

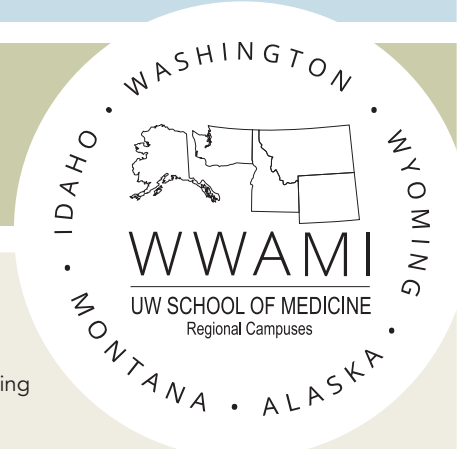


MONTANA
WWAMI

PROGRAM NEWSLETTER CLINICAL EDUCATION-SUMMER 2026

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Clinic Shadowing Robot

In 2020, when the COVID-19 pandemic brought hospitals, clinics, and schools to a standstill, traditional job shadowing and clinical rotation opportunities for students pursuing health care careers quickly disappeared. With health care facilities focused on protecting patients and limiting disease transmission, hosting shadowing students in-person was no longer an option.

Even before the pandemic, Montana faced shortages of health care professionals willing to open their doors to shadowing experiences. Maintaining the pipeline for future health care workers by providing meaningful real-world exposure to health care careers remains a critical priority.

The innovative solution of using robots to provide virtual job shadowing in Montana was brought about by Elizabeth Kelsey, WWAMI Missoula Program Manager & U of M Job Shadowing Coordinator, along with Western Montana AHEC team members, Katie Turner and Lily Apedaile. Telepresence robots allow students to explore health care environments and interact with professionals while remaining safely outside the facility.

St. Luke Community Healthcare in Ronan agreed to partner on a pilot project. Funding support was obtained from three grants, which the Western Montana AHEC used to purchase five Double Robotics telepresence robots, thus launching the program. Behind the scenes, a telepresence robot stationed at St. Luke Community Healthcare serves as a bridge between students and health care professionals. Liz Kelsey works closely with hospital personnel to arrange virtual job shadowing opportunities, giving students a unique window into health care careers after completing required patient privacy agreements.

On the day of the experience, students log in remotely through a secure link and hospital staff retrieve the robot from its charging station and continue their regular workday while Liz Kelsey remotely operates the robot. Students can observe clinical environments in real time, gaining valuable insight into health care careers and workplace operations. At the conclusion of each session, students can ask questions and learn more directly from health care professionals.

Nearly 40 students from communities across Montana have participated in the virtual job shadowing pilot program. For many students in rural and underserved areas, these experiences would otherwise be difficult or impossible to access.

Liz Kelsey hopes to explore ways to expand opportunities, including exposure to specialties such as surgery, and increasing the number of students who can participate. Overall, the goal is to ensure patient comfort, support student education near and far, and acknowledge the dedication to expanding student learning opportunities.



STUDENT NEWS

Celebrating Residency Match, Montana WWAMI 2026

The annual residency Match Day marked an exciting milestone for Montana WWAMI. After years of rigorous training and dedication, students learn where the next step of their medical career will take them. In 2026, 29 Montana WWAMI students matched into residency programs, spanning 13 states, including Montana, and representing 12 different specialties. Notably, 45% of the class matched into the primary care fields of internal medicine, family medicine, and pediatrics. When also considering Montana's critical, high-need specialties of general surgery, obstetrics and gynecology, and psychiatry, the match percentage rises to an impressive 72%. This strong result highlights the students' commitment to addressing health-care workforce needs and serving communities across Montana and the broader region.

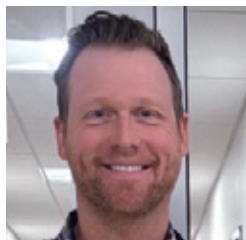
FACULTY APPRECIATION & AWARDS

Family Medicine Clerkship Exceptional Teaching Faculty Award

This is given to the top 1% of clerkship teaching faculty for demonstrating excellence and commitment to medical student teaching. The award decision is made by calculating the evaluations submitted by students of their clerkship experience. In academic year 24-25, Dr. James and Dr. Solomon were honored with this award.

Dr. Amy Solomon joined the UWSOM-Department of Family Medicine clinical faculty in 2018. She plays a key role in training the next generation of physicians, serving as the Billings Track Director, as a supervisor for MFMR residents and as the clerkship director for the family medicine rotations.

Dr. Solomon is known for her work in family medicine, outpatient addiction care, and is a collaborative and dedicated educator. Dr. Solomon is widely respected for her commitment to learners and her positive impact on the clinical teaching environment.



*Jonathon James, DO,
Providence Primacy Care,
Missoula, UWSOM Dept
of FM Clinical Instructor*



*Amy Solomon, MD,
RiverStone Health, Billings,
UWSOM Dept. of FM
Clinical Assistant Professor*

Pediatric Clerkship Faculty Teaching Award

Dr. Tom Strizich was one of the 2025-2026 recipients of the annual Pediatric Clerkship Faculty Teaching Award. Based on student nominations, this award is given to faculty providing a substantial contribution to medical education within the pediatric clerkships. Dr. Strizich is a MT WWAMI Alumni (E-1992). He has been teaching WWAMI students for 14 years. In addition, he is a valuable member of the Montana WWAMI Admissions team.



*Tom Strizich, MD,
Partners in Pediatrics,
Helena, UWSOM Dept of
Pediatrics, Clinical
Assistant Professor*



*Stacey Kingsland, MD,
Northwest Physicians,
Great Falls, UWSOM Dept of
Medicine, Clinical Instructor*

UWSOM Department of Medicine Richard M. Tucker Award

In 2025, Dr. Stacey Kingsland was honored with the UWSOM Department of Medicine Richard M. Tucker Award. UW Medical students nominate educators from the WWAMI region and based on those nominations the UWSOM selection committee selects honorees who have demonstrated true enthusiasm and outstanding dedication in providing teaching and mentoring.

MONTANA WWAMI TRACKS AND CLERKSHIPS

Each spring, a group of UWSOM patient care phase students embark on their clinical learning. Clerkship rotations are available to WWAMI students in communities across the state including Great Falls, Helena, and Kalispell. Montana also offers training tracks in Billings, Bozeman, and Missoula, allowing completion of many third year required clerkships (internal medicine, family medicine, pediatrics psychiatry, surgery, and OB/Gyn) within a track location. Tracks are a popular option for students who want to stay in their home state as much as possible. Montana also offers a fourth year Explore and Focus Track which is a state-based track.



Billings Track— Connecting MT WWAMI Students with Pediatric Residents

In May, Area Health and Education Center representatives and Billings Track students met with local high school students at the Billings Career Center to discuss opportunities and paths into various healthcare careers. Topics covered included medical school expenses, scholarships, and specifics about the Billings WWAMI track and clerkship experience. Montana WWAMI encourages student participation in such pipeline activities.



Bozeman Track— Finding the Right Fit

Last March, students gathered at Bozeman Health for an interactive “speed-networking” event with 16 physicians from various internal medicine subspecialties, including cardiology, oncology, pulmonology, and infectious diseases. The event highlighted the breadth of internal medicine while fostering early mentorship and career exploration in a supportive, low-pressure setting.

Organized by student leaders in the Internal Medicine Interest Group and Dr. Pamela Hiebert, the event featured short, rotating conversations that gave students direct insight into clinical practice, lifestyle, and career paths. Students rotated through ten-minute conversations, gaining direct perspective on clinical practice, lifestyle, and career pathways, insights not always available in traditional classroom settings. More than 20 students participated, describing the experience as both informative and engaging.

“It gave me quick, honest insights into subspecialties I hadn’t seriously considered,” said first year student Luke Thomson.



Missoula Track– Pediatric Rheumatology Elective



An exciting special elective course is now available for students in Missoula. Dr. Julie Campbell, MD, MHA, is teaching a two-week permission only, Pediatric Rheumatology elective at the Logan Health Specialty Clinic. The course introduces medical students to pediatric rheumatology through clinical experiences in outpatient and inpatient settings. Students will learn to evaluate, diagnose, and manage autoimmune, autoinflammatory, and musculoskeletal conditions in children while developing skills to distinguish inflammatory diseases from more common non-inflammatory complaints. The rotation prepares future providers to improve care for children with rheumatologic concerns. As the shortage of pediatric rheumatologists continues to grow, this training equips future pediatrician and family medicine providers with the skills needed to identify high-risk patients, make appropriate referrals, and manage non-inflammatory conditions effectively.

A Montana WWAMI alum, Dr. Campbell earned her medical degree from the UWSOM in 2017. Her pediatric residency followed by a 3-year pediatric rheumatology fellowship were completed at Seattle Children's Hospital.



3rd year Missoula Track students: Katie Powers, Amanda Jennings, Ashley Bubb, Zach Connelly, with Liz Kelsey & Chris Jons

MONTANA WWAMI PIPELINE



HOSA (Health Occupations Students of America) Future Health Professional's annual conference was held in Billings, April 1st. Montana WWAMI connected with nearly 400 aspiring healthcare students at the HOSA State Leadership Conference in Billings, supporting its mission to grow Montana's future healthcare workforce. Students competed in events ranging from clinical skills to presentations on topics like family medicine and Native health advocacy. Montana WWAMI supported the event with representatives Sara Houston and Judi Sullivan manning the WWAMI outreach table and serving as volunteer judges.

"It's a great opportunity to share WWAMI with potential future students," said Sullivan.

WWAMI FACULTY DEVELOPMENT – CME EVENTS



Montana WWAMI Faculty Development Conference

FAIRMONT
HOT SPRINGS RESORT

The annual Montana WWAMI Faculty Development Conference held April 10-12, 2026, took place at Fairmont Hot Springs Resort in Anaconda. The 2026 Montana WWAMI Faculty Development Conference brought together educators from across the WWAMI region to explore emerging trends and best practices in medical education. Sessions focused on innovative approaches to physician training, including three-year MD programs, competency-based assessment, effective learner feedback, and the growing role of artificial intelligence in healthcare and medical education.

Faculty shared strategies for evaluating student progress through Entrustable Professional Activities (EPAs) and Workplace-Based Assessments (WBAs), while discussions on AI examined both its potential benefits and challenges for clinical practice and teaching. Panelists, including students, residents, and experienced clinicians, offered perspectives on adapting to a rapidly evolving healthcare landscape.

The conference also reinforced Montana WWAMI's commitment to addressing healthcare workforce needs across the state. Throughout the weekend, attendees explored new ideas, exchanged experiences, and reaffirmed their shared mission of preparing the next generation of physicians.

Save the date: annual faculty development conference (in Bozeman) April 9-11, 2027



Dr. MaKenna Stavins, with panelists Nat Sisson, Resident physician; Madison Alessi, MS3, Alex Wickens, MS4; Olivia Reid, MS4

Missoula Faculty Development

Missoula hosted its faculty development session in February, with an evening discussion sponsored by CLIME. Fiona Gallahue, MD, UW in the Department of Emergency Medicine, professor and clinician- educator, along with Montana's regional Stern faculty educator, Laura Goodell, MD, presented on the challenging topic of working with difficult learners. The session explored a variety of strategies for effectively supporting learners, from accurately identifying performance concerns through objective competency-based measures to understanding and maintaining appropriate boundaries as well as valuable tools for navigating some of the most complex teaching situations in medical education.

Billings Faculty Development

In April, Jenny Wright, MD, UWSOM Associate Dean of Curriculum and Jay Erickson, MD, MT WWAMI Clinical Dean, met with faculty to discuss the transition to Pass/Fail and incorporating Workplace Based Assessments and competency-based assessment/evaluations. Approximately 30 faculty members attended the session to learn about these recent curricular and assessment changes and engage in discussion about implementation.

Bozeman Faculty Development

A common focus of faculty development sessions is the transition to the new UWSOM grading model. To support faculty through these changes, Jay Erickson, MD, met with Bozeman faculty members for dinner and discussion at Crossings Kitchen in Bozeman. Clerkship faculty had the opportunity to ask questions, share feedback, and discuss concerns related to the new pass/fail grading system, WBAs, and EPAs.

Additional information about faculty development and faculty resources, including details about applying for faculty appointment can be found at <https://www.montana.edu/wwami/mtwwamifacultydevelopment.html>

Are you interested in receiving the monthly Montana WWAMI Feature? Go to <https://www.montana.edu/wwami/subscribe/index.html>

Calling Montana WWAMI Alum: We want to share your stories

Highlighting the history of Montana WWAMI and its impact through the amazing stories and memories you carry. As an alum, let us know if we can feature you in Montana WWAMI social media channels and/or newsletters. Scan the QR code to submit your stories!



UWSOM MONTANA WWAMI ADMINISTRATION

Foundations Phase

Brant Schumaker, DVM, MPVM, PhD Director & Assistant Dean WWAMI brant.schumaker@montana.edu
Kayla Ouert, Director of Operations kayla.ouert@montana.edu
Molly Thompson, Program Coordinator mollythompson1@montana.edu

Montana Tracks

Chris Jons, MD, Missoula Track Director
Liz Kelsey, M.Ed., Missoula Track Manager, elizabeth.kelsey@mso.umt.edu
Julie Topping, Bozeman Track Director
Ali McInnis, Bozeman Track Manager amcinnis@bozemanhealth.org
Amy Solomon, MD, Billings Track Director,
Samantha Helland, Billings Track Manager samantha.hel@riverstonehealth.org

Clinical Education Office

Serena Brewer, DO, Montana WWAMI Assistant Clinical Dean szbrewer@uw.edu
Jay Erickson, MD, Montana WWAMI Assistant Clinical Dean jerick@uw.edu
Judi Sullivan, Program Administrator jasulliv@uw.edu
Bernadette Duperron, Program Administrator duperron@uw.edu
Vanessa Siddoway, Program Operations Vsidd85@uw.edu
Sara Houston, Montana TRUST Director Houston3@uw.edu
Ashleigh Dallas, Montana TRUST Coordinator abdallas@uw.edu

For more information:



Jay Erickson, MD
Assistant Dean for Regional
Affairs, UWSOM Assistant
Clinical Dean, WWAMI MT
406-862-3810



Serena Brewer, DO
Assistant Dean for Regional
Affairs, UWSOM Assistant
Clinical Dean, WWAMI MT
406-862-3810



Brant Schumaker,
DVM, MPVM, PhD
Director & Assistant Dean
WWAMI Foundation Phase
at MSU Bozeman 406-994-4411