah Kennedy previously provided a \$1M gift in support of the new sports and activities complex.

This research gift is typical of Jim Kennedy’s lifelong passion for the outdoors, and his generous support of research and conservation in Montana and across the United States. Professor Richardson enthusiastically accepted the Kennedy award and immediately began to put his unique background knowledge to work in studying CWD. Having come to UMW after a 15-year stint in New Zealand studying tuberculosis, Kyle accepted the challenge of studying this important but not well understood wildlife disease. Even the term “hotspot” is less evidence-based than anecdotal observation. Ranchers and farmers across the region reported seeing deer “dropping dead” in their fields. Herds estimated in the hundreds as recently as five years ago are now reportedly reduced to around 50. Consequently, Richardson’s initial use of Kennedy’s funds is being used to empirically measure the scope of infected cervids in Beaverhead County.

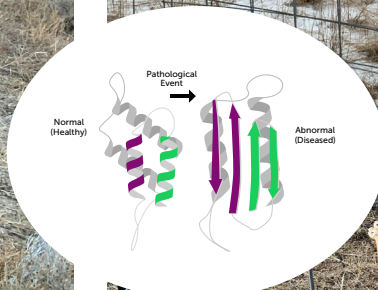
Chronic Wasting Disease has spread across the US for decades and was first identified in Montana in 2017.

The disease is caused by prions, a type of protein that enters the bloodstream and attaches to neurons, particularly affecting the brain and eventually leading to an inability to make even the most basic self-preservation decisions, such as eating. Animals cannot fight prions, as there is no natural physiological defense system, unlike those that fight off viruses and bacteria. Prions infecting cervids have been found in soil samples, and one theory is that animals ingest prions while grazing. Yet, prions are very difficult to isolate and study due to their nature as “sticky” folded proteins. There is no easy method to identify the extent of prion proliferation without very specialized and expensive equipment, except by noting the number of affected wildlife. Prions may live for up to 17 years outside a biological host. There is no known way of eradicating them and there is no vaccine. This is what makes the research conducted by Kyle and his students so important.

To make the most of his funding, Richardson created five internships for undergraduate field research. CWD interns collect “population dynamics” data on the number, age, and gender of individual animals. Under Richardson’s mentorship, students plan, conduct literature reviews, write reports, and make professional presentations with the data collected.







Kennedy's funds are helpful to UMW for several reasons:

1) pilot research forms the basis for seeking larger funds, such as the related multi-year grant proposal under consideration with the National Science Foundation; 2) support of student scientists who will one day make an impact of their own. Of the three interns who studied with Kyle in the first year, one is applying for graduate school in biology, one is applying for field research in wildlife, and the third joined the US Air Force; 3) survey data will extend overall understanding of CWD for all those interested in finding solutions; 4) sparking Richardson's goal of making UMW the center of CWD research in Southwest Montana.

The Kennedy gift is the type of funding that furthers University of Montana Western's mission. By encouraging hands-on research, students get a taste of the real world while learning invaluable scientific skills. "It is not enough to hear and read about science/ research. Students must practice important work solving problems and making science."

"Of our natural world" says Richardson, "everyone is a stakeholder!" This is a value Kyle and Jim hold in common.



**"It is not enough to hear and read about science/ research. Students must practice important work solving problems and making science."**

**- Kyle Richardson**



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