

# Reflection from Keith Parker, PhD.

Retiring Faculty Member of the Skaggs School of Pharmacy  
Department of Biomedical and Pharmaceutical sciences  
(1981 - 2021)

My family came to Montana nearly 125 years ago, settling in the Yellowstone and Big Horn County areas. I had a great childhood in Billings, graduating from Senior High, and was then off to educational and research experiences in Bozeman, San Francisco, and Denver. Just when I was returning to Montana in 1981, an unexpected position became available at Western, and I served as Professor of Chemistry and the Dean of Faculty there until moving to Missoula in 1993.

I've been involved with a lot of research projects at the University of Montana, but a project with CBD (cannabidiol) culminated a long-standing collaboration with former Missoula neurologist, Dr. Ethan Russo. It turns out that CBD has actions beyond cannabinoid receptors, and we were able to study this in cell culture. Overall, our work through the years centered around the effects of natural products and synthetic drugs on serotonin receptors. Serotonin is a naturally occurring substance that helps to regulate our nervous system and many other tissues. This work with serotonin receptors focused on mechanisms used by the receptors to signal the interior of cells, with potential for new drug development. One of the most engaging collaborations was with Professor Salvatore Guccione of the University of Catania in Italy. Along with his co-workers in Spain and Norway, we studied potentially novel anti-depressant drugs.

There's little doubt in my mind that my most delightful moments at UM involved interactions with students at all levels: undergraduate, graduate, and professional doctoral. There've been a few cases in which a student went on to become a parent, and then one of their children became my student as well. These occasions have been marvelous! Anytime students graduate then come back a few years later for a visit, or simply let us know we've made a difference for them – that's a big deal. In fact, from a work-related standpoint, I'm not sure if there's a more pleasing message than that.

I've been lucky enough to have remarkable colleagues, faculty, staff, and administrative leaders, all who've contributed to positive experiences with students. The greatest thing about being part of units like University of Montana, Western and University of Montana, Missoula is the work environment. Even with often modest resources, these and other Montana University System (MUS) units have always been great places to work. Interactions across the System foster great service to Montana's families. Myself and my own family members have benefited from being involved with MUS (as both students and faculty). I feel so much gratitude towards my family for all their care and devotion over the years. I'll definitely miss the many wonderful people at UM, but I'm really looking forward to spending more time with the great folks at home!

"The University of Montana Skaggs School of Pharmacy would like to thank to Dr. Keith Parker for all his service, hard work and dedication. The impact over his 40 years is forever imprinted in our programs and students. Thank you for all you have done for us and the University, you will be missed."

– Marketa Marvanova, Dean of the Skaggs School of Pharmacy