

February 16, 2009

To whom it may concern:

This letter represents my personal opinion concerning the potential for a new multi-purpose exposition facility in the Missoula area. This letter is not meant to represent the opinions of the administration for the University of Montana.

Although there may be reservations about developing a multi-purpose exposition facility in the Missoula area, I see several benefits that likely outweigh these concerns. It is these benefits that I begin to address below.

First, the Montana Business Quarterly (Winter 1997) published a report on the economic impact of the University of Montana on the Missoula area. This report also estimated the economic impact that visitors from outside Missoula County had on area businesses when attending cultural and athletic events. According to this report, visitors spent nearly \$28 million in Missoula County between 1996 and 1997. Additionally, average spending by visitors ranged from \$177 for day trips to \$368 for couples staying one night and \$588 for couples staying two or more nights. Thus, it appears that events attracting outside visitors to Missoula (e.g., sports, concerts, plays, conventions, etc.) have significant economic impact on area businesses.

Second, the proposed facility would be built at a time when the live-performance segment of the entertainment business is growing substantially. In short, today, artists tour more often in order to offset losses they are experiencing from downloading of their art for free. Along this line, a large percentage of the artists who are likely to tour attract a concert base that falls between the seating capacity for existing venues in the Missoula area (i.e., between 1500 and 4000 seats). Consequently, Missoula areas businesses often miss the opportunity to capitalize on these events.

Third, we have recently enjoyed popular press touting that the Missoula area is becoming a hub for cultural events. This press represents a branding opportunity that is not readily achieved; and, one that should not be undervalued by our community. One only has to look at the significant positive economic impact similar brands have had on other municipalities (e.g., Austin, Seattle and Park City) to better appreciate its value. Thus, a facility that attracts more cultural events to our area helps to solidify this brand.

Sincerely;

Scott Douglas, Director  
The Entertainment Management Program  
The William and Rosemary Faculty Fellow  
The University of Montana  
Missoula, MT 59812  
406-243-5695