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Montana Plant Sciences Chair to be Established at MSU

Great Falls – Montana producers have raised \$1 million toward the new Montana Plant Sciences Chair in the College of Agriculture at Montana State University. The Montana Grains Foundation, MSU President Waded Cruzado, and the MSU Alumni Foundation have embarked on a \$5 million mission to perpetually endow the first Chair in the 120 year history of the College of Agriculture.

“The new Montana Plant Sciences Chair will have an advisory council with representatives from Montana’s crop production industry who will focus on the most compelling needs of grain producers in this state,” said Dale Schuler, who serves as chairman of the Montana Grains Foundation.

MSU is ranked by the Carnegie Foundation as one of the top universities in the nation for research activity. Michael Stevenson, President and CEO of the MSU Alumni Foundation, said in announcing the initiative, “Research changes economies, and this chair will be instrumental in attracting top faculty and students to help advance crop science in Montana.”

In an address to the Montana Grain Growers Association membership at their annual convention last December, MSU President Cruzado pledged her support of the new Chair, committing to matching funds for the investment by the Montana grain industry.

Montana Grains Foundation board member Lochiel Edwards praised the support received in the first efforts of this campaign. “The boards of the Montana Wheat and Barley Committee and the Montana Grain Growers Association helped launch this project, and we have met with a number of individual grain producers who share our vision of funding research and development of Montana grains,” said Edwards. The Montana Grains Foundation is partnering with the MSU Alumni Foundation to invite crop producers and supporting industries to invest in the Plant Sciences Chair.

Schuler said that while the economic losses caused by wheat stem sawfly, a devastating insect predator of wheat, was the spark which ignited the enthusiasm for this new research program, the Chair will be structured to adapt to other pressing research needs of the Montana grain industry. “Montana farmers have a long history of reliance on the research and development of crop varieties and crop management that has come from MSU and, with a decline in federal research funds, we are finding a great deal of interest by our farmers in their personal investment to ensure new research and development.”

The Montana Grains Foundation is affiliated with the Montana Grain Growers Association, and was founded to carry out charitable, scientific, and educational activities on behalf of Montana’s grain industry. The MSU Alumni Foundation enhances the continuing excellence of Montana State University through the attraction of financial support and through the prudent stewardship of its resources and relations.

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