


MEMORANDUM

FROM: Christopher Comer, Dean 
College of Humanities and Sciences

TO: Montana University System Board of Regents

DATE: July 24, 2017

RE: Proposal to Name the Academic Hall of the Liberal Arts Building

It is with great enthusiasm that I offer full support for the proposal to apply a name to the Academic Hall of the Liberal Arts Building at UM for the first time in its history. The proposed name: The Dennis and Gretchen Eck Academic Hall is wonderfully appropriate. The generosity of University of Montana alumnus Dennis Eck '68 and his wife, Gretchen, has helped transform the learning environment and technology of one of the largest academic buildings on campus and will continue to impact the capacity of our faculty and students to teach and learn for generations to come.

Each semester thousands of students take classes - including a significant number of general education courses - in the College of Humanities and Sciences' Liberal Arts building. Until the Ecks came forward to help address the functionality of the building, it had been largely untouched since its last major renovation in the early 1960s. With the incredible support and partnership of the Ecks in recent years, the College has been able to create a suite of six "high tech" classrooms that brightened tired classroom spaces; added more energy-efficient Oval-facing windows; improved ventilation and natural light; provided modular furnishings; and offered advanced audio/visual resources for teaching and research.

Additionally, the Ecks' investment provided the necessary funding to develop a comprehensive master plan for the building; renovate a large auditorium classroom and office spaces; create student lounges and gathering spaces; and construct a central entrance to the building off of the historic Oval. With the Ecks' most recent commitment, the College will be able to renovate all of the remaining Oval-facing classrooms and restrooms and make major electrical upgrades to the Academic Hall. Truly, this will become a "new" academic hall.

The generosity of Dennis and Gretchen Eck has been a bright beacon for the College, serving to encourage and uplift our students and faculty. In creating more inviting and useable spaces for both instruction and collaboration, the College is able to move more confidently into a new era that encourages the use of technology for active learning and is an engaging place to advance the frontiers of knowledge; address complex global challenges; and inspire creativity and artistic expression.

In recognition of the significant support of Dennis and Gretchen Eck for the College of Humanities and Sciences, I recommend to President Sheila Stearns that the Academic Hall of the Liberal Arts Building be named the Dennis and Gretchen Eck Academic Hall.