

UNIVERSITY OF WYOMING
Endowed Faculty Report
From the Office of the Provost/Executive Vice President
Division of Academic Affairs
1 OCTOBER 2026

To the Joint Appropriations and Joint Education Interim Committees

The University of Wyoming (UW) has and continues to benefit greatly from the Excellence in Higher Education Endowment. The Excellence in Higher Education Endowment allows the university to establish state-funded endowed faculty positions to advance teaching and scholarship in the areas of distinction defined in the university's strategic plan. UW has also benefited from state appropriations targeted toward faculty positions in legislatively identified areas of priority, the School of Energy Resources positions and the Sustainable Business Practices positions. Furthermore, faculty positions supported (partially or fully) by private endowment gifts through the University of Wyoming Foundation enhance UW's teaching and research programs in areas of mutual interest to the institution and its donors. This report covers all such positions. Part A includes the Excellence in Higher Education Endowment (a continuation of legislative reports prepared annually); Part B encompasses other faculty positions identified in legislative appropriations; and Part C includes privately endowed faculty positions.

Part A. Excellence in Higher Education Endowment Report

[Pursuant to W.S. 21-16-1204]

1. Background

Created in 2006, the Excellence in Higher Education Endowment was funded at \$105 million, the earnings from two-thirds of which, or \$70 million, was designated to the University of Wyoming. Earnings on the state-managed endowment, which are distributed by the state treasurer to the university, allow the university to establish endowed faculty positions (known as Wyoming Excellence Chairs) and to acquire instructional and scholarly materials, classroom equipment, and other resources necessary to support the work of endowed chairs. Distributions to the university are based on a spending policy for FY2026 and was 5.00% of the five (5) year average market value of the corpus.

The statute imposes some constraints on the uses of the endowment earnings. Not less than 2/3 of the amounts shall be used to expand university instruction and research in disciplines related to economic and social challenges facing Wyoming. No fewer than four (4) Wyoming Excellence chairs must be in the College of Education. The remaining earnings shall be used for recruitment and retention of faculty members with established reputations in other areas of distinction as identified in the university academic plan, including business, arts and humanities, mathematics, cultural studies, healthcare, economics, and law.

To initiate the program while the endowment corpus was filling, and pursuant to Senate Enrolled Act 54 Section 1 (c) (ii), the Legislature appropriated \$2.8 million in one-time funds, subsequently reduced to \$1.8 million, to be distributed to the University of Wyoming and expended exclusively for the purposes specified in W.S. 21-16-1202 (b). The one-time appropriation allowed the university to begin filling positions in fiscal years 2007 and 2008. Those initial positions were then funded permanently with earnings from the Excellence in Higher Education Endowment.

2. Summary, history, and accomplishments of authorized positions

Under W.S. 21-16-1204, the University of Wyoming must report annually on faculty positions partially or fully funded through the endowment program, including the name of each faculty member filling a Wyoming Excellence chair, their education and experience, their research and instructional activities, and the benefits of their research and instruction.

The inaugural appropriation became effective July 1, 2006. The provost developed a planning budget for the allocation of positions to be supported with these funds during the 2007-2008 biennium, while the \$70M endowment account began to fill. Based on the planning budget, three (3) searches were authorized with the initial funds: two (2) in the College of Education (fulfilling one-half of the legislative mandate requiring four (4) positions in the College of Education) and one (1) in the College of Arts and Sciences Creative Writing MFA program (aligned with UW's area of distinction Cultural Assets, Arts, and Humanities).

During the second year of that biennium, as more information became available about anticipated payouts to the university from the state-managed endowment account, the provost's office authorized more searches, in two (2) phases. Seven (7) additional Wyoming Excellence endowed positions were authorized during fiscal year (FY) 2008, and five (5) more were authorized in July 2008 for a total of fifteen (15) authorized endowed faculty positions. Four (4) of these fifteen (15) positions were to be funded with earnings combined from both the state account and private endowment gifts to the university, allowing for a greater number of search authorizations and establishing a unique private-public partnership in endowing distinguished professorships.

The decision to authorize the fifteen (15) fully or partially funded positions was based on a budget for salary, benefits, and other position-related costs consistent with the projected payout estimates provided by the state treasurer's office prior to the financial market declines realized later in FY2009. Subsequent financial market events mandated the need to reevaluate the size of the budget and number of permanent positions that could be supported by endowment earnings. Given the need for exceptional prudence in filling permanent faculty positions, and consistent with representations to the Joint Appropriations Committee, the university placed some of the previously authorized searches on hold through FY2010. At the beginning of FY2011, following careful evaluation of the anticipated earnings stream and the accumulated reserves held in the university account, the provost authorized searches to fill the on-hold positions, including some for a bridging period only in order to ensure that permanent funding commitments would remain in line with the anticipated funding stream. Then, at the beginning of FY2013 based on having received a significantly larger payout during FY2012, as well as enhanced projected payout estimates from the state, and a substantial private gift, the provost was able to complete the originally planned position allocations, and grow the program with additional allocations to Nursing, Law, the Haub School, Native American & Indigenous Studies, and Global Studies.

In FY2025, eighteen (18) and in FY2026 seventeen (17) positions were fully or partially funded by the Wyoming Excellence Endowment, and additional positions were supported with endowment funds. Although all positions are subject to available funding in any year, the ongoing annual expenses associated with the funded positions were in line with the state projections for annual earnings.

The authorized positions conform to the legislative mandate. The College of Education has four (4) positions, as prescribed by the legislation, all important to the future of K-12 education in the state: two (2) in literacy education, one (1) in science education, and one (1) in mathematics education. The strategy for the allocation of the other positions was to coordinate a set of positions in areas of distinction identified in the university's strategic

plan, and professions critical to the state such as business, law, and health professions. In addition, positions were selected for allocation based on the potential to address economic and social challenges in the state.

The allocation strategy is reflected in the following table, and the accomplishments of the currently filled positions and the benefits of their research or instruction to students, businesses, industries, or other Wyoming residents are described in detail below.

Allocation strategy	Number of Permanent Positions	College/Academic Unit	Names
Education	4	Education	Dr. Cynthia Brock, (elementary literacy education) <i>Dr. Lorraine Males (mathematics education) FY27</i> Dr. Leslie Rush (literacy education) Dr. Jeff Anderson (special education) <i>Wheeler FY27</i>
Economic and Social Challenges facing Wyoming: Energy, Natural Resources, Wildlife Science, Earth Sciences, Health Sciences, Agriculture, Engineering	11	Law/Haub School of Environment & Natural Resources Haub School of Environment & Natural Resources Agriculture, Life Sciences and Natural Resources Engineering & Physical Sciences	Temple Stoellinger (law/energy) Dean John Koprowski (ecology, conservation, & management of biodiversity) Dr. Kevin Monteith (wildlife) Dr. Bledar Bisha (food microbiology) Dr. Cynthia Weinig (botany) Dr. David Pascual (brucellosis) Dr. Dario Grana (geology/geophysics) Dr. Bryan Shuman (geology/geophysics) Dr. Haibo Zhai (civil engineering) Dr. Mohammed Piri (petroleum engineering) Dr. Ian Walker (electrical engineering and computer science)
Other Disciplines important to the state and region and its history and culture: Business, Arts & Humanities, Mathematics, Cultural Studies, Economics, Law	4	Business/Economics Law	Dr. David Finnoff (economics) Dr. H. Jo Albers (economics) Dr. Jeffrey G. Covin (management) Dean Julie Hill (civil legal services/law)

FY 2025 Accomplishments of Wyoming Excellence Chairs

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

The four (4) permanent positions that reside in the College of Education focus on literacy, science education, and mathematics education. The individuals who hold these positions are developing and leading nationally recognized programs in these fields and are expected to be magnets for attracting the best and brightest junior faculty and students into these critical areas of teaching need in Wyoming. These positions represent four (4) Wyoming Excellence chairs that are statutorily required to be in the College of Education.

Dr. Cynthia Brock, (Ph.D. Educational Psychology, Michigan State University)
Wyoming Excellence Chair in Literacy Education

Dr. Cynthia Brock is a Wyoming Excellence Chair in Elementary Literacy Education. Across the past year, Dr. Brock worked with Dr. Kim Gustafson (Interim Executive Director of the Literacy Research Center and Clinic), Dr. Leslie Rush (Wyoming Excellence Chair in Adolescent Literacy Education), Dr. Tracy Spies (Fisher Family Professor in Literacy Education), and Sara Pommarane (LRCC Distinguished Teacher in Residence) to develop and/or maintain collaborative research/professional literacy learning partnerships in schools in the following Wyoming locations: **Fremont #6, Fremont #14, Fremont #21, Albany #1, Laramie #1, & Holy Name Catholic School** in Sheridan. (The LRCC team works with more Wyoming schools & districts, but the schools/districts listed above are the ones with which Dr. Brock was directly involved.)

Working in conjunction with the College of Education Dean, Jenna Shim, Dr. Brock designed and facilitated the implementation of an ‘American Indian Education for All’ initiative in the College of Education. Components of the initiative included establishing a college-wide book club, setting up opportunities for professors to work closely with Dr. White Eagle (Northern Arapaho) and Ms. St. Clair (Eastern Shoshone) to infuse ‘American Indian Education for All’ standards and curriculum in their respective courses, and setting up a college-wide presentation by Dr. White Eagle and Ms. St. Clair. With Dr. Gustafson, Dr. Brock co-chaired the Fisher Family Literacy Professor position search. Dr. Brock coordinated professional visits by Dr. Al Tatum (past president of the Literacy Research Association) and Dr. Peter Afflerbach (distinguished professor of literacy and member of the Reading Hall of Fame). Dr. Tatum worked with the LRCC and UW literacy doctoral students during his visit. Dr. Afflerbach met with LRCC and literacy faculty, attended and debriefed about a JEIC meeting with Drs. Rush and Brock, and gave a college-wide presentation on literacy in the current era. In addition to providing service to the UW College of Education, Dr. Brock provides service at the state and national levels. For example, Dr. Brock was a member of the Wyoming Department of Education English Language Arts Standards Revision Committee. With Dean Shim and literacy colleagues, Dr. Brock presented to the JEIC in June of 2025. Working collaboratively with Rob Black & Lori Pusateri-Lane (WDE), the Northern Arapaho and Eastern Shoshone Business Councils, Kim Gustafson (UW), Sara Pommarane (UW), Jayne Hellenberg (UW), and Dr. Pauline Harris (Adelaide University in South Australia), Dr. Brock is leading the K-3 American Indian Education for All Disciplinary Literacy Initiative.

At the national level, Dr. Brock served as President Elect of the Literacy Research Association, which is the premier literacy research organization in the U.S. This LRA role entailed serving as the conference chair for the December 2025 LRA conference in Las Vegas. As conference chair, Dr. Brock worked with colleagues to plan and implement all aspects of the 2025 conference for approximately 1,000 conference attendees. Dr. Brock completed six external reviews for colleagues in the field of literacy seeking promotion from assistant to associate

or associate to full professor of literacy at the following institutions: University of New Mexico, University of South Carolina, Auburn University, The University of Texas at Arlington, Northern Illinois University, and University of Illinois at Chicago. Dr. Brock sponsored four UW literacy doctoral students to attend the 2025 Literacy Research Association (LRA) Conference.

Dr. Brock led an international collaborative literacy research initiative between fifth grade teachers and their students in Pavillion, WY and Laramie, WY and fifth- and sixth-grade teachers and their students in Adelaide, South Australia. This project focused on multimodal interactions across international contexts whereby students from Australia read, wrote about and discussed children's literature from the U.S., and U.S. students read, wrote about, and discussed children's literature from Australia. Dr. Brock collaborated with two fifth-grade teachers in Laramie #1 and Andy Pannell (UW) to design and implement a research project on civic literacy. Dr. Brock collaborated with seven Australia colleagues to co-write an Australian Research Council (ARC) Grant (ARC is the major federal research funding agency in AU) entitled, "Developing Literacy and Wellbeing with Creative Teaching in Rural Contexts." (Not funded.) She co-edited one book (with Leslie Rush & Todd Reynolds) on literacy in rural contexts (Routledge) that features Wyoming teachers and administrators; she co-wrote one handbook chapter (for *The Handbook of Interactional Ethnography* with Routledge). As well, she co-authored three journal articles (one in the prestigious journal entitled *Research in the Teaching of English*), and she co-wrote six book chapters.

Dr. Lorraine Males, (Ph.D. Mathematics Education, Michigan State University)
Wyoming Excellence Chair in Mathematics Education (effective 8/25/26 for FY27)

Dr. Leslie Rush, (Ph.D. Reading Education, University of Georgia)
Wyoming Excellence Chair in Literacy Education

During the 2025-2026 academic year, Wyoming Excellence Chair in Literacy Education, Dr. Rush continued to leverage her broad base of Wyoming connections, knowledge of adolescent literacy, and experience as an administrator to provide service and support for Wyoming educators, families, and communities.

Outreach/Engagement Work to Wyoming Schools and Education Agencies

A substantial portion of Dr. Rush's work is engaging in literacy support for Wyoming school districts and other agencies. During the 2025-2026 academic year, Dr. Rush provided the following professional development activities, designed to build Wyoming teacher and administrator expertise in literacy:

- Lander Valley High School (Lander). Dr. Rush served throughout the year as a consultant with the LVHS instructional support team, as they provide professional development to high school teachers in all content areas on disciplinary literacy instruction. This involved 4 trips to Lander and multiple Zoom planning meetings. As a result of this engagement, and with scholarship funding provided by the Literacy Research Center and Clinic, nine LVHS teachers are enrolled in the Literacy Graduate Certificate program, which leads to the Reading Endorsement from the Wyoming Professional Teaching Standards Board.
- Laramie County School District #1 (Cheyenne). Dr. Rush, collaborating with another School of Teacher Education colleague, provided two half-day professional development sessions for the entire Central High School staff during the fall semester, and then met weekly in the spring semester with a small group of high school teachers to provide professional development and coaching cycles in vocabulary instruction and disciplinary literacy instruction.

In addition to these professional development support experiences, Dr. Rush served as a member of the Wyoming Legislature's Joint Education Committee's working group. This group worked collaboratively to write and refine a draft of the K12 Language and Literacy bill (SF0059), which was eventually passed into law. Dr. Rush continues to serve as a participant on the Superintendent of Public Instruction's Literacy Cabinet, providing feedback on the development of rules for SF0059.

Dr. Rush has partnered with the Wyoming Department of Education (WDE) in several ways. First, Dr. Rush helped to establish and continues to contribute to organizing the Wyoming Secondary Literacy Community of Practice, a statewide group designed to provide support and education to teachers, administrators, and community members about research and practice in adolescent literacy. Second, Dr. Rush has served as a member of the WDE's English/Language Arts Standards Review Committee. These projects extended through the 25-26 academic year.

Leadership for Academic Programs Designed for Wyoming Educators

The School of Teacher Education provides several academic graduate programs that support ongoing learning and improvement for Wyoming classroom teachers. Dr. Rush serves as the Program Coordinator for the Literacy Graduate Certificate program. This program is designed for practicing classroom teachers and provides eligibility for teachers to add an endorsement in reading to their existing initial teaching license through the Wyoming Professional Teaching Standards Board. Current enrollment in the Literacy Graduate Certificate program is 35, and Dr. Rush serves as the advisor for all students. Dr. Rush also serves as the Program Coordinator for the MA in Education/Literacy Education program. This distance program is designed for practicing classroom teachers; coursework overlaps with and builds on the knowledge base in the Literacy Graduate Certificate program. Current enrollment in this program is 25; Dr. Rush serves as advisor for 11 of these students.

Research, Scholarship, and Service

In the area of research, Dr. Rush continues to actively publish her scholarly work. Dr. Rush is serving as first editor on an edited book with Routledge, with colleagues Cynthia Brock and Todd Reynolds, titled *Innovative Approaches to Literacy in Rural Contexts*. The chapter authors for the edited book are all Wyoming educators, and the anticipated audience is made up of educators in US rural schools. This book is currently in production and should be published in late 2026 or early 2027. With Dr. Marshall George at Hunter College, Dr. Rush submitted a book proposal to NCTE titled *English Language Arts Teacher Education: A 60-Year Journey*, which will provide a historical account of an NCTE professional organization. This proposal is currently under review.

Dr. Rush also contributes to Wyoming educators through the Trustees Education Initiatives' [Wyoming Teacher Mentor Corps](#), and the [Consortium for Overseas Students Teaching](#). Within the College of Education, Dr. Rush served as Chair of the CoE Tenure and Promotion Committee during the 25-26 academic year. Dr. Rush also was one of the leaders of establishing the College of Education Podcast Club, an informal gathering for faculty and staff to discuss our favorite podcasts.

Dr. Jeffrey Anderson, (Ph.D. Special Education, University of South Florida)
(Note: Deceased September 2025)

Wyoming Excellence Chair in Special Education
(John Wheeler effective 1/19/2027 for FY27)

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CHALLENGES FACING WYOMING: ENERGY, NATURAL RESOURCES, WILDLIFE, SCIENCE, EARTH SCIENCES, HEALTH SCIENCES, AGRICULTURE, ENGINEERING

Dr. Bledar Bisha, (Ph.D. Food Science and Technology, Iowa State University)
Wyoming Excellence Chair in Animal Science

Dr. Bisha's research focuses on post- and pre-harvest food safety, environmental microbiology, and public health. His work supports the aim to reduce the burden of foodborne illness, infectious disease, and antimicrobial resistance by using multifaceted approaches, including, but not limited to, improved diagnostics and surveillance, enhanced processing technologies, and the elimination or reduction of contamination sources.

In the 2025-2026 academic year, Dr. Bisha served as PI on five grants and cooperative agreements from USDA-APHIS, the CDC, and private industry to support research on control of zoonotic pathogens in the environment and in food production. He continues to lead the wastewater surveillance effort at the University of Wyoming in close collaboration with the Wyoming Department of Public Health, which provides real-time data on SARS-CoV-2, influenza, noroviruses, RSV, and measles to support public health measures statewide. In 2025 and early 2026, he published eleven peer-reviewed journal articles and presented twelve conference abstracts at national and international scientific meetings. In 2025-2026, Dr. Bisha mentored eight graduate and two undergraduate students, three laboratory technicians, three research scientists, and one postdoctoral fellow. He has lent his expertise at the national and international level by serving on three separate grant panels for USDA-NIFA. Over the past year, Dr. Bisha has served as the primary instructor for the department's Food Safety course, as well as for other courses in his area of expertise.

Dr. Haibo Zhai, (Ph.D. Environmental Engineering, North Carolina State University)
Wyoming Excellence Chair in Civil Engineering and Roy L and Caryl L Cline Distinguished Chair in Engineering

Dr. Haibo Zhai is a Professor in the Department of Civil & Architectural Engineering and Construction Management at the University of Wyoming (UW). Dr. Zhai is also an Adjunct Professor in the School of Energy Resources and the School of Computing at UW and in the Department of Engineering and Public Policy at Carnegie Mellon University. Additionally, Dr. Zhai is Director for the development of the Integrated Environmental Control Model (IECM), a power plant modeling tool developed for the U.S. Department of Energy's National Energy Technology Laboratory (DOE/NETL). Dr. Zhai has developed an interdisciplinary program of education and research in low-carbon energy and environmental sustainability at UW. Dr. Zhai offers two interdisciplinary courses entitled CE4470/5470 Water for Energy and CE4480/5480 Carbon Capture & Storage (CCS) for both undergraduate and graduate students. Advised by Dr. Zhai, a group of graduate students in his CE5480 CCS class won the 2026 Energython U.S. Regional Competition at the Energy Economics Evaluation Symposium in Houston, Texas. His research program addresses technical, economic and policy issues related to energy and the environment. His research interests mainly include low-carbon energy systems, CCS, clean hydrogen, nuclear energy, bioenergy with CCS, and the energy-water nexus. In the past academic year, Dr. Zhai's research program sponsored five postdoctoral research associates, four PhD students, and one part-time software engineer. One of his PhD students successfully graduated in Fall 2025. Dr. Zhai published six papers in top journals, such as *Environmental Science & Technology* and *Carbon Capture Science & Technology*, and had four manuscripts under review with top journals, such as *Nature Communications* and *Nature Energy*. Invited by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), he is a lead author for the forthcoming 2027 IPCC

Methodology Report on Carbon Dioxide Removal Technologies, Carbon Capture, Utilization, and Storage for National Greenhouse Gas Inventories. In Fall 2025, his team released a new version of the IECM (Version 13). His team is now expanding the IECM by adding clean hydrogen as a brand-new module and will release IECM Version 14 this summer. This computer-based tool has been adopted by users from 55 countries for a wide range of applications since it was housed at UW in 2022. Regarding professional and public services, Dr. Zhai served as a member on the graduate student committee and the ABET committee in his home department and on the UW Faculty Senate Committee's Research Advisory Subcommittee. Currently, he also serves as a junior faculty mentor in his home department. Additionally, Dr. Zhai currently serves on the advisory board of *iScience*, an interdisciplinary journal of Cell Press.

Dr. David Pascual, (Ph.D. Microbiology, University of Mississippi Medical Center)
Wyoming Excellence Chair in Disease Ecology

Dr. Pascual brings his extensive background in brucellosis research and vaccine development to the University of Wyoming. He has more than 27 years of experience working with *Brucella* pathogens, and has developed mutants as potential live vaccine candidates for livestock. Brucellosis, which can cause abortion in livestock and contaminate milk products, has become problematic for states bordering the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem (GYE). *Brucella* is able to spread and infect wild bison and elk herds, which now serve as a reservoir for *Brucella*. Given their ability to commingle, infected elk poses a threat to livestock. To aid Wyoming livestock, Dr. Pascual is continuing his work with brucellosis vaccine studies to develop a suitable vaccine and an optimized vaccination regimen, which will provide improved protection against *Brucella*-induced abortion, since conventional livestock vaccines are only 70% efficacious. The basis for his work is the observation that his mutants are highly effective in experimental animals preventing *Brucella* colonization of the animals' tissues. These new mutants are found to be >1,000 times more efficacious than conventional livestock vaccines.

Dr. Pascual has made important strides in developing novel approaches to conventional vaccination methods. *Brucella* readily disseminates systemically regardless of the route of exposure, resulting in its sequestration into the liver and spleen to cause recurring bouts of infection or chronic disease. *Brucella* has numerous stealth capacities to evade the host's immune system to enable its persistence. However, we have found that our mutants lose many of their stealth properties, and now become recognizable by the host leading to stimulation of multiple arms of the immune system to clear the infectious *Brucella*. New data are showing that antibody-producing lymphocytes or B cells are enhanced subsequent mucosal vaccination with our new mutants. While antibodies are not generally thought to be protective, we believe cellular functions of these B cells contribute to the clearance of infecting *Brucella* pathogen. In addition, we initiated vaccination studies in goats. Interestingly, we observe similar cellular responses to the vaccines as we observed in mice. Remarkably, we find that nasal vaccination of goats stimulates similar T cell and B cell subsets as we observed with vaccinated mice. Current studies are continuing to determine the molecular mechanisms for such immunity in livestock. This work further supports our contention that arming the mucosa with immune lymphocytes will provide superior protection against wild-type, virulent *Brucella* infection.

Dr. Pascual leads a team of investigators in vaccine development supported in excess of \$1.1 million in research funds. He is internationally recognized for his work in mucosal immunology and infectious diseases. As part of his team, two graduate students are investigating host mechanisms of protection against virulent *Brucella* infection. Dr. Pascual presented his research in brucellosis vaccine development at The Brucellosis 2025 International Research Conference, November 4-7, 2025. He also presented his research results to the Wyoming

Stock Growers Association, June 2, 2025; to Department of Veterinary Science at University of Wyoming on June 20, 2025; and to the Department of Animal Sciences at University of Wyoming on October 1, 2025.

Dr. Dario Grana, (Ph.D. Geophysics, Stanford University)

Wyoming Excellence Chair and School of Energy Resources Professor in Geology and Geophysics

Dr. Grana's research focuses on computational geophysics methods to support the exploration and development of energy and natural resources. His work in subsurface geophysical characterization aims to predict the physical properties of rocks and fluids, enabling the identification, location, and quantification of underground resources, while also advancing the understanding of uncertainty in model predictions and decision-making processes. Dr. Grana's research group integrates geophysical data with statistical learning methods to develop cutting-edge data science algorithms that estimate rock and fluid behavior in contexts such as oil and gas reservoirs, carbon dioxide storage, geothermal systems, and groundwater aquifers. This approach builds accurate models that facilitate resource discovery, monitor changes in subsurface systems over time, and reduce predictive uncertainty, which provides stakeholders crucial input for informed decision-making. Recent projects include a carbon sequestration feasibility study near Rock Springs, WY, and a groundwater assessment study in a mountain watershed near Laramie, WY. Dr. Grana's research has been supported by the National Science Foundation and the Department of Energy. During the 2025–26 academic year, Dr. Grana published 13 articles in peer-reviewed journals, presented at numerous universities and international conferences, and secured additional funding from private industry to advance research in energy exploration. He also received the 2025 IAMG Felix Chayes Award from the International Association of Mathematical Geosciences at the association's annual meeting in Zhuhai, China, where he delivered a keynote lecture on his research. In addition to his research, Dr. Grana contributes to teaching through three courses: Quantitative Methods in Geosciences at the undergraduate level, and Rock Physics and Inverse Theory at the graduate level. In these courses, he implements active learning methods to help shape the next generation of geoscientists and engineers poised to lead in the energy and natural resources sectors.

Dr. John Koprowski, (Ph.D. Biology, University of Kansas)

Wyoming Excellence Chair in Environment and Natural Resources

Dean Koprowski joined the University of Wyoming as a Wyoming Excellence Chair in October 2021, moving from the University of Arizona where he had spent 20 years ending as the Director of the School of Natural Resources & the Environment. He is a Certified Wildlife Biologist (The Wildlife Society) and is an elected Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, The Wildlife Society, The Explorers Club, and the Linnean Society of London, the first person to be elected to Fellow status in these 4 organizations. He also received The Wildlife Society's highest honor the Aldo Leopold Memorial Medal and Award for his lifetime of achievements in the conservation and management of wildlife. His scholarship focuses on community-based conservation approaches to wildlife management of everything from squirrels to bears, leopards, tigers and elephants that involve local people in creating sustainable solutions...an excellent match with the Haub School's mission to make a difference for our wild and working lands through interdisciplinarity and collaboration. His commitment to provide training through such approaches to UW students continues with his mentorship of seven graduate students and 3 undergraduates in his research laboratory.

In 2025-26, Dean Koprowski published 15 peer-reviewed articles and submitted a book manuscript *Squirrels of the World 2* to Johns Hopkins University Press. Dr. Koprowski joined with UW's office of global engagement to initiate international partnerships that will provide numerous opportunities for our students in Nepal, India and Malaysia and presented invited talks on the importance of conservation partnerships to classes on campus,

community organizations and universities in the USA, Malaysia, Nepal and Mongolia during the past year. He was honored in September 2025 with an honorary doctorate from the Mongolian Academy of Science for his contributions to the development of Mongolian science. In summer 2025 and J-term 2025-26, Dr. Koprowski led courses in Mongolia and Nepal for UW students that compared and contrasted strategies for wild and working lands management. Dean Koprowski is honored to serve as a Wyoming Excellence Chair and continues to seek expanded impact through partnership and collaboration.

Dr. Kevin Monteith, (Ph.D. Biological Sciences, Idaho State University)
Wyoming Excellence Chair in Environment and Natural Resources

Monteith holds an appointment in the Haub School of Environment and Natural Resources, with a joint appointment in the Wyoming Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit and the Department of Zoology and Physiology. Monteith joined the faculty at the University of Wyoming in 2015 and was named a Wyoming Excellence Chair in 2021. Monteith's research program is focused on addressing important, timely, and often vexing questions in natural resource management to offer sound insight into strategies for wildlife conservation while simultaneously striving to advance scientific thought. His research group, the [Monteith Shop](#), works hand-in-hand with natural resource agencies to address questions that have direct links to land and population management, and maintain strong ties to non-profits and foundations within the state and beyond. Support in external funding was ~\$1 million in 2025; the Monteith Shop is grateful for the dedicated support of their partners and donors. Monteith's collaborative research was featured in 20 scientific publications in 2025, ranging from top ecological journals to more applied outlets with 8 of the publications being led by students that Monteith mentored. Monteith mentored a team of 4 PhD students, 4 MSc students, oversaw 5 Research Scientists, and graduated 1 PhD student. Moreover, Monteith's program works hard to communicate findings not only to the scientific community, but also to stakeholders outside of the academic community who interface with wildlife policy through multiple outreach and engagement events throughout Wyoming and beyond. And in addition, they work hard to make science accessible to the public, participate in multiple K-12 classroom visits, and continue to develop educational pieces for K-12 classrooms. In collaboration with the Muley Fanatic Foundation, Monteith and his team executed the inaugural Echoes of the Tracks event in Laramie. Echoes is a fundraising and outreach event designed to create a fun, engaging, and inspiring celebration of conservation and science. Monteith was bestowed UW's 2025 Distinguished Researcher Award bestowed at the Research and Innovation Excellence Awards. Monteith is honored to serve as a Wyoming Excellence Chair and blessed to continue to serve the state of Wyoming and her natural resources.

Dr. Mohammad Piri, (Ph.D. Petroleum Engineering, Imperial College London)
Wyoming Excellence Chair in Petroleum Engineering; Thomas and Shelley Botts Endowed Chair in Unconventional Reservoirs in the College of Engineering and Physical Sciences; and Alchemy Sciences Petroleum Engineering Chair

In the 2025-2026 period, Prof. Piri and his research team disseminated their scholarly work through twenty-six research articles published (or accepted for publication) in peer-reviewed journals. The group's productivity remains high, with over twenty-five additional manuscripts currently submitted or in preparation. Furthermore, the team continued to advance the world-leading Center of Innovation for Flow through Porous Media (COIFPM), housed within the University of Wyoming's High Bay Research Facility. The team focused on acquiring, installing, and upgrading key instrumentation, significantly enhancing Center's leading-edge capabilities and research capacity. During this period, Prof. Piri collaborated closely with The Dow Chemical Company and four operators in Wyoming (Oxy, Devon Energy, Continental Resources, and Ballard Petroleum

Holdings) to advance both phases of the Wyoming Gas Injection Initiative (WGII). While the state of Wyoming provided \$50 million in matching funds, operators' investment has already reached approximately \$80 million, far exceeding the original dollar-for-dollar requirement. With seven planned field pilot projects, the total investment in WGII now stands at nearly \$130 million. The Initiative positions the University of Wyoming and the state at the forefront of Enhanced Oil Recovery (EOR) innovation. By deploying advanced gas injection technologies using recovered hydrocarbon gases or carbon dioxide, the initiative aims to revitalize declining oil fields in Wyoming. Critical to this process is the laboratory-scale de-risking conducted at COIFPM. Over the next five years, this grant will fund projects designed to boost productivity and recovery from existing wells. Prof. Piri continues to advance the strategic, long-term partnership with Thermo Fisher Scientific (TFS), recently established with a \$105 million budget over 10 years. This two-phase alliance includes \$75 million from TFS and \$40 million from the state of Wyoming for Phase 1. The partnership focuses on pioneering research and innovation in the energy and environment sectors, specifically aiming to develop and scale cutting-edge porous media technologies for hydrogen storage and oil recovery. Additionally, Prof. Piri's team continue to make progress in the latest phases of their collaborations with Shell, Petrobras, and Chevron, valued at approximately \$6.4 million. In a continuing effort to expand global research, Prof. Piri worked closely with collaborators at the Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC) to define the scope for the second phase of their partnership with COIFPM. This \$7.8 million project is currently in the contract negotiation stage. Additionally, Prof. Piri launched a new research initiative integrating Artificial Intelligence with Digital Rock Technology for reservoir engineering applications, a project stemming from COIFPM's long-standing partnership with Hess/Chevron. Prof. Piri's current external research funding exceeds \$100 million. His research group currently comprises twenty-six Ph.D. students, seventeen full- and part-time post-doctoral research associates, and six staff members. During the 2025–2026 period, he expanded his team by recruiting seven new Ph.D. students and successfully graduating three. In Fall 2025, Prof. Piri taught a course on Flow through Porous Media where he leveraged his expertise in multiphase flow through porous media and pore-scale modeling of displacement processes. His expertise in EOR directly supports Wyoming's energy sector. Since joining the university in 2005, he has established three world-leading facilities (Encana, Hess, and COIFPM) that have positioned UW at the global forefront of porous media research and fueled its recent achievement of R1 status. By providing access to state-of-the-art technology found nowhere else, these research centers have become essential for attracting top-tier faculty and providing students with an unparalleled education. Prof. Piri has actively commercialized technologies from his research group through two spin-off companies: Piri Technologies, LLC and Digital Pore Solution, LLC. With UW as an equity owner, these entities provide specialized technical services in flow through porous media, diversifying Wyoming's economy and creating high-paying, local jobs. Since its 2015 launch, Piri Technologies has achieved global reach, partnering with major national and international corporations. The company currently employs 12 highly skilled professionals, including 10 full-time staff, nine of whom are UW graduates. Furthermore, Prof. Piri founded Digital Pore Solutions, LLC in March 2022, in close collaboration with UW. Established as a subsidiary of Piri Technologies, LLC, the entity commercializes software-based intellectual property developed within his research group. To formalize this initiative, Prof. Piri developed a series of agreements with UW. The company specializes in the computational aspects of flow through porous media, leveraging high-performance computing, advanced data visualization, and state-of-the-art multi-GPU systems. Since its inception, Digital Pore Solutions has partnered with Piri Technologies on numerous Digital Rock Technology projects for real-world field development initiatives. The firm currently employs eight highly skilled professionals holding advanced degrees.

Dr. Bryan Shuman, (Ph.D. Geological Sciences, Brown University)
Wyoming Excellence Chair in Geology and Geophysics

Dr. Shuman has taught in the Department of Geology and Geophysics at the University of Wyoming since 2007 and works with undergraduates, graduate students, and post-docs to study the geological record of past climate changes and their influence on water and ecosystems. Shuman has published over 135 peer-reviewed journal articles, including 6 new publications in 2025 and several accepted for publication in 2026. His past awards include a National Science Foundation CAREER award. Shuman is currently co-leading a \$20 million grant from the National Science Foundation EPSCoR program, which focuses on anticipating risks to the state's water supplies. The project supports UW faculty and students in disciplines from atmospheric science to economics and enables them to work directly with Wyoming communities anticipate and respond to ongoing changes and future risks. For example, Shuman was the 2025 keynote speaker at the Teton Science School's Place-Based Education Symposium and was one of the invited speakers about the future of the Snake River and its watershed at the Jackson Hole Summit for Economics, Energy, and Environment; he also helped to train guides who work in Grand Teton National Park to discuss related topics with park visitors. The project also involves an ongoing teacher-researcher exchange program, through which Shuman met with K-12 teachers from Rock Springs, Pinedale, Casper, and Jackson to help develop science curriculum materials and research activities.

Shuman's research focuses on the natural environmental variations recorded by geological evidence since the last ice age as context for understanding drought, snowpack, temperature, and ecological trends today. For example, in 2025, Shuman received a new grant from the National Science Foundation to combine geophysics, sedimentology, and novel geochemical approaches to examine the history of drought in the Tetons and elsewhere across Wyoming over the past >12,000 years. As part of the project, Shuman has been able to develop new field research experiences for students based out of the UW-NPS Research Institute at the AMK Ranch. This work was further supported by combining Wyoming Excellence funds with an Engineering Initiative grant to acquire a new X-Ray Fluorescence (XRF) scanner for geological cores. One of Shuman's Ph.D. students has used the XRF data with AI computer vision techniques to enhance methods for analyzing lake sediment cores, such as those collected by Shuman and his students in the Tetons, Bighorns, and Beartooths. A new grant from the Department of Defense will apply these techniques to addressing US Army concerns about wildfire risks on bases in Alaska.

Temple Stoellinger, (J.D. Law, University of Wyoming College of Law)
Wyoming Excellence Chair in Law & Haub School

Temple Stoellinger serves as Associate Dean of the Haub School of Environment and Natural Resources, Wyoming Excellence Chair, and Associate Professor in the Haub School of Environment and Natural Resources, with a joint appointment in the University of Wyoming College of Law. She also serves as Co-Director of the Gina Guy Center for Land and Water Law, oversees the JD/MA Environment and Natural Resources Program, and is Adjunct Faculty with the School of Energy Resources. In Spring 2026, she was awarded promotion to Full Professor, effective for the 2026–27 academic year.

Stoellinger's scholarship during the 2025–26 academic year resulted in publications addressing wildlife conservation and species governance, public lands and state trust lands, and energy law. Her article *State Trust Lands Revenue Diversification Through Conservation* received Environmental Law and Policy Annual Review Honorable Mention recognition as one of the nation's top environmental law articles of 2025. Additional publications included a CJ Box Symposium article on grizzly bear delisting in the *Wyoming Law Review*, and articles in *Environmental Law Reporter*, *Wildlife Biology*, *Wildlife Society Bulletin*, *Frontiers in Conservation*

Science, and the *Arizona Journal of Environmental Law & Policy*, as well as invited essays in *Natural Resources & Environment* and *Western Confluence*.

The 2025–26 academic year was also marked by significant leadership in convening scholarly and professional discussions on natural resource governance. In October 2025, Stoellinger served as lead organizer and master of ceremonies for the 2025 Gina Guy Center Landscape Discussion on Energy Law and Policy in the Rockies, a signature conference series she has led for more than a decade that brings together national leaders from government, industry, academia, and conservation organizations to discuss emerging issues in energy law and policy. She also served as lead organizer of *Managing Wildlife in Large Landscapes*, an international conference convened by the Haub School in collaboration with Yellowstone and Grand Teton National Parks. The conference brought experts from some of the world's most iconic landscapes to the GYE to explore shared challenges and solutions in wildlife conservation and ecosystem-scale management.

Stoellinger's service and leadership contributions extended across both the Haub School and the University of Wyoming. As Associate Dean, she helped guide academic and strategic initiatives and supported the continued growth of the Haub School's online graduate programs. At the university level, she served as Chair of the University of Wyoming Graduate Council, helping shape graduate education policy and governance. As Co-Director of the Gina Guy Center for Land and Water Law, she expanded student fellowship opportunities, secured continued operational support, and fostered collaborative research and policy initiatives. She also secured significant external funding to support wildlife policy research, state trust land conservation initiatives, and the internationally recognized *Managing Wildlife in Large Landscapes* conference.

Her national professional service also continued to expand. During the year, she served as Chair of the Public Lands and Indian Law Section of the Foundation for Natural Resources and Energy Law Annual Institute, planning committee member for the American Bar Association Section of Environment, Energy, and Resources (SEER) Spring Conference, Co-Chair of the ABA SEER Biodiversity Committee, and member of the Editorial Board for *Natural Resources & Environment*. Building on the success of the *Managing Wildlife in Large Landscapes* conference, she is serving as Lead Issue Editor for a special Yellowstone-focused edition of *Natural Resources & Environment*. She also completed her elected term as Trustee-at-Large for the Foundation for Natural Resources and Energy Law and continued serving as a Senior Fellow with the Property and Environment Research Center.

Together, these accomplishments reflect a year of significant institutional leadership, scholarly productivity, national professional service, and public engagement, while advancing the University of Wyoming's reputation as a leading center natural resources law and policy.

Dr. Cynthia Weinig, (Ph.D. Evolutionary Biology, Indiana University)
Wyoming Excellence Chair in Botany

Dr. Weinig is a Professor in the Department of Botany and in the Program in Ecology. Her research focuses on plant evolutionary genetics, that is, the genetic underpinnings of plant performance in natural or agricultural settings. In the past year, Dr. Weinig's research funded by the WY Excellence Chair focused on the interaction between plants and microbes. This research was applied specifically to microbes that interact with crops grown in controlled environment agriculture (CEA) settings, seeking to characterize all entry points of microbes into these environments and manipulate microbes to improve both crop growth and nutritional quality. Dr. Weinig has a continuing \$6M NSF award in collaboration with researchers in MN and SD that tests how microbes may

promote growth of Brassica plants in CEA; Brassicas include many crops familiar from the grocery store, such as broccoli, cabbage, canola oil and others. Dr. Weinig also received a WY ART (Accelerating Research Translation) award, and is collaborating with Dr. John Oakey in Engineering to produce growth substrates that stabilize beneficial microbes around plant roots. Dr. Weinig currently has two pending proposals at the Department of Energy and the National Science Foundation.

By way of background: When growing in agricultural or natural field settings, plants interact with complex microbial communities. As many as ten billion microbial organisms are present in each gm of soil, meaning that soil in the immediate proximity of plant roots harbors abundant microbial life and is the site of continuous host plant-microbe interactions. Not only are microbes highly abundant in soil, but also their communities are exceptionally diverse, with a gram of soil including thousands to tens of thousands of microbial species. As a consequence of this taxonomic diversity and associated differences in their functions, microbes can have pronounced negative or positive effects on the growth of plants with which they interact. Her research seeks to identify both the plant traits that may attract beneficial microbes as well as the plant growth responses to the presence of microbes. Notably, her research aligns with the growing state investment in CEA and activities in the Plant Growth and Phenotyping Facility.

Dr. Weinig's lab hosted several UG and graduate researchers in the past. Further, plant-microbe research was used to illustrate multiple concepts in a large-enrollment undergraduate class, Genetics (LIFE 3050), that she teaches; direct application such as these are known to enhance student engagement, learning outcomes, and retention. Dr. Weinig also teaches an upper-division course in Plant-Microbe Interactions. Lab members published four peer-reviewed papers in the past year on plant-microbe interactions in top-tier subject area journals, and past students have entered jobs at CEA firms, West Inc, and Biotech firms as well as the federal agencies and academia.

OTHER DISCIPLINES IMPORTANT TO THE STATE AND REGION AND ITS HISTORY AND CULTURE: BUSINESS, ARTS & HUMANITIES, MATHEMATICS, CULTURAL STUDIES, ECONOMICS, LAW

Dr. Heidi J. Albers, (Ph.D. Economics, University of California at Berkeley)
Wyoming Excellence Chair in Economics

In the 2025-2026 academic year, Dr. Albers taught her core PhD course in Natural Resource Economics and her advanced undergraduate course in Environmental Economics. At the undergraduate level, her teaching benefits students by giving them strong decision analytic tools that empower them to make well-developed arguments for their positions, improve their decision-making, and help them achieve employment success through technical skill development. In addition, Albers provided support to several current undergraduate students and recent graduates as they pursued the job market and graduate school, including several who are now entering graduate programs at UW. At the graduate level, Albers' course covers analytical, optimization, spatial analysis, and numerical methods for nonrenewable and renewable resource economic analysis; uses multiple writing assignments to foster communication, reasoning, and insight development; and includes opportunities for students to develop the skills necessary to become high quality researchers on pressing resource issues. To further foster students' educational growth, Dr. Albers used her Excellence funding for graduate students and recent graduates to pursue various experiences including fieldwork in India, summer research, conference presentation experience, and publishing, which provides students with important learning/networking, develops marketable skills, and deepens understanding of tools and issues. The funding enriches the students' educational programs by enabling them to

explore topics and develop skills differently than classroom work and by providing experience with analytical tools that employers value. Through these experiences, students become stronger contributors to Wyoming's economy and resource management debates.

In 2025-2026, Albers advised 2 PhD students, participated on several students' committees, and mentored many current and former students as they navigate their careers including helping a former graduate student get her work accepted to a prestigious journal. Albers also served as a mentor to students and junior faculty on campus and worldwide, as through her work with women in economics through the Environment for Development Initiative's WinEED and the ASSA's CSWEP, her role at Lulea, her role as an AERE Scholars Mentor, and engagement with AERE's workshop on mentorship. Albers is also a member of UW's Africa Cohort, which acts to bring faculty and students from across campus together to build an on-campus network of Africa specialists for research, advising, and teaching and to develop community.

Dr. Albers maintains an internationally-respected research agenda based around determining biodiversity conservation and resource management strategies that integrate socio-economic, ecological, and institutional characteristics of the setting. That reputation led to her designation as a non-resident visiting professor at the Grantham Institute of the London School of Economics. Her current projects include bioeconomic and policy-focused projects on marine economic development through aquaculture, pollinators and pest-control services to agriculture, migratory species conservation policy, reserve siting with consideration of people's threats, and cultural and environment conservation through women's livelihoods. In 2025-26, she gave 4 research presentations, with 3 in international settings. Her contributions to the economics, policy, and interdisciplinary literatures through editorial roles (at the *Environmental and Resource Economics*, *Ambio: A Journal of the Human Environment*, *Conservation Biology*, and *Environment and Development Economics*) enable Albers to lead research in important directions and to raise the visibility of UW's research and programs. Dr. Albers had accepted or published 6 peer-reviewed or refereed papers, including several invited articles that reflect her senior status in the areas of spatial resource economics, REDD+, and protected area design for biodiversity conservation. In 2025-26, Albers was able to use Excellence funds to conduct fieldwork in Australia and Tanzania, while supporting a student's ongoing work in India.

Julie Hill, (J.D. Brigham Young University)
Wyoming Excellence Chair in Law

Julie Hill joined the University of Wyoming College of Law as Dean and Wyoming Excellence Chair in June 2024. She was previously Vice Dean and the Alton C. and Cecile Cunningham Craig Professor of Law at the University of Alabama School of Law. As a nationally recognized expert in banking and commercial law, Dean Hill has written more than two dozen articles focusing on the unwritten rules of banking regulation.

Dean Hill's latest scholarly article, *Governmental Debanking*, will be published by the TEXAS A&M LAW REVIEW in 2026. The article examines why there are persistent claims that government regulators pressure banks to restrict banking access to lawful businesses. This year, Dean Hill presented her scholarly work at the University of Georgia, the University of North Carolina, the University of Alabama, and the University of Houston. In December 2025, Dean Hill also testified about debanking before the Subcommittee on Financial Institutions and Consumer Protection of the Senate Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs Committee.

This year, two of Dean Hill's earlier articles influenced proposed changes to banking regulations. First, her article *Regulating Bank Reputation Risk* published in the GEORGE LAW REVIEW, was cited by FDIC Chairman Travis

Hill when he announced the FDIC's proposed rule to eliminate the practice of considering reputation risk. Second, her article, *When Bank Examiners Get It Wrong: Financial Institution Appeals of Material Supervisory Determinations* (WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY LAW REVIEW), was cited by the Office of the Comptroller of the Currency when it proposed new rules for bank appeals of examination ratings.

The impact of Dean Hill's scholarship is also felt in Wyoming. She was instrumental in facilitating U.S. Comptroller of the Currency Jonathan Gould's visit to the University of Wyoming this spring. That event was attended by bankers and policymakers from around the State. She has provided banking commentary to American Banker, NPR Marketplace, Bloomberg Law, Cowboy State Daily, and other news outlets.

Dr. David Finnoff, (Ph.D. Economics, University of Wyoming)
Wyoming Excellence Chair in Economics

Dr. Finnoff returned to his alma mater 21 years ago, in 2021 was honored to be named a Wyoming Excellence Chair and McMurry Fellow, and in 2025 elected to be the Director of Graduate Studies for the Department of Economics.

Finnoff taught a course for graduate students in Spring 2025, the core graduate class "Dynamic Optimization." The class introduces new tools (theory and computational) that graduate students might direct at their own research questions, where Finnoff worked to try to increase the relevance of the material to potential research areas for the students across natural resource economics, energy economics, health economics and economic growth. Finnoff also chaired or co-chaired the Ph.D. committees for several PhD students, advises numerous recent graduates to help them with their research program and serves on the committees of several Ph.D. and MS candidates.

During the Fall of 2025 Finnoff was scheduled to teach a 4000/5000 level mathematical microeconomics class which did not draw enough students to be offered. The class was canceled as the semester was about to start, when the Department Chair asked if Finnoff might help the department and teach a new prep of ECON 1000 Global Economic Issues that Professor Alexander was scheduled to teach and could not with administrative duties. Finnoff accepted the challenge and taught the new prep with a week or so of preparation.

Finnoff integrated the use of AI and R to provide these freshmen a working knowledge of gathering data, presenting it in a useful fashion, and interpreting it. Not one of the students had any experience in R and by the end were very useful with this industry standard statistical package. Furthermore, with integrating R and the use of AI to help the students get a working knowledge of the tool, the concepts being taught hopefully were brought home in a useful way. While the development of the course and integrating AI and R into a freshmen level introduction was intensive, the students were impressive in their approach to the class, appeared to get a tremendous amount out of the course, and it is hoped they take more economics or business classes in the future.

Finnoff's research program continued to focus on developing public policies to improve social welfare, taking into account the coupling between human and natural systems. His research seeks to understand (1) how coupled human and natural systems co-evolve over time and space in the presence of uncertainty and market failure, and (2) how economics can use information about the coupling between human and natural systems to construct public policies in the face of uncertainty that can correct market failures and move society towards more sustainable outcomes.

Finnoff's work as a Principle Investigator (with other COB colleagues) was successful in generating a proposal that was awarded a \$1 million grant from the National Science Foundation (RAISE:IHBEM Understanding and predicting behavioral responses to infectious disease risks and control policies: Implications for epidemiological models and policy design). This grant finished in 2025 and received a no cost extension for this year. In 2025 it supported a graduate student with a fully funded research assistantship (Salvatore Speda) and provided summer funding for Finnoff and professors Cherry, Newbold and Thunstrom (as well as supporting a post-doc in Sweden, and some summer support for a faculty member here in Psychology, and collaborators at Dennison and George Mason University). Work in 2025 with Salvatore Speda and Steve Newbold has resulted in the paper nearing submission, "Modelling the Impact of Imperfect Trust and Information on the Spread of Emerging Infectious Diseases".

Finnoff has also been part of a team at UW that won a \$20million NSF-EPSCOR grant for UW (WYACT: Anticipating the climate-water transition and cascading challenges to socio-environmental systems in America's headwaters). This grant paid for half the year of the Research Assistantships of 3 students, Tristin Waggener, Ian Fletcher and Katie Fisher. While both Tristin Waggener and Ian Fletcher are transitioning out of the grant, their research is being continued by Katie Fisher. Work with Ian Fletcher is nearing submission ("Non-autonomous Management of Dam Releases") after extensive revisions following positive yet not positive enough reviews at the top field journal, *Journal of Environmental Economics and Management*. The reviews and feedback at conferences were very useful and helped us identify a very unique aspect of the work.

Finnoff also was also part of another NSF team (as a subcontractor) that was successful in winning a \$18million NSF grant (PIPP Phase II: Analysis and Prediction of Pandemic Expansion (APPEX)). This grant provides some summer support for Finnoff and has provided indirect research opportunities for two of our graduate students, Katherine Barkley and Chandler Hubbard who have used the work to add dissertation chapters to the PhD dissertations.

Finnoff, Todd Cherry and graduate student Katherine Barkely were awarded \$50,000 for research in collaboration with the *National Wildlife Resource Center*. The award is being used to fund the research assistantships of Katherine Barkley and Ian Fletcher. Work with Katherine Barkley has resulted in the paper presented at a conference this year and being polished for submission, "Controlling Adaptive Invasive Species: A Bioeconomic Model of Wild Pigs."

In addition, Finnoff, Todd Cherry and Jacob Hochard submitted a NSF Rapid Grant for the project, "Rapid: Belief Dynamics, Strategic Pricing, Risk Perceptions, And Decentralized Risk Management Under China's One-Year Suspension Of Rare Earth Export Controls," requested funds of \$185,000. The project includes funds to support a graduate student, purchase proprietary datasets, and faculty summer support.

In 2025 Finnoff:

2 papers **published**,

Fletcher, I. C. Hubbard, T. Cherry, J. Hochard and **D. Finnoff**. 2025. Individual Preference Elicitation Transforms 'Social Carrying Capacity' into a Pragmatic Management Tool, accepted for publication, *Nature Communications Earth & Environment*.

Wood, A., C. Mason, and **D. Finnoff**. 2025. "The Development of OPEC: An Evolutionary Game Theory and Agent-Based Modeling Approach", *SN Business and Economics*, 5:79

2 papers **revise and resubmit**,

“Beyond the Bonus: Reuniting and Adapting to Habitat Fragmentation for Species Recovery,” (with Jacob Hochard, Yuanhao Li, and Jason F. Shogren) invited for revision, Strategic Behavior and the Environment.

“Should I Stay or Should I Go? Dynamic Decision Rules that Reflect Rate-of-Return and Stationary Equivalency Tradeoffs” (with Rick Horan) invited for revision, American Journal of Agricultural Economics.

2 papers **submitted**,

“Environmental Change, Regime Shifts and Disaster Declarations in Salmon Fisheries” (with K. Berry, J. Ohlberger, T. Schwoerer, and E.J. Ward) submitted for review, Environmental and Resource Economics.

“Natural Wealth Tracking Reveals Climate Damages Obscured by Institutional Responses” (with R. Bawa, D. Bennett, W. Yan Siu, B. Kirkland, and J. Hochard) submitted for review, Natural Resource Modelling.

5 papers **nearing submission**,

“The New American Stake From Regulator to Shareholder and Why the U.S. Should Build a Sovereign Security Fund” (with Jacob Hochard, Caden Bogus, Paul Bonifas, Tyler Brown, Todd Cherry, Joe Evers, Scott Quillinan, Charles Sims, Phillip Treick), being prepared for submission.

“Non-autonomous Management of Dam Releases,” (with Ian Fletcher), being prepared for submission.

“Gauging conservation support for grizzly bears using choice experiments” (with Aaron J. Enriquez and Stephen C. Newbold) being prepared for submission.

“Controlling Adaptive Invasive Species: A Bioeconomic Model of Wild Pigs” (with Katherine Barkley, Kalyn Coatney, and Seong Yun) being prepared for submission.

“Modelling the Impact of Imperfect Trust and Information on the Spread of Emerging Infectious Diseases” (with Salvatore Spada, and Stephen C. Newbold) being prepared for submission.

3 **conference presentations**,

“Dynamic Adjustments of Jackson Lake Dam Releases in Response to Climate Change” Association of Environment and Resource Economists 2025 Summer Conference, Albuquerque New Mexico, May 2025.

“Dynamic Adjustments of Jackson Lake Dam Releases in Response to Climate Change” XXVI ANNUAL BIOECON CONFERENCE ON “Integrating Biodiversity Conservation and Climate Change Solutions” St. John’s College, Cambridge, The University of Cambridge, UK, September 2025.

“Evasive, Invasive, and Adaptive: A Bioeconomic Model of Wild Pigs with Varying Adaption” (presented by Katherine Barkley) Southern Economic Association, 95th Annual Conference, Tampa Bay Florida, November 2025.

Supported 5 graduate students with grant funded research assistantships (full year Katherine Barkley & Salvatore Spada, ½ year (including summer) Tristin Waggener & Ian Fletcher, summer Manab Prakash).

Was **invited** to be the Keynote Speaker at Kemmerer High School Career Fair, Kemmerer WY, November 2026; and was an **invited** participant to all 4 sessions of the Wyoming Resource Policy Forum at the UCROSS Foundation, Buffalo, WY, June 2026. **Elected** to be Director of Graduate Studies for the Department of Economics.

Finnoff has served on many department, college and university committees. This year, Finnoff served on the University Graduate Council, the College of Business Tenure and Promotion Committee & the College Curriculum Committee, and the Department of Economics Comprehensive Exam Committee & Economics graduate admissions committee & Economics graduate curriculum committee. Finnoff also has professional service commitments, serving as a Co-Editor (Environmental and Resource Economics) and Associate Editor (Frontiers in Ecology and the Environment) for prominent journals in the profession as well as serving as a regular review for numerous journals in and out of the economics discipline.

Dr. Jeffrey G. Covin, (Ph.D. Organizational Studies & Strategic Planning, University of Pittsburgh)
Wyoming Excellence Chair in Business

During the 2025-2026 academic year, Professor Covin contributed to the mission of the University of Wyoming in teaching, research, and service capacities. Regarding his teaching activities, Professor Covin taught a doctoral seminar entitled “Research Design Skills.” He also taught a master’s-level course entitled “Strategic Management of Technology and Innovation.” The former is a required course in the Management and Marketing Department’s doctoral program, and the latter is a required course within the Venture MBA program. Both courses were well received by Professor Covin’s students, as indicated by his high scores on the “teacher effectiveness” course evaluation item. Regarding research, Professor Covin published seven refereed journal articles on topics pertaining to entrepreneurship and strategic management. He also had papers accepted for presentation at several internationally recognized conferences. Professor Covin was a recipient again this past year of the University of Wyoming, College of Business “Belt Buckle Award” for Outstanding Research. Within his domain of scholarship (the “Business and Management” area), Professor Covin is rated by Research.com as a top 100 scholar in the United States and a top 200 scholar in the world (<https://research.com/scientists-rankings/business-and-management?page=2>). Regarding his service activities, Professor Covin is currently serving as the chair or a member of six dissertation committees. During the 2025-2026 academic year, he also chaired a faculty recruiting committee and served as a member of the College of Business Policy and Curriculum Committee. He engaged in extensive professional service activities, such as being a member of the Awards Commission for the *United States Association for Small Business and Entrepreneurship (USASBE)* and an editorial board member for several of the top journals in his field of scholarship.

Wyoming Excellence in Higher Education Endowment Fiscal Summary

The costs associated with each position include salaries commensurate with the market for top academics, employer paid benefits, ongoing budgets to support research and instructional activities, as well as one-time start-up expenses which are especially critical to recruiting distinguished scholars with large established laboratory research programs.

The balance in the Excellence in Higher Education Endowment expenditure account held at the university as of June 30, 2025, was over \$4 million. Total expenditures for the 2026 fiscal year were currently budgeted at nearly \$5 million. The planning budget was designed to maintain an adequate cash balance to cover on-going expenses for an acceptable period, in the event of diminished revenue.

The following table summarizes the uses and expenditures of the budgets for filled positions, and the total estimated cost of the program when all allocated positions are filled.

Balance July 1, 2025	\$4,038,761
Tuition Scholarships	\$ 20,518
Salaries, Wages & Benefits	\$3,942,842
Services, Travel & Supplies	\$ 432,432
Internal Allocations	\$ 76,070
Total Expenses	\$4,481,663*
Income (distribution from state and interest)	\$4,184,320
Balance June 30, 2026	\$3,751,621

*Expenses to date (June 30, 2026). Due to UW Year-End processes, full accounting for FY2026 is not complete.

Planning for FY2027

Planning for the FY2027 budget is based on anticipated annual projected income as per State Spending Policy for FY26 (WS 9-4-719). The table below includes the estimated annual budget for the permanently funded positions.

<i>Estimated FY26 Spending Policy Amount for UW*</i>	\$4,422,000
Income FY26 90% per W.S. 21-16-1201(c)	\$3,800,000
Salaries and Benefits (for Chairs and GAs)	\$5,129,715
Services, Travel and Supplies	\$ 564,084
Internal Allocations, Other Exp., Subcontracts	\$ 140,070
Total Expenses	\$5,973,879

** The FY 2027 Spending Policy Amount was not available prior to the due date of this report; therefore, an estimate based on the FY 2026 Spending Policy Amount was used.*

Part B. Legislatively identified faculty positions

1. School of Energy Resources (SER) faculty

The Wyoming Legislature established and appropriated initial funding for the School of Energy Resources (SER) in 2006. The plan for SER stipulated the hiring of up to twelve (12) distinguished faculty who were to be co-appointed in departments across campus. Professors in the SER are internationally recognized energy experts who are actively involved in both energy research and teaching. They work in a variety of disciplines and have formed productive collaborations across campus. The current SER professors include:

Dr. Jennifer Bell, (Ph.D. Soil Science, University of Saskatchewan)
SER Professor of Soil Science and Reclamation

Dr. Bell, along with masters student Lauren Sielski and research associate Resham Thapa, have investigated the long term effects of coal char as a soil amendment. The char was applied five years ago. This far we have found that the long term effects of the char appear to be highly variable by site with one site having decreased soil carbon and another having increased soil carbon relative to the control. Similarly the effect of the char on soil water

holding capacity and pH are mixed. Sielski is currently working on sequencing the soil microbial communities to see what is impact the char has on the community composition and diversity of soil microbial communities.

Dr. Po Chen, (Ph.D. Geological Sciences, University of Southern California)
SER Associate Professor of Geology and Geophysics

In the past year, Dr. Chen, together with his group, made substantial progress in three different directions of research. His work in applying AI to well-log analysis and reservoir characterization has led to a publication in the peer-reviewed journal “Petrophysics”. Mr. Benard Oppong, who is the leading author of the article and Dr. Chen’s graduate student, successfully defended his MS thesis with flying colors. Dr. Chen and his student, Ms. Elham Shokrgozar-Yatimdar, made significant contributions in applying AI to improve earthquake hazard analysis and their work was published in the peer-reviewed journal “Geophysical Journal International”. Dr. Chen continued his work in full-3D seismic waveform tomography and its applications, which led to 3 publications in peer-reviewed journals. Together with the Technology Transfer Office at the University of Wyoming, he has been working diligently to commercialize this technology so that it will benefit both the university and the public in general. In the past year, Dr. Chen taught 3 courses in computational geosciences, machine learning and capstone to both graduate and undergraduate students. He is currently advising one PhD candidate.

Dr. Timothy Considine, (Ph.D. Natural Resources Economics, Cornell University)
SER Professor of Economics and Finance

During academic year 2025-2026, Dr. Considine taught three undergraduate courses: two sections of in Oil: History, Culture, and Power and Energy Markets and Policy. He completed a study that appeared in a top-tier, peer-reviewed journal on the effect of temperature on energy demand and the role of adaptation. This research is important for Wyoming’s fossil fuel industries because the paper finds that adaption reduces the need to enact stringent emission control policies. He also completed a paper on an integrated policy forecasting model of oil and gas drilling and production model of the Mowry Shale in Wyoming with Maryam Lakjaa from the School of Energy Resources. He also estimated models of oil and gas investment and production to determine if land ownership matters and to estimate the economics of royalty relief and regulatory reform of federal land management. He is also completing a study of the economic impacts of set-back requirements for oil and gas drilling.

Dr. Craig Douglas, (Ph.D. Computer Science, Yale University)
SER Professor of Mathematics

Dr. Douglas is an internationally recognized expert in computational sciences who leads a research group that creates sophisticated mathematical models of physical phenomena using networks of remote sensors and high-performance parallel computers. He had a long-term collaboration with AirLoom, LLC, a renewable energy company located in Laramie until the company reorganized in early 2025. Two of his current or former Ph.D. students have worked there, including one full-time, who is still there. He has published a research paper with AirLoom staff on optimization techniques relevant to wind energy design development. Dr. Douglas also has a project on dual porosity models relevant to both the fracking industry and aquifer modeling. An open source two and three-dimensional high-performance code has been released that runs efficiently on one to thousands of processors. Another project involves the Wyoming Department of Transportation to create a machine learning model for predicting when Interstate 80 should be closed and re-opened. It currently works well with historical data. We are working to create a better model using a live data stream. Federal dollars are spent in state and the

results enhance UW's reputation through high visibility internationally. One of his projects has created the first 100 Gigabit/second computer network in Wyoming, which enhances Wyoming's ability to attract large data centers to the state. He has taught a first-year seminar course on Energy, the Environment, and Economics, that covers all aspects and forms of energy from the viewpoints of Wyoming and globally. Dr. Douglas is also an adjunct professor in the School of Computing where he concentrates on providing new opportunities for Wyoming residents for careers in data sciences and machine learning.

Dr. Maohong Fan, (Ph.D. Mechanical Engineering, Iowa State University)

SER Professor of Chemical and Biomedical Engineering and Carrell Family Energy and Petroleum Professorship in the College of Engineering and Physical Sciences

His research last year focused on carbon resource recovery and valorization (e.g., CO₂ to methanol), fossil resource utilization, carbon materials, including carbon nanofibers and carbon quantum dots, and extraction and purification of critical materials (e.g., lithium and rare earth elements or REEs) with different methods, including membrane and sorbents. As a PI, Co-PI, or a major senior personnel member, he led multiple DOE and NSF projects over the last year in the areas of material synthesis, energy production, and waste valorization. His team has made good progress in separating critical materials from waste streams. The research results have been published in journals, such as Chemical Engineering Journals, or filed for patent applications. His multiple patents were licensed to industry, which will benefit Wyoming businesses and residents because the technologies in those patents are closely related to the development of Wyoming's resources, e.g., coal, oil, and natural gas. The technologies developed by his group can be used to advance Wyoming's manufacturing industries, including those for chemical and energy production, material synthesis, and environmental protection. Also, the knowledge derived from the technologies his group has developed has been disseminated to UW faculty and students, as well as to scientific communities in Wyoming, through conferences and meetings. The students trained through the projects and course work are valuable human resources for Wyoming and will help develop the State's economy across various fields, e.g., education, research, and manufacturing. Moreover, he has supported faculty members at UW and other universities and DOE labs by collaborating with them to develop new technologies in energy and materials research that are not only beneficial to Wyoming but also to the U.S. Specifically, the projects he has been leading have involved faculty members from the Departments of Physics and Astronomy, Mathematics and Statistics, Mechanical Engineering, Civil Engineering, and the Haub School of Environment and Natural Resources at UW, as well as many team members from other universities and companies, and national labs.

Dr. Dario Grana, (Ph.D. Geophysics, Stanford University)

SER Professor of Geology and Geophysics and Wyoming Excellence Chair (See WY Excellence Endowment Report)

Dr. John Kaszuba, (Ph.D. Geochemistry, Colorado School of Mines)

SER Professor of Geology and Geophysics and John and Jane Wold Chair of Energy

Dr. John Kaszuba, (Ph.D. Colorado School of Mines), School of Energy Resources (SER) Professor of Geology and Geophysics. Professor Kaszuba has over 27 years of experience researching geochemical interactions between fluids and rocks. His research group of five graduate students, two undergraduate students, and two postdoctoral researchers presently focus on unconventional oil and gas reservoirs, carbon storage, geologic hydrogen, and rare earth elements/critical minerals in Wyoming. His former students have successful careers in industry (e.g., Chesapeake Energy Corporation, ExxonMobil, Wyoming Whiskey) and government (Pacific Northwest National Laboratory). His research is funded by several extramural resources, including a Joint

Industry Project with ConocoPhillips Company. He teaches courses in the Department of Geology and Geophysics and SER. He serves on numerous committees, including graduate student committees as well as SER and University committees, and is a member of the Wyoming State Geological Survey Advisory Board. Professor Kaszuba is the John and Jane Wold Centennial Chair in Energy and a Nielson Faculty Fellow.

Dr. Subhashis Mallick, (Ph.D. Geology and Geophysics, University of Hawaii)
SER Professor of Geology and Geophysics

Dr. Mallick specializes in the fields of full waveform seismic inversion, seismic modeling, and the use of artificial intelligence to solve seismic inverse problems. The full waveform inversion and anisotropic seismic modeling Software, developed by Dr. Mallick is being used by many companies in the oil and gas industry.

In FY2026 Dr. Mallick received a collaborative seed grant of \$24,791 from the College of Engineering and Physical Sciences on a research proposal “On the characterization of enhanced geothermal reservoirs for long-term sustainability”. In collaboration with Morteza Dejam (Petroleum Engineering) and Joe Biasi (Geology and Geophysics), he submitted a DOE grant proposal “On the feasibility of critical mineral extraction in combination with carbon sequestration and geothermal energy production” for an amount of \$2,508,274. In addition, he also collaborated with Oklahoma State University and submitted another DOE grant proposal “AI-Enabled Characterization and Control of Subsurface Fractures in a Deep Fractured Granite Reservoir, Osage County, Oklahoma”, in which the funds requested for University of Wyoming is \$99,213. Both DOE grant proposals are still under review. He published two papers in peer-reviewed journals and presented one paper at the IMAGE international conference. As for teaching, Dr. Mallick taught two classes in FY2026, (1) Principles of Geophysics (2) Geophysical Optimization Theory. The first class was primarily meant for senior undergraduate students and one of the required classes in the Department of Geology and Geophysics. The second class was taught to the graduate students and was based on the textbook “Computation, Optimization, and Machine Learning in Seismology” that Dr. Mallick published in 2025.

Dr. Randall Violett, (Ph.D. Agronomy, University of Wyoming)
SER Professor of Environment & Natural Resources

The RMAL program has reached many milestones this past year. The primary one was developing two new RMAL courses and a Leadership Certificate. Currently there are 26 students enrolled in the degree program with 85% of them from out of state. These out-of-state students are coming to UW for this degree program and would have gone elsewhere if the program was not offered. We have garnered a great deal of support from the agriculture industry as well as the state legislature and governor’s office. It is exciting to see the program grow and become sustainable for a long and prosperous future. The Wyoming Innovation Partnership (WIP) funding will close out on June 30, 2026, and the primary source of funding for the program will come from the donor endowments.

Tara Righetti, (J.D. Law, University of Colorado Boulder)
SER Professor of Law and Occidental Petroleum Corporation Chair in Energy and Environmental Policies

Tara Righetti is faculty in the College of Law, the Haub School of Environment and Natural Resources, and the School of Energy Resources. She holds the Occidental Petroleum Chair in Energy and Environmental Policies and co-directs the Nuclear Energy Research Center (NERC) at the School of Energy Resources. Professor Righetti's teaching, research, and outreach activities continue to positively support efforts to advance energy-driven economic development in the state of Wyoming.

Professor Righetti teaches energy law classes in the College of Law and the School of Energy Resources. In the Fall of 2025 Professor Righetti offered two sections of oil and gas law and two sections of a seminar on climate law, both at the undergraduate and graduate level. During the 2025-2026 academic year, she also served as an external member on one M.A. and one Ph.D. Committee.

Professor Righetti's research relates to property and administrative law issues associated with energy development and decarbonization. During the 2025-2026 academic year, Professor Righetti published articles with the Oklahoma Oil, Gas, Natural Resources, and Energy Law Journal, the Columbia Journal of Environmental Law, the Tulane Environmental Law Journal, and the Ohio State University Law Journal. During the academic year Professor Righetti was invited to present her research to numerous academic, industry, and government groups including the Western Governors' Association, the Coleman P. Burke Center at Case Western Reserve University, the U.S. Energy Association, and the Berkeley-Penn Energy Scholars Workshop at U.C. Berkeley. Together with partners on campus and internationally, Professor Righetti also convened two significant events at UW, the Subsurface Futures Colloquium and the Emerging Issues Forum on Nuclear Energy.

Part C. Privately Endowed Faculty Positions

In the 2025-26 Academic Year more than eighty (80) UW faculty positions are partially or fully supported by privately funded endowments established with gifts to the UW Foundation. In the 2025-26 Academic Year, endowed accounts support twenty-four (24) faculty chair positions, of which three (3) positions were vacant, and fifty-one (51) professorship positions, of which four (4) were vacant during the year. Leadership support includes: three (3) Deanships with a future named Deanships approved in the College of Business. The single Archivist position is located at the American Heritage Center, and single Librarian position is located at Coe Library. A complete list of privately endowed chairs, professorships, and faculty fellowships is available from the UW Foundation. That list describes the history of endowment, the qualifications or purpose, the uses, and the current and past faculty recipients. Some of these endowed positions are not filled at the present time; others fund various faculty from year-to-year.

In all cases, the uses of the endowment earnings are specified in the gift agreements and are reflected in the focus of the teaching, research, and extension/outreach programs of the faculty member beneficiaries.

As discussed in Part A of this report, the funding for some privately endowed positions is bolstered by earnings from the state-funded Excellence in Higher Education Endowment. These public-private partnerships include:

The Thomas and Shelley Botts Endowed Chair in Unconventional Reservoirs in the College of Engineering and Physical Sciences and Alchemy Sciences Petroleum Engineering Chair, held by Dr. Mohammad Piri (College of Engineering and Physical Sciences).

The Curtis and Marian Rochelle Endowed Chair in Animal Science, held by Professor James K. Pru (College of Agriculture, Life Sciences, and Natural Resources).

The individuals who held endowed faculty positions for this reporting period are as follows:

College of Agriculture, Life Sciences & Natural Resources

Dr. Michael Dillon, (Ph.D. Biology, University of Washington)

L. Floyd Clarke Professorship in Zoology and Physiology

Michael E. Dillon (Ph.D., University of Washington), the L. Floyd Clarke Endowed Chair. Dr. Dillon is a Professor in the Department of Zoology and Physiology and in the Program in Ecology and Evolution. His research centers around two core and related questions: How do environments determine whether and where animals persist?, and How do animals respond to environmental challenges? Dr. Dillon published 6 peer-reviewed manuscripts in 2025, has 2 active NSF grants, served as Director of the WyldTech Center for Wildlife, Technology, and Computing which aims to leverage new technologies, big data, and computational advances to understand and conserve Wyoming's wildlife on working and changing landscapes. He gave two invited symposium talks at Entomological Society of America annual meeting in addition to 5 presentations by his research group at international conferences. He graduated 1 PhD student and currently mentors 2 PhD and 1 MS student and a postdoc as well as serving on graduate committees for an additional 9 students at UW (Haub school, Botany, Zoology and Physiology, Chemistry, MCB) and 3 PhD students at other institutions (Alabama, Iowa State, UW Madison). He mentored 5 undergraduate researchers in the lab (including an INBRE transition scholar). As part of a new initiative he is leading, 65 Degrees of Thermal Biology, supported by the L. Floyd Clarke fund, the UW Center for Global Studies, and CALSNR, he gave invited seminars at the University of Sao Paulo (2), Brazil, the University of Buenos Aires, Argentina, and the Universidad Militar de Nueva Granda, Bogotá, Colombia. This initiative aims to build teams of researchers across the Americas (from the northern US to southern Argentina) studying pollinator resilience. He teaches Comparative Environmental Physiology (a core course for our wildlife biologists) and co-teaches a study abroad course, The Art and History of Medicine, providing a global experience for Pre-professional and Honors students. His graduate student leads the “Bee the Scientist” program which has engaged over 150 people at 11 senior centers across 6 counties in Wyoming in pollinator activities. The L. Floyd Clarke fund additionally supported 2 graduate students through research awards. Dr. Dillon is honored to serve as the L. Floyd Clarke Chair and looks forward to expanding its impact in the coming year.

Dr. Daniel Laughlin, (Ph.D. Forest Science, Northern Arizona University)

Louis and Terua Excellence in Botany

Dr. Laughlin is a Professor in the Department of Botany and Program in Ecology and Evolution. He conducts research with significant implications for Wyoming's landscapes, land managers, and natural resource agencies. Supported by over \$1.6 million in active federal grants from the National Science Foundation, the National Park Service, and the USDA Forest Service, Dr. Laughlin leads projects examining western tree species adaptations to drought and fire, sagebrush steppe restoration in Grand Teton National Park, alpine plant community dynamics in the Snowy Range, and the climatic tolerance of native Rocky Mountain plants to guide vegetation restoration across the West. He is involved in a variety of international working groups focused on developing a deeper understanding of the mysterious world of plant roots, the hidden features of plants that have an outsized role in plant functioning and ecosystem resilience. His research on how plant traits can predict the success of restoration efforts gives land managers, conservation practitioners, and federal agencies scientifically grounded strategies for rehabilitating degraded rangelands and forests, a challenge of growing urgency as Wyoming faces increasing pressures from drought, wildfire, and invasive species.

In the classroom, Dr. Laughlin trains the next generation of Wyoming's ecologists and natural resource professionals through courses in Plant Physiological Ecology, Vegetation Ecology, General Ecology, and Ecological Modeling, equipping students with quantitative and field-based skills directly applicable to careers in state and federal land management agencies and conservation organizations. He mentors multiple graduate students whose thesis research focuses on Wyoming ecosystems, producing findings that are being used to improve restoration practices on public lands across the region, including the iconic landscapes in Grand Teton National Park. Through his development of the Global Vegetation Project, a geospatial web application funded by the University of Wyoming and National Science Foundation, Dr. Laughlin created an open-access educational tool that enhances virtual learning opportunities for students and educators around the world. He has published over 150 peer-reviewed papers and published two books on plant ecological adaptations and community assembly. His contributions to ecology recently culminated in being elected to a lifetime appointment as a Fellow of the Ecological Society of America.

Dr. Donna Harris, (Ph.D. Plant Breeding, Genetics, & Genomics, University of Georgia)
E.A. Whitney Professorship in Agriculture

The Harris lab currently focuses on several main areas related to plant selection and improvement. Drought is considered to be one of the major limitations of crop yield. Through climate change, drought is becoming more frequent, intensive and erratic in many regions of the USA and the world. From the producer's perspective, yield stability is the ultimate measure of success when dealing with abiotic stress variability. One trait, slow wilting, has been shown to translate into enhanced yield stability rather than simply to increase survivability under drought conditions in several legume species. With this in mind, the lab is in the process of identifying germplasm and the underlying genomic loci that control traits shown to enhance yield stability under drought conditions. In one project funded by the USDA – Pulse Crop Health Initiative, we have been evaluating 100+ field pea accessions at Powell, Wyoming for yield stability and numerous phenological traits under adequate irrigation and deficit irrigation. Two greenhouse experiments were also conducted in Sheridan with a subset of these lines, and a two-year dryland experiment was conducted in 2024 and 2025 at our rainfed farm in WYarno, WY (a few miles outside of Sheridan). A recent genome wide association study (GWAS) from this work was presented at the National Association of Plant Breeders (NAPB) meeting in May of 2025. (PhD candidate, Grace Vinarao is working on this project). Additionally, in collaboration with a University of Georgia researcher and plant breeder, Dr. Zenglu Li, the Harris lab has completed three years of drought tolerance trials with soybean at our rainfed farm where they have been able to identify canopy wilting quantitative trait loci (QTLs) and evaluate remote sensing for selecting drought-tolerant soybean. Currently, PhD student, Clement Nyam is doing some comparative transcriptomic work where he is exploring gene expression of soybean under drought stress from this collaboration with UGA. Clement presented this work at the NAPB meeting in May. Additionally, an M.S. student that graduated this summer, Bhawna Lalit, has evaluated the Durango diversity panel of dry beans for drought tolerance under water deficit conditions, and PhD student, Dipanjoli Dola is evaluating chickpea in a similar manner. Both Bhawna and Dipanjoli presented their work at NAPB as well.

Through funding from the Wyoming Bean Commission, Dr. Harris breeds for dry bean cultivars that are high yielding, upright, early maturing, and adapted to Wyoming. These are the traits that dry bean producers in the state have identified as important to them. The eventual goal of this project is to release varieties adapted to Wyoming that are high yielding, upright, and mature within a range of 75 to 80 dap. This would allow bean producers to harvest in late August (before a frost) or alternatively, in years where dry bean producers in WY cannot plant on time due to weather, they will still have time to mature the crop. The lab is also evaluating dry bean genotypes at Powell and Sheridan Wyoming for canopy temperature (using a thermal drone) and yield with

the purpose of determining whether canopy temperature can be used as a fast and reliable method of determining the potential yield of varieties prior to harvest. PhD students Price Akiina and Clement Nyam are involved in this project.

The Harris lab is also working on native plant improvement and alternative forage options for farmers and ranchers in Wyoming. At present, Wyoming contains the largest intact extent of sagebrush steppe in the USA and is home to nearly 40% of the remaining sage grouse. However, sagebrush grassland ecosystems are experiencing dramatic declines largely driven by annual grass invasion, conifer encroachment, and human modification. Much of the region that had characteristics of core sagebrush integrity in the early 2000s has converted to ‘growth opportunity areas’— areas that are prime opportunities to enhance vegetation back to a higher sagebrush ecological integrity. Increasing diversity and productivity of rangeland systems could provide great benefits to the region’s economy and ecology. In collaboration with Dr. Brian Meador, and with funding support from the Bureau of Land Management and EOG Resources, Inc. (EOG funding was matched by the University of Wyoming School of Energy Resources), Dr. Harris is selecting and improving native plant materials for reclamation of disturbed rangelands and wildlife habitat improvement. A field trial was established in 2023 at Wynona, WY. In addition, that lab has looked at the genetic diversity and population structure of prairie junegrass (*Koeleria macrantha*) across sixteen level III U.S. ecoregions using genotyping-by-sequencing and are currently working on a similar study for Wyoming big sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata* ssp. *wyomingensis*). The prairie junegrass work has been presented at the NAPB meeting and at the National Native Seed Conference in 2025 (Ph.D candidate Grace Vinarao, M.S. student Heidi Schueler, PhD student Clement Nyam, and post doc Ilyas Ahmad are involved in these research projects). Success of the project will primarily be determined by increased success in the use of native plant materials to restore structure and function to degraded rangelands and hard to reclaim sites

Additionally, over three hundred alfalfa accessions from the USDA germplasm bank were planted in Sheridan in 2023 in a replicated plot trial to screen for tolerance to the alfalfa weevil, a trait that producers in the region have requested (M.S. student Heidi Schueler is working on this project). Dr. Randa Jabbour from our department is collaborating with us on this project. Heidi recently presented our preliminary data from this work at the NAPB conference.

Through a research agreement with the Whitetail Institute of North America, Dr. Harris has started to work on breeding for ladino clover. They are in need of a ladino clover variety that can produce higher seed yields while maintaining forage quality. Eventually, promising lines will be tested not only in Wyoming but also at Whitetail Institute sites in Alabama, Tennessee, Pennsylvania, and Ohio.

Another research project that the lab is focused on is the use of a combination of aero-ground penetrating radar (GPR) and a multispectral and thermal drone to predict the non-destructive yield of sugar beets. The aero-GPR consists of a large drone with a mounted GPR system that flies at low altitudes over the target area. This technology could significantly increase the ease of monitoring below-ground plant parts during the growing season in a non-destructive manner. Plant breeders and other plant scientists could use a device such as this in the seed industry to help predict the yield of crops harvested for their underground parts. In addition, we are collecting other above-ground traits with the additional two drones to see what combination of traits best aid in yield prediction accuracy and if any of our drone data collected correlates with sugar content. Dr. Dirk Hays and his team from Texas A&M University are collaborators on the software side of this project. PhD student Price Akiina is working on this project and presented it at the Bayer Crop Science “Bring Them In” conference in St. Louis where he was recently invited, and at the NAPB conference.

Dr. Harris also continues to teach Plant Breeding PLNT 4520 and LIFE 3050 Genetics in spring semesters and in the fall, I teach PLNT 4050/5050 Plant Biotechnology.

Publications from 2025 and 2026:

- Aina, A and D.K. Harris. 2026. Mungbeans: a climate-resilient crop for diversifying Wyoming cropping systems. *Front. Sustain. Food Syst.* 10:1816076. doi: 10.3389/fsufs.2026.1816076
- Burner, N., D.K. Harris, C.K. Nyam, I. Ahmad, N. Lee, J.H. Suh, B. Fallen, and Z. Li. 2026. Drought tolerance in soybean: genetics, metabolomics, remote sensing, and breeding for enhanced drought tolerance. *Front. Plant Sci.* 17:1733525. doi: 10.3389/fpls.2026.1733525.
- Lee, N., D.K. Harris, Z. Li, and J.H. Suh. 2025. Pathway-based metabolomics reveals metabolic strategies and reprogramming in drought-tolerant soybean genotypes from the United States. Submitted to *Legume Science* on 18 September 2025.
- Burner, N., P.A.A. Akiina, Q. Song, D.K. Harris, and Z. Li. 2025. Identifying canopy wilting QTLs and evaluating remote sensing approaches for selecting drought-tolerant soybean. *Theor. Appl. Genet.* 138:276.
- Burner, N., D.K. Harris, and Z. Li. 2025. SHP Buddy: A QGIS plugin for generating shapefiles to support remote sensing in plant breeding and agronomic experiments. *Plant Methods* 21:17. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13007-025-01336-1>
- Keith, J.F., J. Heitholt, and D.K. Harris. 2025. "Peruvian popping beans: Breeding and performance data of beans cultivated in the U.S" In: Jimenez-Lopez, J.C. and J. Escudero-Feliu (eds), *Legumes Crops - Cultivation, Uses and Benefits*, ISBN 978-0-85466-593-8, IntechOpen, London, U.K. doi: 10.5772/intechopen.1009117

Dr. James K. Pru, (Ph.D. Molecular Reproductive Biology, University of Wyoming)
Curtis and Marian Rochelle Endowed Chair in Animal Science

Dr. Pru has extensive background in reproductive biology and disease, as well as in genetic approaches used to understand these processes in production livestock and humans. His research program seeks to understand the unique molecular dialogue that exists between the mother and embryo as pregnancy is first being established. He uses genetic approaches in animal models to elucidate signaling networks that coordinate maternal: embryo cross-talk. The significance of these studies is that the large majority of failed pregnancies in domestic livestock and other species occur during this time when the embryo first signals its presence to the mother. The overarching goal of these highly collaborative studies is to identify evolutionarily conserved pathways that coordinate successful pregnancy in diverse species. Dr. Pru also has a long-standing interest in the etiology and progression of women's reproductive diseases such as endometriosis and endometrial and breast cancer, as well as in the development of therapeutic strategies to combat these diseases. Such diseases dramatically increase female morbidity and mortality while reducing reproductive capacity and the overall quality of life. Aligned with these efforts are additional studies that seek to comprehend mechanisms of aging, particularly in the ovary. Over the past few years, Dr. Pru's lab has procured over \$2.5M in grant support from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to study early pregnancy, non-classical progesterone signaling, endometrial/breast cancer, and for the application of gene editing technologies. Dr. Pru has developed two new graduate level course in Animal Science (ANSC 5300, "Stem Cell Biology and Regenerative Medicine"; ANSC 5880 "Scientific Writing"), as well as an undergraduate course (ANSC 3850, "Perspectives in Biotechnology") that will provide insights into modern technologies in large animal production

systems and biomedical sciences. Dr. Pru serves on multiple international journal editorial boards, is a standing member of the Integrative and Clinical Endocrinology and Reproduction Study Section at the NIH, and provides service to UW on departmental, college and university committees. Dr. Pru continues to work closely with UW leadership to develop the Center for Reproductive and Regenerative Biology. With \$10.5M in grant support being sought from the NIH, the Center seeks to expand molecular biology research capabilities at UW. When established, this new Center will: 1) expand exposure to biomedical research at UW for Wyoming's undergraduate and graduate student populations; 2) grow existing research infrastructure through the development of research core labs and equipment purchases, and 3) recruit world-class faculty to facilitate the development of a novel area of research at UW. The basic and translational research conducted in Dr. Pru's lab has impactful application to both the agricultural and health care sectors within the state of Wyoming and beyond.

Vacant – *Davis Excellence in Agriculture Professorship, NEW*

Vacant – *Doug and Deniz Stark Ranch Management and Agricultural Leadership, NEW*

Mary Martin, (M.Ed. Education, University of Wyoming)
Elizabeth McCabe Endowed County Coordinator for Teton Count Extension

The Community Vitality and Health (CVH) program successfully balanced a return to county-based programming with continued regional collaboration to address community needs across Wyoming. Because CVH is not anchored in a single academic discipline, its effectiveness depends on strong partnerships and the sharing of expertise among educators. This collaborative approach expanded the reach and impact of Extension programming while ensuring local priorities remained central. During the year, efforts focused on strengthening community leadership, supporting nonprofit and public board governance, and providing educational resources in food preservation, financial literacy, succession planning, mediation, disaster preparedness, and conflict resolution that enhance community capacity and resilience.

Leadership Jackson Hole (LJH) remained a flagship leadership development initiative, graduating 24 participants through a nine-month curriculum developed through UW Extension's EVOLVE program. Participants gained a deeper understanding of local and state issues, expanded civic and professional networks, and increased confidence in their leadership abilities, with 90% expressing interest in serving in expanded leadership roles. Opportunities created through Wyoming Statute 9-1-150 also supported the continued expansion of the Building Better Boards curriculum, strengthening governance practices among elected officials and community organizations. Together, these leadership, governance, and community education programs are helping build a stronger leadership pipeline, improve organizational effectiveness, and foster more informed decision-making throughout Teton County and the region. Through these efforts, University of Wyoming Extension continues to provide measurable public value by strengthening communities, supporting informed decision-making, and helping local governments, nonprofits, and residents address emerging challenges while preparing the next generation of community leaders.

Vacant – *Donna Beth Downer Family and Consumer Sciences Endowed Faculty*

Vacant – *Farm Credit Services of America Ranch Management and Agriculture Leadership Chair*

Dr. Sarah Kane, (Ph.D. Cell and Molecular Biology, Colorado State University)
Riverbend Ranch Endowed Chair in Wildlife-Livestock Health

The Kane laboratory research projects primarily focus on diseases that impact wildlife and livestock, including chronic wasting disease (CWD) and brucellosis. According to the Wyoming Game and Fish Department's 2025 Chronic Wasting Disease Surveillance Report, the average statewide CWD prevalence was 22%, and one herd showed a staggering prevalence of 62%. Unfortunately, no vaccines or therapeutic interventions exist for this devastating disease. The Kane laboratory seeks to enhance diagnostics, develop new research tools, and monitor the risk to human health. Primary research activities in the 2025-2026 academic year included setting up the laboratory space, onboarding personnel, and initiating research projects. Active, ongoing research projects include the development of CWD-specific antibodies and enhanced detection capabilities from various staring samples, including stock tank drinking water samples. If successful, these research projects will directly impact management strategies and increase overall herd health. Dr. Kane has applied for over \$10M in grant funding and will co-direct the new Science Institute research center, WyoPATH, to enhance diagnostics and vaccines against brucellosis.

Dr. Kane currently mentors one PhD student, one undergraduate INBRE research scholar, and one technician who aims to join a PhD program next year. She currently serves on three PhD student committees, is the departmental Faculty Champion for Student Success, and serves as the chair of the departmental Graduate Student Committee and a member of the GTA allocation committee. In addition to research activities, Dr. Kane taught her first course at the University of Wyoming. LIFE 1010 is a large enrollment, active learning, General Biology course for STEM majors. Dr. Kane also enhanced her pedagogical training through learning communities focused on experiential education and ungrading. Collectively, Dr. Kane continues to perform cutting-edge research to address problems faced by various Wyoming stakeholders and continues to provide students receive premier instruction during their time at the University of Wyoming.

Dr. Kelly Crane, (Ph.D. Rangeland Ecology and Watershed Management, University of Wyoming)
Farm Credit Services of America College of Agriculture, Life Sciences, and Natural Resources Deanship

The University of Wyoming College of Agriculture, Life Sciences, and Natural Resources secured the Farm Credit Services of America Deanship, marking one of the most significant private investments in the college's history. This endowed deanship strengthens leadership capacity, advances the college's land-grant mission, and reinforces UW's partnership with agricultural producers and rural communities across Wyoming and the region. The deanship provides long-term strategic support for teaching, research, and extension aligned with Wyoming's agricultural and natural resource priorities.

Dr. Mark Gomelsky, (Ph.D. Biological Sciences, Institute of Genetics & Selection, Russia)
Martha Gilliam Microbiology Research Institutional Fund

The Martha Gilliam Research in Microbiology Endowment directly powers groundbreaking scientific discovery at the University of Wyoming. It is held by Professor Mark Gomelsky, an internationally recognized expert in molecular and synthetic microbiology ranked in the top one percent of life scientists globally. The endowment provides crucial support for two innovative graduate-led research initiatives.

One initiative targets food safety, uncovering the mechanisms that allow the deadly pathogen *Listeria monocytogenes* to persist on fresh fruits and vegetables. Dr. Gomelsky's lab recently identified a novel bacterial

protective layer and created a specific probe to detect its presence on produce, leading to an invention disclosure with the UW Technology Transfer Office. In the second project supported in part by the Martha Gilliam Research in Microbiology Endowment, the lab is pioneering a revolutionary intracellular RNA-delivery platform aimed at transforming treatments for cancer, genetic diseases, and oral vaccine development. Protected by a UW provisional patent, this platform serves as the foundation for β Drones, Inc., a new startup company founded by Dr. Gomelsky's graduate students to bring the technology to market. Ultimately, these endowment-backed advances deliver critical solutions for food safety and public health while opening opportunities for high-tech jobs and regional economic expansion.

Dr. Amy Navratil, (Ph.D. Biomedical Science, Colorado State University)
Gardner Chair/Professorship in Physiology

As the Hank Gardner and Marilyn Fiske Associate Professor of Physiology and Department Head of the Department of Zoology and Physiology, Dr. Amy Navratil leads one of the university's largest and most impactful life science departments. Home to nationally recognized programs in physiology, neuroscience, ecology, wildlife biology, and organismal biology, the department provides foundational instruction to hundreds of undergraduate, graduate, and professional students each year while advancing research that supports Wyoming's healthcare system and natural resources.

As Department Head, Dr. Navratil provides strategic leadership for the department's faculty, staff, academic programs, and research mission, helping prepare the next generation of scientists who will serve Wyoming and the region. During the past year, she has focused on expanding access to physiology education through development of new online course offerings that better serve students at UW Casper and other communities across Wyoming, ensuring that high-quality educational opportunities reach students regardless of location.

Dr. Navratil's teaching, mentorship, and research directly advance Wyoming's healthcare workforce. She teaches Integrative Physiology, Human Systems Physiology, and Mechanisms of Hormone Action, providing rigorous scientific training to more than 400 undergraduate and professional students annually. Additionally, as the lead for the Reproduction and Development block in the WWAMI Medical Education Program, she helps prepare future physicians, many of whom are committed to practicing in Wyoming's rural and underserved communities. In recognition of her exceptional commitment to student learning, she received the WWAMI Outstanding Faculty Award for Excellence in Teaching and Engagement.

Dr. Navratil also mentors undergraduate and graduate students conducting biomedical research on female reproductive health. This year she is exploring a new research initiative examining access to obstetric and gynecologic care across Wyoming. By identifying the causes and consequences of Wyoming's growing obstetric care deserts, this work will provide evidence to inform strategies that improve maternal healthcare access for Wyoming women and families.

Through leadership of a major academic department, excellence in teaching and student mentorship, and research addressing women's health challenges, Dr. Navratil embodies the mission of the Gardner Fiske Chair while advancing the University of Wyoming's land-grant mission of translating education and research into lasting benefits for Wyoming's communities.

Vacant – *W. Richard and Barbara Andarau Powell Wildlife/Livestock Professorship*

Dr. Corey Tarwater, (Ph.D. Ecology, Evolution, and Conservation Biology, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign)

Robert B. Berry Distinguished Chair in Ecology

Dr. Tarwater is an Associate Professor in the Department of Zoology and Physiology and in the Program in Ecology and Evolution. She began her appointment as the Berry Distinguished Chair in Ecology in January 2023 and since she began this position, she started WYOBIRD (Wyoming Bird Initiative for Resilience and Diversity), trained undergraduate and graduate students, and conducted field research on species interactions and avian demography. In particular, Dr. Tarwater is in charge of the longest running study on avian demography in the Neotropics, which began in 1977. Dr. Tarwater's research program is focused on addressing how the loss of species, introduction of invasive species, and other environmental factors influence individuals, populations, and communities. Her research group works with natural resource managers to address questions linked to management, while also asking larger theoretical questions that result in her group publishing in top-tier journals such as *Science*, *Nature Climate Change*, and *Nature Communications*. Her long-term work in Panama recently gained international attention when it was featured in *Science* magazine, one of the world's most prestigious scientific publications, in an article asking whether tropical forests are facing another silent spring. You can read the full piece [here](#). During the 2025-2026 academic year, Dr. Tarwater published 6 scientific papers. These included papers in *Nature Communications* and the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, and 5 of the 6 papers included graduate students from UW. She continued her research in Hawaii (funded by a Strategic Environmental Research and Development Program grant, \$2 million), which examines how the loss of particular plant species alters seed dispersal of native and invasive plants in Hawaii. Dr. Tarwater was in the final year of her National Science Foundation grant, for which she is the Principal Investigator. As part of this project, Dr. Tarwater and her research group have four scientific papers in review or accepted for publication, and the two UW graduate students on the project successfully defended their MS degrees in May 2026. Dr. Tarwater continued her collaboration with multiple international institutions, including the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute (STRI), to examine how birds, bats, and their prey are responding to a changing environment. Dr. Tarwater mentored four graduate students, two postdoctoral researchers, and undergraduates that are part of WYOBIRD. Dr. Tarwater is honored to serve as the Berry Distinguished Chair in Ecology and continues to seek expanded impact through the training of students and outreach with the public within Wyoming, while also addressing conservation needs in highly speciose regions of the world.

The Wyoming Bird Initiative for Resilience and Diversity (WYOBIRD) began in the summer of 2023, and has already had notable impacts on both University of Wyoming students and Wyoming communities. The mission of the Initiative is threefold: to further research objectives, support student success, and to connect with local communities through outreach events. In this past year, 15 paid undergraduate interns were involved in this program, seven during the summer as part of the nest box study and eight during the fall semester as part of the migration banding study. The funds also supported two PhD students that trained undergraduates and oversaw the two WYOBIRD research projects. We also published our first WYOBIRD paper using data from the nest box project. This was a collaborative study on tree swallows that was published in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, one of the most prestigious scientific journals in the world. This work was featured in a recent UW press release and can be found [here](#). This past year, we hosted interactive tables at UW's STEM day, which included over 1200 people from the public. We also invited the public to our migration banding station so they could learn about the work that we do. WYOBIRD students and faculty continue to plan future outreach events and student opportunities for the coming year while upholding a standard of excellence in pursuing their research objectives across the Americas.

Joseph Cook, (Ph.D, candidate Rangeland, Ecology & Watershed Management, University of Wyoming)
Dr. Kurt S. Bucholz Irrigation Science Excellence Fund

Joseph Cook's research and instructional activities during the 2025–2026 academic year focused on improving irrigation water management and quantifying consumptive use under changing conditions across Wyoming's agricultural landscapes. His work integrates field-based measurement, remote sensing, and applied modeling to better understand water use, irrigated system water balances, and groundwater–surface water interactions. Key projects included multi-site monitoring of irrigation diversions and return flows, evaluation of evapotranspiration using both ground-based instrumentation (e.g., scintillometers and soil moisture networks) and satellite-based platforms (OpenET), and participation in basin-scale investigations such as the Savery–Little Snake free river study. These efforts directly support state agencies, including the Wyoming State Engineer's Office and the Upper Colorado River Commission, by improving the technical basis for water administration, conservation program evaluation, and interstate compact compliance.

Cook's work provides tangible benefits to Wyoming's agricultural producers and rural communities by developing practical, data-driven approaches for irrigation decision-making under variable water supply conditions. Through partnerships with ranches and conservation organizations, his research evaluates strategies to maintain or enhance agricultural productivity while adapting to drought and evolving water management frameworks. Instructionally, Cook engages undergraduate and graduate students in hands-on field research, providing training in hydrologic measurement, data analysis, and applied water management. These experiential learning opportunities prepare students for careers in Wyoming's water, agriculture, and natural resource sectors, while contributing to research that supports the long-term sustainability and resilience of the state's working lands.

Dr. Tucker J. Furniss, (Ph.D. Ecology, Utah State University)
Neiman Family Forestry Resources and Range Professorship

Dr. Tucker Furniss is a broadly trained ecologist specializing in forest, fire, and landscape ecology. Since joining the University of Wyoming in 2023, Dr. Furniss has established a high-impact research program focused on the dynamics of forest landscapes of the Western US. His work integrates field-based data collection with advanced remote sensing and process-based modeling to produce actionable science and management-oriented decision support tools. He currently oversees a robust research lab comprising three graduate students and a postdoctoral fellow. In 2025 Dr. Furniss published peer-reviewed publications in leading disciplinary journals including *Fire Ecology* and *Environmental Research Letters*, and since 2023 he has secured over \$1.5M in external funding as a PI or Co-PI.

A primary benefit of Dr. Furniss's work to the state of Wyoming is his leadership in establishing long-term research infrastructure and use-inspired decision-support tools. He co-founded the **Wyoming Forest Resilience Initiative (WyFRI)**, a program dedicated to bridging the gap between academic research and the practical needs of Wyoming's land managers and policymakers. As part of this Initiative, he has led the development of "**WyLDFIRE**," a web-based wildfire risk toolkit designed to help Wyoming's public utilities develop wildfire mitigation plans to protect critical infrastructure. Furthermore, Dr. Furniss is Co-PI on the **Grand Teton Forest Dynamics Plot Network**, the first Smithsonian Forest Global Earth Observatory (ForestGEO) plots in the Rocky Mountains. These research activities serve the State of Wyoming by facilitating responsive, place-based research to address pressing issues, and they have elevated the profile of the University of Wyoming as a regional leader in the fields of forest ecology and wildfire science.

In addition to his research, Dr. Furniss contributes to the University's instructional mission by leading core courses in *Forest Management* and *Applied Fire Ecology*. He has successfully integrated active-learning techniques—such as live fire behavior demonstrations—to prepare the next generation of Wyoming's natural resource professionals. He is revising the Forest Resources Minor and leading the development of a new Forest Resources Certificate to provide training to distance students across the state. He serves on several graduate student committees and is the Faculty Advisor for the new UWyo Chapter of the Student's Association for Fire Ecology. His service activities extend to the national level in his role as a Reviewer for numerous journals, Co-PI of the Southern Rockies Fire Science Network, and as a member of the Association for Fire Ecology's Education Committee.

American Heritage Center

Dr. Mary Brown, (Ph.D. History, University of Missouri)
Clara R. Toppan Curator of the Toppan Rare Books Library

Dr. Brown's position is more archival in nature, and her primary responsibility is the oversight and growth of the Toppan Rare Books Library. One of the benefits of this is that she provides UW students with unique opportunities to gain experience in the archival and rare book field while also working on projects that will help them in their graduate school applications or future career endeavors. This year, Dr. Brown supervised an undergraduate intern through the Museum Studies minor program. The student's primary project during the summer and fall semesters was to curate the Toppan Rare Book Library's 250th exhibit. The resulting exhibit was titled "Turning the Pages of America: Celebrating 250 Years of the USA With a Roadtrip Across the Country through Books". The exhibit opened in March 2026 and features a book from each state. Among the books included were works of fiction, travel memoirs, illustrated travelogues, and books written by local authors. The exhibit provided our intern the opportunity to curate an exhibit that celebrates the country's anniversary. The exhibit itself will become a piece of history showing how the Toppan Library commemorated the 250th. Of particular interest are the two exhibit cases that highlight books about Wyoming and an additional case that focuses on Clara Toppan's Wyoming, which was the Jackson Hole area. This exhibit not only helped tell a story about our country, but it also allowed us to highlight some of the library's recent accessions and in particular highlight works written by Wyoming authors.

In the 2025-2026 academic year, Dr. Brown contributed to the growth of the library with the addition of several new sub-collections, including the rich collection of Bart Rea from Casper, Wyoming. Rea's book collection contained books covering many subjects, but was particularly rich in documenting the early history of Wyoming and in particular the Casper area. Some of the notable books added to the library's holdings include the 1849 three-volume *Quadrupeds of North America* by John James Audubon and John Bachman and a 1721 edition of *The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*. Dr. Brown continued to host class visits throughout the academic year from multiple UW campus departments including History, Visual Arts, English, Art History, and Communication & Journalism.

In addition to the activities in Toppan, Dr. Brown has continued her research on the American Veterans Committee, a national organization of World War II veterans, and the work of the local college chapters across the country. In February, Dr. Brown was invited to the University of Missouri to speak at two events sponsored by the Michael A. Middleton Center on the history of student activism on campus.

College of Arts and Sciences

Dr. Joseph Carver, (Ph.D. Music Education, Ohio State University)
McMurry Foundation Western Thunder Marching Band Faculty

Dr. Joseph Carver, (Ph.D. Music Education, The Ohio State University) Assistant Professor and Director of the “Western Thunder” Marching Band. Dr. Carver’s work during the 2025–26 academic year focused on preparing future music educators and leaders while advancing the University of Wyoming’s outreach and visibility throughout the state and beyond. Through undergraduate and graduate instruction in music education, percussion, and marching band pedagogy, Dr. Carver mentored future teachers in effective instructional practices, leadership development, and student-centered learning. His courses emphasized practical teaching skills, collaboration, communication, and experiential learning opportunities that directly prepare students to serve Wyoming schools and communities.

Support provided through the McMurry Faculty Fellowship allowed Dr. Carver to expand recruitment efforts across the state of Wyoming, helping attract prospective students and future marching band members while serving as an advocate for the University of Wyoming’s music programs. Fellowship funding also supported his creative and professional activities, including guest conducting, clinics, and presentations at regional, national, and international music education conferences. In addition, Dr. Carver provided professional development and outreach to Wyoming music educators through workshops, adjudication, camps, and collaborative events that strengthen music education opportunities for students across the state. His work continues to promote the University of Wyoming’s mission as a land-grant institution by supporting educational excellence, community engagement, and leadership development through the arts.

Dr. Shane Epping, (Ph.D. Journalism, University of Missouri)
Bobby Model Professorship in Photojournalism

During the 2025–2026 academic year, Epping continued to build the Bobby Model Professorship as both a creative practice and a research program at the University of Wyoming. He received the University of Wyoming Award for Excellence in Teaching in recognition of his work in the photography and visual communication classroom. In February 2026, the Center for Community News at the University of Vermont named him a Faculty Champion, one of 150 journalism faculty from 41 states and two Canadian provinces recognized for advancing university-led community reporting. He was also the subject of a *UWyo Magazine* feature, “Never Stop Looking,” published in Volume 28, Number 3, Spring 2026, profiling the inaugural years of the professorship and its place in the legacy of *National Geographic* photographer Bobby Model. Epping was also included in a group photograph on the cover of that issue.

In creative production, Epping mounted a solo exhibition, *On the Road Again: Scenes from Highway 287*, at D’art Gallery in Denver, running from May 7 through May 31, 2026. The exhibition presents twenty-one photographs as metal prints, drawn from his ongoing documentary project along the highway that runs between his home in Fort Collins and the University of Wyoming. The project began in 2021 and continues as the primary vehicle for his long-form creative work. Related to that project, Epping received an Individual Fellowship from the Wyoming Institute for Humanities Research (WIHR) to support *The Excluded West*, a photographic project retracing Robert Frank’s unpublished 1955 Wyoming journey. The fellowship funds fieldwork, archival research, and a public exhibition of the resulting work.

In research, Epping contributed a chapter, "Authenticity Under Pressure: How Platform Economics and Artificial Intelligence Are Remaking Photojournalism," accepted for publication in *The Routledge Handbook of Digital Platform Studies and AI*, edited by Dal Yong Jin. The chapter examines how algorithmic image production, generative AI, and the platform economics of major technology companies are reshaping the foundations of documentary practice and visual truth.

Epping also published four pieces in *Visual Communication Quarterly*, the international peer-reviewed journal of theory, research, and creative work in visual communication. "Visualizing Citizenry-in-the-Making: Representations of Youth Protest in Reuters News Photography," co-authored with Elizabeth O. Bent, applies a qualitative visual analysis to news photographs of youth protest worldwide, finding that future-oriented protest topics such as climate change tend to be framed more positively and within presumptions of "normal youth" activity. "Framing the In-Between: Photojournalistic Encounters with Urban–Rural Liminality," co-authored with Ross Taylor and published as the journal's invited portfolio piece for its special issue on liminal spaces, presents documentary photographs that examine the threshold between urban and rural landscapes. "Visual Analysis of Living with Cancer as Seen Through a Lens of Poststructuralism" examines documentary photography of cancer patients through a poststructuralist framework. He also contributed a book review of *Looking at Photographs* by Laurent Jullier. He is a co-author on a collaborative manuscript, currently in development, that examines how caption type shapes viewer perception of documentary photographs, with paired image sets on the U.S. opioid crisis and immigration coverage.

Epping is co-leading a study abroad course to the Cheetah Conservation Fund (CCF) in Namibia in May and June 2026, with co-instructors Cindy Price Schultz and Kayla Clark, taking eleven University of Wyoming students into the field for documentary, wildlife, and landscape photography work with a focus on cross-cultural visual storytelling and conservation reporting. Funds from the Bobby Model Professorship are subsidizing the participation of two graduate students on the trip.

In service to the profession and students, Epping co-directed the 2026 VIM (Visual and Interactive Media) Festival contest, an international juried competition for student and faculty work. In that year's competition, University of Wyoming students swept all three student photography categories. In Photography Single – Journalism, Zach Agee won Gold for "Hat Trick," Garrett Grochowski won Silver for "100-Yard Butterfly," and Sera Glass won Bronze for "Starry Night." In Photography Photo Essay – Journalism, Zach Agee won Gold for "4 Kids, 3 Jobs, Barely Making It," and Shelby Sinclair won both Silver for "Staying with Stacey" and Bronze for "Unseen Hands." In Photography Photo Illustration, Ruth Muyapa won Gold for "Still Here," Abigail Johnson won Silver for "She Could Do It," and Alanna Link won Bronze for "Painting with Light." Epping also earned a Bronze in the Faculty Photography Single Photo category for "Neighbors," an image from his ongoing Highway 287 project. He served on faculty committees that included evaluations for the Larsh Bristol Photojournalism Fellowship and the Judith A. Muhlberg Endowment for Study Abroad, along with a department chair search. He completed his fifth-year faculty review during the year.

In August 2025, Epping attended the 108th Annual Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC) Conference in San Francisco, where he served on five sessions of the Visual Communication Division program: as a panelist on the ethics of emerging technology in photojournalism, as a discussant for the Commission on the Status of Women, as moderator of a session on human perception, AI, and visual credibility in the digital age, as a discussant for a session on visualizing science communication for impactful journalism, and as a panelist on responsible documentation of refugee and underrepresented communities.

Epping continues to mentor graduate students in photojournalism and visual communication research, chairing two master's thesis committees during the year, and serving on three separate committees.

Dr. David Rooney, (Ph.D. Communications Studies and Rhetoric, University of Texas-Austin)
Greg Dyekman & Wayne Callaway Director of Debate

Dr. David Rooney began at the University of Wyoming in the Fall of 2025 as an Associate Professor of Practice and the Greg Dyekman & Wayne Callaway Director of Debate. In that time, the Wyoming Debate Team grew by approximately 400% and travelled around the country to compete at the highest levels of collegiate debate. This year, undergraduate students travelled to compete in 13 tournaments around the country against other collegiate debate programs. Students on the team qualified to both of the prestigious national championships in policy debate and made it to the top 32 best teams in the country at the CEDA National Championship. The University of Wyoming Debate team was also recognized for its contributions to the college debate community. The team was honored for the "best evidence and research" for the 2025-26 season, the Bootstraps Award for "hardest working small squad" and the Rookie Director award. At the CEDA National Championship, Rooney was named one of the community's Critics of the Year, being given the honor of judging the championship final round.

The Wyoming Debate Team has also committed to growing regional debate, working collaboratively with high school programs to benefit high school students interested in debate. In September 2025, Rooney travelled to the Wyoming Speech and Debate Association Fall Meeting in Riverton, WY, where he workshopped ways that the University Debate program can work with high school programs in the region. In July 2026, the program will host a summer debate camp (The Wyoming Forensics Institute) after a hiatus, which offers some of the cheapest instruction in argumentation for high school students in the country, including significant discounts for students in the Mountain West. The Wyoming Debate team has also been selected to host the 2026-2027 Wyoming High School Speech and Debate State Tournament in March 2027, which will host hundreds of high school students in dozens of speech and debate events.

In terms of research in 2025-2026, Rooney received the 2025 Association for the Rhetoric of Science, Technology and Medicine (ARSTM) article of the year award for an article "Long Live the Liver King" published in *Frontiers in Communication*, published the articles "Culture(d) Wars" in *Technical Communication and Social Justice* and "Blood, soil, and tofu" in the *Western Journal of Communication*, as well as a book manuscript *Primal Rhetoric and the Rise of Right Wing Carnivorism* accepted for publication by the *University of Mississippi Press* (release date February 2027).

Dr. Arielle Zibrak, (Ph.D. English, Boston University)
Clarence Seibold Professorship

Dr. Arielle Zibrak traveled across the East coast to meet with leaders in the Public Humanities, gain new ideas for our PhD program in that field, and research her own work of Public Humanities scholarship, *Wishing Ourselves Well*, a history of how the power-of-positive-thinking movement New Thought shaped women's culture in the United States at the turn of the twentieth century. Zibrak's book is under contract with Liveright, an imprint that has published four Pulitzer-Prize winning books in the last ten years, and is already gaining buzz in the worlds of trade publishing and nineteenth-century scholarship as a result of several events and lectures where Zibrak was able to share her research with public and academic audiences at high-profile events, such as celebration of Penguin Press's 100th year to honor their authors and editors and conduct research at archives at Harvard, Yale, and various local historical societies.

Zibrak also met with Humanities directors at Boston University, Harvard University, Brown University, the University of Connecticut, and Yale University, building relationships with institutions working on a collaborative Public Humanities network, and identifying scholars interested in visiting and working with the University of Wyoming as we build this aspect of our programming. Some relationships cultivated in the Seibold year have already led to upcoming collaborations with American University and institutions in Europe such as The University of Erfurt, Germany, where she will visit in Fall to continue collaborating at their expense. In addition to her teaching and service for the English department and the University, Zibrak is Vice President of the Edith Wharton Society, Director of the Rebecca Harding Davis Archive online, Advisory Board Member for the Society for the Study of American Women Writers, and Director of the English Honors Program.

Dr. Jean Garrison, (Ph.D., Political Science, University of South Carolina)

Clyde E. and Jerrin N. Stewart Family Professorship

Dr. Garrison is a Professor in the School of Politics, Public Affairs, and International Studies (SPPAIS) in the College of Arts and Sciences. In her 25 years at UW her research and teaching have focused on American foreign policy, U.S.-China relations, energy security, and civic/community engagement. Across her career she is the author of three books, co-editor of one book, and the author of multiple peer-reviewed articles. Her work as director of the Wallop Civic Engagement Program has prioritized projects with Wyoming K-12 teachers including the signature project providing free multimedia civics materials for teachers and hosting statewide projects encouraging youth to become civically engaged in their communities. In terms of broad impacts, through December 2025, 150+ middle and high school educators from 58 schools have accessed the Wallop WyoLearn catalog's content. She also has worked collaboratively with the Wyoming Department of Education (WDE) as a lead on its Citizenship Subcabinet, initiatives such as the Patriotic Schools Seal, and through the Wallop Civic Engagement Program's WyoLearn catalog hosts the WDE Civics Education Center classroom materials.

As the new Clyde E. and Jerrine N. Stewart Family Professor in Public Service, Garrison prioritizes a community-engaged scholar approach to her research, teaching, and service that advances a variety of public service and community engagement projects in Wyoming and beyond. First, Garrison oversees the Stewart Family Serviceship Fellowship award for students – an annual award whereby recipients receive a \$5000 award to fund a service project of their choice. To date, eight students from three colleges have received the fellowship to fund projects that range from engaging Wyoming seniors in pollinator conservation to advancing sustainable cultural preservation in San people communities in South Africa to a project providing developmental screenings for autism and follow-up services to youth and families in the Laramie community. Second, across 2025-26, as the PI for the grant-funded Wyoming Youth Resilience Project, Garrison has collaborated with twenty K-12 teachers and their students from eleven counties and the Wind River Reservation in a project encouraging youth community engagement. The project uses the photovoice method to gather information on youth perceptions of opportunities and barriers they see to education, employment, and community resilience. This project has included professional development training for teachers in the photovoice method and provided support for them as they develop class assignments related to the project. Hundreds of students have shared their voices on these key issues facing Wyoming through local presentations to stakeholders and community members and the photo/narrative submissions that are available on the UW-hosted Wyoming Youth Resilience interactive map (see: <https://surveys.wygisc.org/profiles-in-wyoming-resilience>). Dr. Garrison's academic outcomes from the project have included a co-authored, peer-reviewed article (with Jason McConnell), public presentations at the Wyoming Department of Education's TeacherCon 2025 and 2026 educator conferences, and a new article project in process with two UW students focusing on the outcomes of the project. Third, Garrison organizes statewide outreach programming around the state and on campus prioritizing presentations on public service and governance topics. This has included multiple high school classroom

presentations to hundreds of students with former U.S. Ambassador Thomas Dougherty who has served as the Milward Simpson Visiting Professor in Political Science. In March 2026, Garrison hosted Pulitzer-prize winning author and historian, Dr. Edward Larson, for his keynote address “Declaring Independence: Why 1776 Matters” for UW’s America 250th Celebration.

In the classroom, Dr. Garrison teaches undergraduate and graduate students in the political science and international studies programs. Her regular courses include American foreign relations, energy security, conflict resolution and management, the undergraduate international studies senior capstone class, and a graduate course in human security. She mentors students in their final undergraduate research projects and works with a variety of MA graduate students completing projects on topics in American foreign policy and energy security. Relatedly, Garrison actively promotes student experiential learning opportunities, including internship opportunities, and oversees the Byra Kite Internship Program in SPPAIS. The purpose of this work is to engage UW students in internship and other real-world opportunities that advance their professional opportunities as they develop a lifelong commitment to community involvement and public service.

As a scholar, Garrison remains an active scholar in the fields of leadership and foreign policy analysis in the field of political science and international relations. She participated in an invited workshop on “Three Decades of Research on Cognition, Leaders and Collective Political Decision Making” at the annual meeting of the International Studies Association in March 2026. This is a collaborative project with 20 scholars from across the United States looking at how the fields of political leadership and foreign policy have evolved across the last thirty years. In every dimension of this work, from teaching, research, mentoring of students, and outreach to the state, the support provided by the Stewart Professorship in Public Service advances a broad set of public service goals that advances multiple opportunities for UW students and many others across the state. Dr. Garrison is grateful for this support and looks forward to continuing this important work.

Dr. Cecily Zaneder, (Ph.D. History, Pennsylvania State University)
Phil Roberts Faculty Fellowship in Wyoming History and the West (NEW - effective 8/25/26 for FY27)

Dr. Renee Laegreid, (Ph.D. History, University of Nebraska)
Andrew Allen Fellow in Western History

I would like to express my gratitude for being the recipient of the Andrew Allen Fellow in Western History. The time gained through course release and the extra funding provided from the endowment encouraged success in existing and new projects that otherwise would not have been possible. Additionally, my scholarly activities have elevated my visibility within the Western History profession, bringing recognition to the University of Wyoming and helping recruit strong Master of Arts candidates to our History Department. The ability to research more extensively in western history has been important in mentoring graduate students, helping them keep up with the latest scholarship, and introducing them to scholars who have helped their research programs.

Scholarly projects this year include completing two anthologies and a monograph—all peer reviewed and now in the publication pipeline with the two top Western History presses: Sandoz Studies, vol. 3: *Mari Sandoz’s Slogum House* (University of Nebraska Press, forthcoming Fall 2026); *The US West between the World Wars: A Region Transformed, 1917-1941* (University of Oklahoma Press, forthcoming Spring 2027), and the monograph, *Discovering Great Plains Women* (University of Nebraska Press, anticipated publication Spring 2027). Looking forward, two other projects are underway. First, contract negotiations with the University of Oklahoma Press for a monograph exploring the idea of the West between the US and Italy through the lens of William F. “Buffalo

Bill” Cody; research funding provided by the Andrew Allen Fellow award met a critical need by supporting travel to the National Library in Florence, Italy, to continue work on several chapters. Finally, Sandoz Studies, vol. 4 focusing on Sandoz’s book *Cheyenne Autumn*, is on track to meet a publication date aligning with events commemorating the 150th anniversary of the Cheyenne Break-Out at Fort Robinson, NE.

In conclusion, I am grateful for the resources of time and funding provided by the Andrew Allen Excellence Fellowship. The resources have been vital to research, and by extension teaching, allowing for a very productive year.

Vacant – *Branney Chair for High Plains Paleoindian Archeology, NEW*

Dr. Thomas Dougherty, (U.S. Ambassador to Burkina Faso)
Milward Simpson Professorship in Political Science

In the fall semester of the 2025-26 academic year, Ambassador Dougherty gave 48 guest lectures in courses offered by the School of Politics, Public Administration & International Affairs (SPPAIS) in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences. He was a guest speaker at three university-sponsored events, organized on-campus events for three out-of-state experts in international affairs, hosted eight Professional Development Speaker Events in the Simpson Room for undergraduate and graduate students, and participated in speaker and recruitment outreach events with the Wallop Program in Riverton (2x), Arapahoe, Casper (3x), Sheridan, Upton, and Cheyenne. He served as an adviser and mentor to 30+ UW students considering careers in public service and the private sector in the U.S. and/or internationally. In cooperation with the Center for Global Studies, he served as an adviser, mentor, and reviewer for the Fulbright program and other educational exchange award programs.

College of Business

Dr. Molly Burchett, (Ph.D. Business Administration, University of Kentucky)
Smyrnios Family Sales Professorship

Dr. Molly R. Burchett is an Assistant Professor of Marketing, Smyrnios Family Sales Professor, and UW President’s Distinguished Scholar at the University of Wyoming. Her research examines behavioral sales and marketing strategy, and her teaching emphasizes experiential sales education. Before academia, she held industry roles in business development and sales leadership. Since joining UW in 2020 after completing her PhD at the University of Kentucky, she has built a nationally recognized program of research, teaching, and student development. Her scholarship includes publications in leading journals, such as the *Journal of Marketing*.

Dr. Burchett’s contributions to UW have been recognized through numerous awards since joining the faculty. These include three Weatherford Journal Excellence Awards (2026, 2025), the Excellence in Experiential Teaching Award (2025), the Top-Tier Publication Award (2024), three College of Business Excellence in Teaching Awards (2024, 2022, 2021), the College of Business Impact Award (2023), the Research Belt Buckle Award (2023), the Top Professor Award from the Cap & Gown Chapter of Mortar Board (2022), and the Campus Being a Difference Award from the NASBA Center for the Public Trust (2021).

This academic year, Dr. Burchett published two articles in the *Journal of Marketing* and one in the *Journal of Business Research*, while also advancing projects with UW doctoral students. During the same year, her growing international visibility was reflected in invited roles as a leader, panelist, or mentor at the Baylor Sales Research

Symposium, Sales Research Collaboration Consortium, Thought Leadership on the Sales Profession Conference, and Global Sales Science Institute Conference. She also serves as an invited Co-Chair of the Sales Force Management and Personal Selling track for the 2026 AMA Summer Academic Conference.

On behalf of the UW Center for Professional Selling, Dr. Burchett founded the UW Sales Club (2021) and UW National Competition Team (2022) to build a high-impact student development ecosystem in professional selling. This academic year, she supported the Center through Sales Club professional development programming and advising, curriculum and strategic planning committee service, and coaching for award-winning sales competition teams.

In the classroom, Dr. Burchett's courses use a highly experiential, performance-based model enhanced by AI-enabled technology. In her Selling for Impact course, Dr. Burchett's 40 students partnered with the UW Ethics Club to support SparkTank 2026, completing 966 outreach attempts, 307 donor calls or meetings, and 260 closed deals to raise nearly \$115,000 for Albany County nonprofits. To date, SparkTank has raised \$930,000 for local nonprofits, generating \$3.2 million in economic output and 30 jobs. Dr. Burchett further contributed to doctoral education by serving on the PhD Program Committee and six dissertation committees.

Beyond the classroom, Dr. Burchett serves as a mentor for Cowboy Coaches and a board member for Tele-Hope, a Wyoming-based nonprofit focused on suicide prevention. Collectively, these contributions reflect the core goals of the Smyrnios Family Sales Professorship, for which she is immensely grateful: advancing sales and marketing scholarship and thought leadership, delivering innovative and experiential sales education, and preparing students for impactful careers while contributing to the broader Wyoming community.

Dr. Todd Cherry, (Ph.D. Economics, University of Wyoming)
John S. Bugas (Professorship or) Chair of Economics

During the 2025-26 academic year, Dr. Cherry engaged with students at all levels, including teaching an undergraduate senior capstone course and a graduate experimental methods course. After five years at the helm, he stepped down from serving as the Director of Graduate Studies. During his time, he increased the size and strengthen quality of the MS and PhD programs. Dr. Cherry carries a heavy load of advising graduate students and serves on multiple theses and dissertation committees. Cherry's research addresses policy-relevant challenges, with a particular focus on energy and environmental resources. He continues to secure external funding to support graduate students and graduate programs. In the past year, Dr. Cherry's research on wildfire management was funded by the National Science Foundation. He continues to contribute to a federally funded project to study the potential for behavioral insights to improve the performance of epidemiological models. During the past year, he published multiple journal articles in leading peer-reviewed journals, including a top journal in his field *Journal of Environmental Economics and Policy*. He continues to be ranked among the top economist in his field, and in the past year, he again received the *College of Business Belt Buckle Award for Research Excellence*. Cherry is on the editorial team of three international journals, including *Resource and Energy Economics* and *Strategic Behavior and the Environment*. He is a faculty affiliate with the Ostrom Workshop at Indiana University-Bloomington and a Senior Research Fellow in the Climate Policy Program at the Center for International Climate Research in Oslo Norway.

Mike Burns, (M.S. Sport Business, Temple University)
Timothy M. Miles for Professional Selling Position

Mike Burns, Director of the Center for Professional Selling at the University of Wyoming, led a highly impactful 2025–26 academic year defined by experiential instruction, strong industry engagement, and student success at the national level. His teaching in Professional and Technical Selling and Professional Sports Sales emphasized hands-on, applied learning through real-world projects with corporate partners and Wyoming-based organizations. Students engaged directly with businesses through sales role plays, consulting-style projects, and live pitch presentations, developing practical skills in communication, problem solving, and value creation. Burns also coached and traveled with student teams to national and regional sales competitions, where University of Wyoming students consistently earned top finishes while building professional networks and securing internships and full-time positions. These efforts contribute directly to workforce development by preparing career-ready graduates who remain in and support Wyoming’s economy.

Burns’ research focuses on donor motivation and behavioral strategy in collegiate athletics, with an emphasis on Name, Image, and Likeness (NIL) and fundraising in rural, mid-major contexts. His work applies frameworks such as identity-based motivation, warm-glow giving, and ritual participation to better understand how to engage and retain donors in Wyoming and similar markets. This research provides actionable insights for athletic departments, nonprofit organizations, and development professionals seeking sustainable funding strategies. In addition, Burns extends his impact beyond campus through collaboration with corporate partners, community engagement initiatives, and support of statewide business development efforts. By integrating research, teaching, and outreach, he strengthens the connection between the University of Wyoming and the state’s business community while contributing to economic growth and innovation across Wyoming.

Dr. Kenneth Zheng, (Ph.D. Management Science-Accounting, University of Texas, Dallas)
The Clara Raab Toppan Distinguished Professorship in Accounting

During the 2025–2026 academic year, Dr. Kenneth Zheng continued to advance a research agenda in managerial and financial accounting focused on how firms respond to economic conditions, informational signals, and managerial incentives. His recent work examined aggregate SG&A signals and future market returns, rollover risk and tax avoidance, aggregate sales declines and cost stickiness across countries, and managerial earnings forecast commitments and investment efficiency. In the 2025-2026 academic year, he published articles in *Finance Research Letters* and *Journal of Corporate Accounting and Finance*. These studies contribute to accounting scholarship while addressing issues directly relevant to business decision-making, capital market assessment, cost management, and firm resilience. Dr. Zheng also remained active in presenting and developing research. His ongoing working papers and works in progress further extend his research into stock repurchase decisions during the COVID-19 pandemic, market orientation and cost asymmetry, valuation roles of book value and earnings, and weather-induced mood and cost stickiness. His research productivity was recognized through the 2025 College of Business Summer Research Grant and the College of Business Belt Buckle Research Excellence Award in 2026.

In teaching, Dr. Zheng continued to contribute to student learning, program development, and departmental leadership. He taught MBA-level accounting courses and emphasized the use of accounting information in managerial decision-making, while also receiving support for curricular innovation through the 2025 College of Business Integrating AI in Accounting and Finance Curricula Grant.

As Department Chair and Director of the M.S. Accounting Program, he provided strategic leadership for academic programs, faculty development, and departmental governance; oversaw the relaunch of the campus-based M.S. Accounting program; completed STEM designation processes for both undergraduate and graduate accounting programs; supported enrollment growth by introducing a pathway track to MS in Accounting; and course scheduling improvements. He also continued advising students, serving on graduate and MBA admissions committees, supporting Assurance of Learning efforts, engaging donors, and representing the department in international partnership discussions. Collectively, these research, teaching, and administrative activities strengthened the Department of Accounting and Finance and supported the College of Business's mission to prepare students and serve Wyoming's business community.

Dr. Mitchell Oler, (Ph.D. Business Administration, University of Washington, CPA)
The Clara Raab Toppan Fellowship in Accounting

During the 2025–2026 academic year, Dr. Mitchell Oler held the rank of Associate Professor of Accounting. He continues to serve on the Board of the Wyoming Society of CPAs, where his perspective as both an educator and a licensed practitioner has been vital as the state evaluates CPA licensing changes. In addition, he sits on both the Networking Committee and the Accounting Pipeline Committee. His work on the latter committee has been especially impactful, helping to address the ongoing shortage of CPA professionals in the state of Wyoming.

Dr. Oler's current research includes projects that consider the cost to shareholders of firms with deficient corporate governance, the impact of taxes on share valuations, the current quality and direction of accounting education, as well as how firms cycle through periods of income inflation and deflation.

Dr. Mackenzie (Mac) M. Festa, (Ph.D. Business Administration in Accounting, West Virginia University)
The Clara Raab Toppan Fellowship in Accounting and Finance

During the 2025–2026 academic year, Dr. Festa continued his work as an Associate Professor and Toppan Fellow in the Department of Accounting and Finance. His research remains focused on high-impact areas that directly benefit Wyoming's business community and residents, including workforce retention in the accounting field, the effects of information overload on investors, and the restoration of trust in digital asset exchanges. Notably, his work on the national accounting shortage offers critical insights for Wyoming firms looking to attract and retain top talent. Furthermore, his ongoing investigation into the effects of psychological withdrawal and self-leadership in the workplace provides actionable strategies for local organizations to improve employee engagement and operational efficiency.

In the classroom, Dr. Festa's instructional activities emphasize the practical application of financial and real estate principles, directly supporting Wyoming's economic development. This year, he taught courses in Financial Statement Analysis, Entrepreneurial Finance, Real Estate Finance, and Real Estate Investment, equipping students with the analytical skills necessary to drive growth in the state's manufacturing, energy, and real estate sectors. By mentoring students in research and coordinating outreach initiatives like the "Beat the Firms" event, Dr. Festa ensures that University of Wyoming graduates are uniquely prepared to contribute to the state's long-term fiscal health and professional landscape.

Dr. Trevor Sorensen, (Ph.D. Accounting, University of Alabama)
The Clara Raab Toppan Fellowship in Accounting and Finance

During the 2025-2026 academic year, Dr. Sorensen served as an Associate Professor of Accounting. His current research projects include the market reaction to meeting or beating analysts' forecasts based on expectations from prior periods, whether investors discount municipal bond ratings using publicly available data, and how CEO compensation packages impact the timeliness of reporting a goodwill impairment. In the classroom, Dr. Sorensen teaches courses related to individual taxation, which involves continual awareness and application of changes in tax law. This year he also led the Professional Skills course wherein students engage in discussions with accomplished professionals about current events and recent changes in accounting. Dr. Sorensen continues to advise students on career options and CPA exam preparation. He also holds discussions with accounting professionals in the state to identify and address areas of concern regarding the accounting profession and incorporate crucial topics to better prepare students in the classroom.

Dr. Mark Leach, (Ph.D. Marketing, Georgia State University)
Mendicino Chair in Sales and Salesmanship

Dr. Leach's research is in business-to-business marketing and sales. More specifically, his research focuses on understanding buyer and seller relationships, leveraging the sales function to manage relationships with profitable customers, and providing effective sales training. Mark has published articles in the *Journal of Business Research*, *Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management*, *Industrial Marketing Management*, *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, and other leading academic journals. Mark is a member of the editorial review board of the *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice*, and the *Journal of Business and Industrial Marketing*. Prior to joining the University of Wyoming in 2017, Dr. Leach was a member of the faculty at Loyola Marymount University and Purdue University. He has also been a behavioral research scientist at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. During the 2025-2026 academic year, Dr. Leach has published research examining how salespeople and customer success managers work together to add value in *Industrial Marketing Management*. Additionally, he continues to develop and refine curriculum and recruitment strategies for UW's academic programs in Professional Selling. He has brought together a team of faculty, staff, and sales practitioners to effectively establish the Center as a hub for sales thought-leadership.

Dr. Charles Mason, (Ph.D. Economics, University of California, Berkeley)
H.A. (Dave) True Jr. Chair in Petroleum and Natural Gas Economics

During the past fiscal year, Dr. Mason taught one graduate class (Advanced Microeconomics II – Economics of Uncertainty and Game Theory; ECON 5120) and one undergraduate class (Energy Economics, ECON 4340). He directed two (2) doctoral students, and one master's students and participated in the graduate committees for several students. He had three papers published, one in the prestigious journal *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* and one in a newly launched publication in the *Nature* family (*Springer Nature Business & Economics*). The first of these one of these studies the economics of carbon capture, utilization and storage – a topic of direct relevance to the state. The third additional paper was accepted for publication in 2026 and is still in press. He has multiple other papers under review for potential publication. He gave a variety of presentations, both in the US and abroad. He continues to serve as the Editor-in-Chief for Economics of Energy and Environmental Policy, a key publication produced by the International Association of Energy Economists.

His research program is largely centered on studying oil and gas markets, including studies of oil and gas prices, motives to hold oil inventories, and the incentives for deployment of infrastructure, such as pipelines, and the implications of constrained infrastructure upon energy markets. These topics have clear relevance to the energy sector of the state, and policy relevance to the nation. Dr. Mason's research agenda also provides valuable input that allows regular updating of the undergraduate oil and gas class, which he teaches most years (and is scheduled to teach next spring), enhancing the educational value and relevance of the class. He has several projects underway, many of which directly relate to oil or natural gas markets. He also was part of a team that received a grant from the National Science Foundation. Students in his undergraduate class obtain a deep understanding of the recent history of oil and gas markets, and how that informs current events. Students in his graduate class gained important skills that modern micro-economists use regularly in their professional work. His approach to this class encourages students to speak up, and he capped the class off with a round of presentations by the students. Material he discusses in that class is also amenable to public presentations, which provides visibility for the University and helps lay people better understand these markets.

Dr. Robert Godby, (Ph.D. Economics, McMaster University)

John A. Guthrie Distinguished Professor of Banking and Financial Services

In the past year the Banking Minor that the Guthrie Chair is responsible for overseeing has been had significant changes implemented. First, because courses that were previously required and seldom taught, and the curriculum would have only been practical for finance majors due to the prerequisites of those courses, it was very difficult for students to complete the minor. This likely contributed to the total of one banking student enrolled in the program at the beginning of the 2025-26 academic year. The revised coursework description will now be accessible to students in any business program, and students from some colleges with previous business or economics classes completed. After these changes and promotion of the minor during advising. Enrollment in the minor has increased to 15 students, with more anticipated as students take additional classes in the coming year.

With respect to research the Guthrie Chair published two articles in very high-placed journals. One considered the financial models of wind energy projects and how financing affects the cost of wind-energy build outs across states competing for such development. The second article considered the determinants of favorability among state residents of small nuclear energy development projects in Wyoming and Alaska. This surveying effort showed that appropriate information sharing could enhance social acceptance of such projects and explained how developers and policymakers could constructively address development concerns. A third project was begun in late fall 2025. This project attempted to identify Wyoming voter preferences over different budgetary policies in the 2026 Legislative session. Using a discrete-choice framework, the effort allows respondents to evaluate budgetary tradeoffs to identify preferred budgetary packages. The results of this effort were presented to the College of Business faculty and UW leadership in Spring 2026, and are now being prepared for publication in a high-level journal.

With respect to service, the Guthrie Chair continues to serve on the Wyoming Consensus Revenue Estimating Group, and also gave several public presentations regarding the state of the economy nationally and in Wyoming over the past year. In the coming year this Chair will be working to expand relationships with the banking sector to create student opportunities and internships, and to elevate the visibility of the UW Banking Program among Wyoming and region bankers.

Dr. Chase Thiel, (Ph.D. Industrial and Organizational Psychology, University of Oklahoma)
Rile Chair of Leadership

Dr. Chase Thiel continued his service as the Rile Chair of Leadership during Academic Year (AY) 25–26. He also remained Chair of the Department of Management and Marketing and served as Interim Associate Dean of the College of Business.

As Rile Chair of Leadership, Dr. Thiel led or supported several significant initiatives through the Center for Principle-Based Leadership and Ethics (PBLE), which he co-founded in 2022. Under his leadership, PBLE hosted its signature events, including the SparkTank competition—distributing nearly \$160,000 to Albany County nonprofits—and the Leadership Academy. The latter is a unique co-curricular experience designed to equip elite UW students to become capable actors in transforming Wyoming’s economy. Students develop systems leadership capabilities to help leverage economic development opportunities. PBLE also organized two Ethical Leadership Showcases—during the fall and spring terms—bringing seasoned business leaders to the University of Wyoming (UW), including restaurant entrepreneur Elizabeth Blau and former Farm Credit Services Company CEO Doug Stark. Extending PBLE’s impact, Dr. Thiel again collaborated with the Ellbogen Center for Teaching and Learning to reimagine the Daniels Fund Faculty Fellows Program, which awarded grants to faculty across five UW colleges to integrate ethics education into their curricula.

Dr. Thiel remained deeply engaged in external outreach, delivering leadership and ethics workshops to organizations such as the Mountain West Farm Bureau, University of Wyoming College of Agriculture, University of Wyoming Athletics, the Drucker School of Management at Claremont University, the Teaching Business Ethics Conference, State of Wyoming Enterprise Technology Services, the University of Wyoming Office of Research and Economic Development, and the Faculty Leadership Institute at the University of Wyoming. He also presented internationally at the Academy of Management’s annual meeting in Copenhagen, Denmark. In addition, he led executive training through the Cowboy Leadership Experience, covering topics such as principle-based leadership, employee motivation, and team dynamics—programs that directly benefit Wyoming’s workforce.

Students continued to benefit significantly from PBLE’s programming. During AY 2025–26, senior leadership students partnered with several Wyoming-based organizations to develop ethical culture plans. Dr. Thiel also co-advised students in the Advanced Business Decision-Making course (MGT 4030/5030), preparing elite UW students for both the Daniels Fund Business Ethics Case Competition and the International Business Ethics Case Competition.

In terms of research, Dr. Thiel sustained an internationally recognized scholarly profile. During AY 2025–26, he had papers invited for revision at the high-ranking journals *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes* and *Journal of Business Ethics*. His work on employee monitoring—an area that continues to draw significant media attention, including features in *Computerworld*, *Chicago Booth Review*, *Open Minds*, and *Prodoscore*—has solidified his standing as a thought leader in business ethics. Dr. Thiel’s research contributions were again recognized with the College of Business Senior Faculty Research Award, underscoring his ongoing impact in both scholarship and practice.

Dr. Jeff Covin, (Ph.D. Organizational Studies & Strategic Planning, University of Pittsburgh)
Rile Chair of Entrepreneurship (See WY Excellence Endowment Report)

Vacant, Solomon D. Trujillo Center for e.Business

Kent Noble, (B.S. Broadcasting, University of Wyoming)

Daniels Fund Ethics Initiative Service Chair

Kent Noble advanced principle-based leadership and ethics education during the academic year through high-impact classroom instruction and applied learning experiences. In his courses at the University of Wyoming's College of Business, Noble integrates experiential learning with a focus on helping students develop their own personal codes of ethics, equipping them with practical frameworks to lead with integrity in personal, educational, and professional settings. His instruction emphasizes real-world application, ethical decision-making, and personal accountability, preparing students to navigate complex challenges with clarity and purpose. Student outcomes reflect the effectiveness of this approach. In Spring 2025, 97% of students agreed that he is among the best instructors they have known, and 98% earned the Ethical Leadership Certification from the NASBA Center for the Public Trust, a distinction achieved by less than 1% of college students nationally. Noble further extended his impact through *What Do You Stand For?*, a digital publication offering a structured, principle-based approach to ethical leadership and personal decision-making. He also developed *Lead and Live with Purpose: The Power of Knowing Your "Why"*, a digital publication focused on helping individuals and leaders discover and live out their deeper sense of purpose. Collectively, his instructional efforts equip students with the skills and mindset needed to contribute meaningfully to Wyoming's workforce and to lead with integrity across industries critical to the state.

Beyond the classroom, Noble's work generates significant and measurable impact across Wyoming through student engagement, community partnerships, and leadership outreach. As faculty advisor to UW's Student Center for the Public Trust (Ethics Club), he mentors students in leading SparkTank, a Shark-Tank style philanthropic initiative that, in 2025 alone, awarded \$165,000 to Albany County nonprofits addressing essential community needs. The initiative provides students with hands-on experience in ethical leadership, fundraising, and community engagement while delivering direct support to organizations serving Wyoming residents. Since 2018, SparkTank has awarded over \$743,000 to local nonprofits and generated more than \$3.2 million in total economic output, including the creation of 30 new jobs, as reported by UW's Center for Business and Economic Analysis. In addition, Noble has delivered hundreds of leadership presentations and workshops statewide, supporting Wyoming businesses, industries, and organizations by strengthening ethical culture, decision-making, and leadership capacity. He also contributes to the continued growth of the Center for Principle-Based Leadership and Ethics and supports statewide recognition of ethical leadership through initiatives such as the Wyoming Business Hall of Fame and the Bill Daniels Ethical Leadership Award. Collectively, his instructional, outreach, and service activities directly support the University of Wyoming's land grant mission by developing principled leaders, strengthening communities, and creating lasting economic and social benefits across the state.

Dr. Linda Price, (Ph.D. Business Administration, University of Texas at Austin)

W. Richard Scarlett III and Margaret W. Scarlett Chair of Business Administration

Linda L. Price is the Dick and Maggie Scarlett Chair of Business Administration and Professor of Marketing. She is globally acclaimed as a top educator, researcher, and doctoral student mentor in marketing and consumer behavior, considered within the top 10% most impactful global scholars in consumer research and thought leadership. Professor Price has received numerous awards for lifetime scholarly and mentorship contributions, including being named a fellow and distinguished educator for the leading consumer and marketing associations. In spring 2026, she was the first woman to receive the Trailblazer award from Marketing Collegiate Educators'

Association, she also received a prestigious long-term impact award for her research in international marketing and is being formally honored this summer among a handful of marketing scholars as an American Marketing Association Marketing Legend. She has been a plenary speaker at several national and international conferences this year, and an invited speaker at many universities.

Because of Professor Price's ethos of institutional leadership and stewardship she serves on the advisory or editorial board for several top marketing journals and additionally serves on the board of several foundations, including the Foundation Board for the *American Marketing Association*, and the advisory board for *Better Marketing for a Better World*. Dr. Price is currently finalizing a special issue of *Journal of Service Research* and a volume of *Journal of the Association of Consumer Research* as managing editor, both to be published in Spring 2027. She has several publications recently published or forthcoming in leading Financial Times journals for this year. As should be evident from this brief profile of activities, Dr. Price brings lots of visibility to University of Wyoming through her institutional service and scholarship.

As a distinguished alumnus of the College of Business, Dr. Price is especially honored to give back to University of Wyoming through faculty teaching and service. Dr. Price serves as co-director of research in the college, with responsibility for assessing research funding requests, recommending research awards, and facilitating a stronger research culture. Dr. Price also serves as Director of the PhD program in the Department of Management and Marketing and on Graduate Council. This academic year she stewarded several departmental initiatives to improve the pedagogical and scholarly skills of PhD students. She has also helped PhD students submit and present research at several highly competitive top academic conferences and submit research to top journals. Dr. Price also served this past year on the College of Business Assurance of Learning Committee working to align our pedagogy and evaluation processes with our objectives to recruit, develop, grow and sustain our most prized resource—our students. Truly, our students are where stewardship matters most! As a first-generation college graduate from University of Wyoming, Professor Price loves offering support and guidance while teaching undergraduate and graduate students in the College of Business. She views this as a special opportunity to inspire curiosity, innovation, and critical thinking. Professor Price wants each of them to leave her classes with pride, and confidence in what a University of Wyoming degree can do for them.

As the Dick and Maggie Scarlett chair, during the 2025/2026 academic year Professor Price was able to support students' development as teachers and scholars in myriad ways, helping them attend and present their work at conferences, participate in doctoral symposiums and consortiums, and host distinguished marketing scholars, including some alumni at University of Wyoming. With the support of the Dick and Maggie Scarlett chair, Dr. Price was able to represent University of Wyoming with pride in prestigious and leadership forums. She was able to pursue ambitious research on ground-breaking topics and publish that research in highly impactful journals. Without the generous support of the Dick and Maggie Scarlett chair, none of this would be possible.

Dr. Jason Shogren, (Ph.D. Economics, University of Wyoming)
Stroock Chair of Natural Resource Conservation and Management

Professor Jason F. Shogren is in his 31st year as the Stroock Chair at the University of Wyoming, his alma mater. His research focuses on the behavioral and institutional underpinnings of economic and environmental policy. He is currently the Presidential Fellow in the Creative Economy. Shogren is a foreign member of the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences, and by royal appointment he was professor to King Carl XVI Gustaf of Sweden. He is a Nobel Peace Prize contributor for his work as a lead author for the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (III), the senior economist for environmental affairs at the Council of Economic Advisers in the White

House, a member of the Environmental Protection Agency’s Economics Science Advisory Board, and a member of the Wyoming Environmental Quality Council and the Wyoming Arts Council. He is a Fellow of the Association of Environmental & Resource Economists, Agricultural & Applied Economics Association, and Beijer Institute of Ecological Economics. He has received two honorary doctorates—one from the Aix-Marseille University and one from the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU). He was on the school board for Albany County District #1 for a decade, and on the Board of the Laramie Plains Civic Center. In 2025 as required every 5 years, Shogren was evaluated by a peer group regarding his overall performance as Stroock Chair, and he was officially reappointed for another 5 years.

Over the past few years, his work has continued to focus on six primary research areas.

1. Economics of land use and migration

Shogren continues to integrate economics and biology to better understand migration management in Wyoming. In a paper published in *Review of Environmental Economics and Policy*, he and his co-authors examine how to design incentive systems that help migratory species—on land and in the air—navigate a patchwork of public and private lands.

They develop a framework based on two key ecological traits: route plasticity and resilience. These traits reveal four central challenges: free riding, holdouts, transaction costs, and transnational coordination. The framework is applied to two species—mule deer and monarch butterflies—to identify combinations of mechanisms that support successful migration.

2. Economics and Epidemiology

Working with colleagues at Wyoming, Shogren has expanded research linking economics and epidemiology to address long-term pandemic risks, including estimating the first benefit cost study of the 2020 COVID-19 outbreak.

In *Scientific Reports*, the UW team compares two strategies for controlling emerging epidemics: physical distancing and regular testing with self-isolation. Using an integrated epidemiological-economic model that accounts for superspreading, they evaluate how each strategy performs under realistic conditions.

Additional work on COVID-19 and willful ignorance has been published in a leading psychology journal.

3. Economics and ecology interactions and feedback (with the Beijer Institute)

Shogren continues his collaboration with the Beijer Institute at the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences, where he is a Fellow and a Member of the Academy.

In *Nature Sustainability*, the group explores “response diversity”—the idea that resilience depends on having a range of responses to change. Just as financial portfolios spread risk, ecosystems rely on diverse species to maintain function under stress.

They argue that this principle is not addressed sufficiently in human systems such as urban planning, public health, and food production. Their work defines response diversity, shows how it emerges, and explains how it can be strengthened—or lost.

This year, the group began new work on how to measure welfare changes in rapidly shifting ecosystems constrained by rigid policy institutions.

4. Economics of Oaths and non-market institutions

With French colleagues, Shogren continues to study non-market institutions—especially the role of solemn oaths in shaping behavior and facilitating exchange.

In *Economics Letters*, he and his graduate student examine how oath-taking affects behavior in both simultaneous and sequential prisoner’s dilemma games. They find a marked shift among second movers—from always defecting to conditionally cooperating—suggesting that preferences can depend on context.

In *Games and Economic Behavior*, related work shows how oaths affect trust and exchange under different information conditions. Several additional papers are under review, including one revise-and-resubmit.

In *Journal of Experimental Criminology*, Shogren and colleagues demonstrated how the truth-telling oath improved the performance on eyewitness testimony.

5. Economic experimentation for resource and environmental policy

Shogren and co-authors from the Teton Group of Behavioral Environmental Economics published a *Science Policy Forum* calling for greater use of experimental methods in environmental policy.

They argue that many policies rely on methods that cannot identify cause and effect, which risks ineffective or counterproductive outcomes. They propose embedding formal experimentation into environmental programs to support “learning by doing.” This paper has been influential in getting both policymakers and scientists to think about how to use the experimental mindset in their projects so as to identify cost-effective and costly options to address public good provision and external impacts on third parties.

Recent work extends this effort to climate policy alignment, Colorado River water rights, and the role of experimental economics in public policy (forthcoming in *Review of Environmental Economics and Policy*). New research is underway on two-way externalities and institutional misalignment.

6. Creative Economy (Presidential Fellow)

Shogren is serving as UW Presidential Fellow on the Creative Economy, focusing on how market and non-market values shape arts and culture.

Wyoming’s creative sector generates both tangible and intangible value—jobs, income, identity, and community vitality. The arts create a chain reaction: they attract people, support businesses, generate tax revenue, and strengthen local economies. This is not just a story—it is measurable and economically significant.

Working with the Wyoming Arts Alliance and the Center for Business and Economic Analysis (CBEA), estimates suggest the creative economy contributes over \$1.4 billion to state GDP, supports more than 14,000 jobs, and generates over \$35 million in state and local tax revenue.

The central challenge remains scale. Wyoming has strong talent, but limited population and resources create a “border effect” that restricts reach beyond the state. Expanding that reach requires sustained investment and coordination.

Shogren has worked to establish a baseline for Wyoming’s creative economy by collaborating with key partners, including the Wyoming Arts Alliance, Wyoming Arts Council, WESTAF, UCross, and the Neltje Center for Excellence in Creativity and the Arts. From there, the work expands outward—comparing Wyoming to other states and identifying gaps and opportunities.

As part of the Global Leadership in Entrepreneur Educators Network (GLEEN), Shogren participated a week-long workshop on the theory and practice of Disciplined Entrepreneurship at the MIT Sloan School of Management. The goal was to learn about how best to implement this structural approach to help creative and cultural students focus on developing a sustainable career in the creative economy.

- i. The effort now focuses on three goals:
 - (i) help establish Wyoming’s creative economy hub at University of Wyoming;
 - (ii) benchmark against other states and cities; and
 - (iii) develop a strategic plan to expand Wyoming’s creative sector.

This year, Shogren also presented the lessons learned on the creative economy across Wyoming, including talks at the Rotary clubs in Laramie, Jackson, Douglas, Casper, Lander, and Riverton.

College of Education

Dr. Marisa Macy, (Ph.D. Special Education, University of Oregon)
John P. Ellbogen Foundation Professorship in Early Childhood Education

During the 2025-2026 academic year, Dr. Marisa Macy advanced the University of Wyoming’s land-grant mission as the John P. Ellbogen Foundation Professor of Early Childhood Education by connecting research, instruction, and service to the needs of Wyoming’s youngest children, families, educators, and communities. Her scholarship focused on authentic assessment, early childhood special education, developmental screening, inclusive early learning environments, family-professional collaboration, and the transition from preschool to kindergarten. This work included peer-reviewed journals and two new books on early childhood curriculum entitled, “Realizing Children’s Rights in a Global Context,” and “Reggio Emilia-Inspired Pedagogies of Listening and Inclusion.” Together, these projects translate international and evidence-based practices into practical approaches that help educators observe children more carefully, identify strengths and needs earlier, partner more effectively with families, and make better instructional and intervention decisions. For Wyoming, the benefits are direct: children are more likely to receive support early, families are better connected to educational systems, and teachers and early childhood providers have stronger tools for serving children with disabilities, multilingual learners, and children in rural communities across Wyoming.

Dr. Macy's instructional, leadership, and outreach activities also strengthened Wyoming's early childhood special education workforce and created new ways for educators and service providers across the state to connect. She founded the Wyoming Early Childhood Special Education Ecosystem Consortium, an interdisciplinary forum that meets monthly to discuss early childhood special education topics affecting Wyoming children, families, educators, service providers, and communities. Her monthly Wyoming education ecosystem meetings created a regular forum for over 200 people in Wyoming who are educators, early childhood leaders, policy makers, service providers, university partners, and community stakeholders to share needs, coordinate resources, and identify practical solutions for children and families across the state. Two initiatives of the consortium are an early childhood special education Wyoming conference, and the formation of a Wyoming subdivision of the Council for Exceptional Children's Division for Early Childhood. Her collaboration with the Wyoming Department of Education has already resulted in eight hours of sessions and workshops devoted to early childhood special education workforce content at Wyoming TeacherCon26 in Casper. Dr. Macy also served on the state leadership team for the Wyoming Early Childhood Pyramid Model, further bridging research and practice in support of young children's social, emotional, and behavioral development. When forty-eight Wyoming educators registered for the National Association for the Education of Young Children annual conference, she organized a November 19th breakfast meetup in Florida, attended by sixteen people from Sheridan, Gillette, Cheyenne, and Laramie, so Wyoming educators could network and exchange ideas for the state. In addition, Dr. Macy was the 2025 fall semester University of Wyoming Faculty Senate Speaker Series award recipient, and her invited recorded presentation on leadership extended the reach of her work across the university and into her classes and outreach efforts. Through these initiatives with direct impact on Wyoming, Dr. Macy moved research into everyday practice, strengthened preparation for University of Wyoming students, supported educators in rural and underserved communities, and contributed to more responsive services for Wyoming families and children.

Dr. Tracy Spies, (Ph.D. Emotional Psychology, Texas A&M)
Fisher Fund for the Advancement of Literacy

Dr. Tracy Spies, Fisher Family Professor in Literacy Education, joined the University of Wyoming in the Fall 2025. Dr. Spies joins UW's Literacy Research Center and Clinic from the University of Nevada Las Vegas where she spent 13 years in the Department of Early Childhood, Multilingual, and Special Education. Her research program focuses on (a) language and literacy interventions for underserved students; and (2) the critical variables in preparing teachers to create high quality language and literacy classroom environments.

During the 2025-2026 academic year, Dr. Spies focused much of her research and teaching to respond to Wyoming's initiatives around dyslexia. She created a fully online graduate certificate program in dyslexia (currently under review), along with the five corresponding classes set to be offered in Summer 2026. Designed for in-service teachers, this certificate program aims to support the implementation of [Senate File 59](#). It develops educators' knowledge and skills in the areas of screening and diagnosis, development of individualized reading plans, and the provision of explicit and systematic instruction. In her research, Dr. Spies developed and piloted both an English and Spanish structured literacy intervention with embedded goal setting and social-emotional learning. The aim of this research is to move beyond understanding the cognitive and instructional deficits contributing to reading difficulties to an examination of psychological factors such as motivation. Research on the effectiveness of the intervention is expected to begin in the Fall.

Dr. Spies published two articles and currently has one in-press. She served as lead on the submission of a Spencer Research to Practice Partnership Grant with members of the Eastern Shoshone and Northern Arapaho nations, Drs. Rush and Brock. This grant, *Walking Together: Empowering Teachers for Wyoming's Indian Education for*

All, aimed to support building Wyoming's Indian Education for All Framework. She is currently preparing a W.T. Foundation Officer's Grant with her doctoral student to seek funding to pilot a fluency intervention using culturally relevant texts for Native American students.

She also began her work supporting Wyoming schools in their literacy initiatives. Dr. Spies joined Dr. Brock and Sara Pommarane in a professional development series in writing at Holy Name Catholic School in Sheridan. She also designed and developed PD for schools in Platte County.

Dr. Nikki Baldwin, (Ph.D. Curriculum Studies, University of Wyoming)
Everett D. and Elizabeth M. Lantz Distinguished Professorship in Education

During the 2025–2026 academic year, Dr. Nikki Baldwin, the Everett D. and Elizabeth M. Lantz Distinguished Professor in Education, completed a pilot study in collaboration with Dr. Amy Encinger and the Wyoming Department of Education TANF Preschool Grantees to pilot the Early Childhood Program Evaluation Profile (EC-PEP; Encinger, Baldwin, & Carlisle, 2025). The EC-PEP is a comprehensive self-assessment system that helps programs document strengths, identify opportunities for growth, and align their work with the Wyoming Early Learning Standards. Each of the 26 early childhood programs in the pilot completed a self-assessment, a portfolio of evidence, and family and staff surveys, producing a robust snapshot of current practice to guide reflection and program improvement. The EC-PEP is Wyoming's first standardized framework for evaluating early childhood program quality against national benchmarks. Dr. Baldwin and Dr. Encinger also developed and tested an observation tool aligned with the EC-PEP to provide more robust feedback to participating programs. A complete EC-PEP tool and accompanying observation for early childhood programs in Wyoming will roll out in the fall of 2026.

Dr. Baldwin also obtained funding to create interactive Play Labs to provide early childhood educators with accessible, hands-on models of high-quality, intentional classroom design and support their facilitation of children's play to achieve learning outcomes. A mobile Play Lab is offered at statewide early childhood conferences, and a permanent installation will be accessed by educators and families at the UW Early Care and Education Center. Additionally, Dr. Baldwin offered the first Play Practitioner Grant program for kindergarten and first-grade teachers, partnering recipients with a K–1 teacher-mentor and providing high-quality classroom materials to enhance student learning. Twelve Wyoming elementary school teachers participated in the initial Play Practitioner Grant program this year, with an expansion planned for 2026–2027. Dr. Baldwin also provided professional development for four Wyoming school districts and hosted the 5th Annual Kindergarten Summit for 35 kindergarten and first-grade teachers in Rock Springs, WY. She is currently planning the University of Wyoming's first Play Institute for teachers working with children from birth through second grade, to be held on the UW campus June 29–30, 2026. Over 100 participants have already registered for the event.

Finally, Dr. Baldwin continues to lead the Wyoming Early Childhood Professional Learning Collaborative (WYECPLC), an outreach organization funded in partnership with the Wyoming Departments of Family and Workforce Services to provide free professional development aligned with national standards for Wyoming childcare providers and preschool teachers. The WYECPLC provides local classes, online webinars, site-based coaching, and micro-credential courses through a network of Learning Specialists located across the state. Hundreds of Wyoming providers access these trainings yearly, ensuring that professional growth opportunities remain accessible to early childhood educators throughout the state.

Dr. Jihyun Lee, (Ph.D. Special Education, University of Texas Austin)
Everett D. and Elizabeth M. Lantz Distinguished Professorship in Education

Jihyun Lee, Ph.D., associate professor in the Special Education Program in the College of Education at the University of Wyoming, received the Everett D. and Elizabeth M. Lantz Distinguished Professorship (\$2,000) in December 2025 for the January 2026–January 2027 award period. During Spring 2026, Dr. Lee partnered with two elementary schools in Laramie County School District #1 in Cheyenne, Wyoming, to address mathematics learning challenges among upper elementary and middle school students. In collaboration with three teachers and approximately 60 sixth-grade students at Meadowlark and Coyote Ridge Elementary Schools, she implemented and evaluated evidence-based Algebra-Readiness Intervention Modules focused on fractions, a foundational skill for success in Algebra I and STEM learning. The Tier 2 intervention incorporated explicit instruction, multiple mathematical representations, targeted remediation of misconceptions, opportunities to develop flexible fraction knowledge, and self-graphing activities to support engagement and progress monitoring. Teachers implemented the intervention over 15 lessons delivered three to five times per week in authentic school settings. Approximately 40 students participated in the treatment group and 20 students served as a comparison group. Dr. Lee provided instructional materials, scripted lessons, and teacher manuals, and conducted observations to measure fidelity of implementation and assessment procedures. Dr. Lee is currently analyzing pretest–posttest and social validity data to examine the intervention’s effectiveness and feasibility. Findings are expected to contribute to the evidence base for scalable mathematics interventions that support diverse learners in Wyoming schools and beyond. She plans to prepare a manuscript for journal submission in Summer or Fall 2026 and continue collaborating with teachers at Coyote Ridge Elementary School during the 2026–27 academic year. The project benefited Wyoming teachers and students, particularly in rural schools, by providing validated instructional materials and professional learning opportunities to strengthen classroom practice. A University of Wyoming graduate student also gained authentic research experience through collaboration with educators, helping build statewide capacity in education, research and practice. Ultimately, this work aims to expand evidence-based mathematics practices and support students’ long-term academic and career readiness.

Dr. Amy Encinger, (Ph.D. Human Sciences, University of Nebraska-Lincoln)
Everett D. and Elizabeth M. Lantz Distinguished Professorship in Education

During the 2025–2026 academic year, Dr. Amy Encinger, the Everett D. and Elizabeth M. Lantz Distinguished Professor in Education, collaborated with Dr. Nikki Baldwin and the Wyoming Department of Education TANF Preschool Grantees to pilot the Early Childhood Program Evaluation Profile (EC-PEP; Encinger, Baldwin, & Carlisle, 2025). The EC-PEP is a comprehensive evaluation system that helps programs document their strengths, identify opportunities for growth, and align practices with the Wyoming Early Learning Standards. It is Wyoming’s first standardized framework for evaluating early childhood program quality in relation to national benchmarks.

A total of 31 early childhood programs participated in the pilot, including 26 TANF-funded preschool programs and five additional volunteer programs. Of the participating programs, 30 submitted a self-assessment and 29 submitted portfolios of evidence. The pilot also generated more than 450 parent survey responses and 215 teacher and staff survey responses. Together, these data are being used to develop a statewide snapshot of current practices and to support program reflection, planning, and continuous improvement.

Drs. Encinger and Baldwin also developed and tested an observation tool aligned with the EC-PEP to provide participating programs with more robust and actionable feedback. In January, they conducted a two-day training

for the six-member Wyoming Early Childhood Professional Learning Collaborative Team. The training included three live classroom observations in Lander and Riverton, followed by structured debriefing and revisions to the observation tool based on team feedback. Four additional observations were conducted during the spring in Casper and Laramie, leading to further refinement of the tool. The remaining observations will be conducted in fall 2026.

Dr. Encinger also conducted a statewide study of Wyoming's early childhood workforce, examining professional learning experiences, perceived competencies, barriers to participation, and educator stress and well-being. More than 150 early childhood professionals from across Wyoming participated. Findings will be presented at the 2026 Cowboy State Early Childhood Conference in Casper, at an international early childhood conference in spring 2027, and are being prepared for submission to a peer-reviewed scholarly journal.

In addition, Dr. Encinger continued work on a \$96,517 Head Start Data Grant examining how Native language and cultural engagement were associated with kindergarten readiness outcomes of American Indian and Alaska Native children. During the 2025-2026 year, she finalized results, gathered result interpretation and dissemination feedback from Tribal partners, presented findings at the University of Nebraska's biennial Child, Youth, Family, and Schools Summit, prepared results to share with Tribal Head Start programs and families, and began developing a scholarly manuscript.

Dr. Encinger also published "Indigenous Children's Resilience in Early Childhood Classrooms in the U.S.: Culturally Relevant Practices and Teacher Interpretations of Standardized Assessments" in the Journal of Early Childhood Research.

Collectively, these activities produced practical evidence to strengthen early childhood program quality, support Wyoming's early childhood workforce, and improve services for children and families.

Dr. Jenna M. Shim, (Ph.D. Language and Literacy Education, University of Albany, State University of New York)

John P. "Jack" Ellbogen College of Education Deanship Fund

We appreciate the opportunity to highlight how the Ellbogen Deanship has continued to advance the mission of the College of Education across Wyoming.

Dr. Jenna Min Shim, John P. "Jack" Ellbogen Endowed Dean of the College of Education, has stewarded the Ellbogen Deanship with deep appreciation for the trust embedded in the Ellbogen name and with a continued focus on student success, academic innovation, and service to Wyoming communities. During the 2025–26 academic year, the Deanship supported both immediate student needs and broader strategic initiatives connected to educator preparation and the future of Wyoming schools.

This year, the Ellbogen Deanship expanded its impact across the full spectrum of the College community by supporting undergraduate students, graduate students, faculty, and staff. Funding supported undergraduate and graduate student financial aid, student teaching assistance, faculty and student recognition, staff development, professional learning opportunities, and initiatives designed to strengthen educator preparation and workforce development across the state.

Through programs such as the John P. "Jack" Ellbogen Dean's Student Teaching Support Award, the Peer Mentoring Program, the Stay and Teach in Wyoming Award, the Wyoming Rural Teacher Corps, and the Dean's

Distinguished Speaker Series, the Deanship helped expand opportunities for students and educators while reinforcing the College's land-grant mission to serve Wyoming communities. The Stay and Teach in Wyoming Award was designed to support the retention of College graduates within the state and to help address ongoing teacher shortage challenges facing Wyoming schools. Similarly, the Wyoming Rural Teacher Corps supports current students preparing to teach in small rural schools by strengthening rural clinical experiences, mentorship, and community engagement opportunities across the state.

The Deanship also provided flexible support for forward-looking faculty work with direct relevance to Wyoming. One example is Dr. Ling Zhang's CoIEP project, an AI-supported system designed to assist with the development and evaluation of Individualized Education Programs in special education. Deanship support contributed to participant interviews, testing, books, and conference-related activities that advanced the project's continued development. CoIEP is especially significant within the Wyoming context because it directly supports special education practice and has involved meaningful collaboration with Wyoming teachers and school districts. The project also reflects the College's growing ability to bridge scholarship, innovation, entrepreneurship, and product development in ways that create practical tools for educators.

Across all of these efforts, Dr. Shim remains focused on ensuring that the Ellbogen Deanship supports both present and emerging educational needs while advancing work that benefits Wyoming students, educators, schools, and communities.

College of Engineering and Physical Sciences

Vacant, Templeton Associate Professor of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science

Dr. Ryan Webb, (Ph.D. Civil and Environmental Engineering, Colorado State University)
Loy and Edith Harris Assistant Professor

Dr. Ryan Webb's Mountain Hydrology Lab group has three main focus areas: 1) Improving our ability to measure mountain snowpacks with satellites to improve water resource management, 2) Improving hydrologic forecast models by further understanding the flowpaths that snowmelt takes from hillslopes to streams, and 3) Improving our understanding of impacts from wildfire and forest management techniques on water resources in the Rocky Mountains. During the 2025-2026 academic year, Dr. Webb's lab group conducted projects within these three areas of research funded by NASA, NSF, Bureau of Reclamation, and UW funds. These projects included graduate students that assist in conducting the work with one student successfully defending their master's thesis in the spring 2026 semester.

Dr. Webb's teaching during the 2025-2026 academic year included 2 courses: CE 3300 – Hydraulic Engineering and CE 4650/5650 – Hydrology Field Methods. The Hydrology Field Methods course is a new innovative course that Dr. Webb developed to integrate teaching with his research. This course focused on field observations for hydrologic monitoring of a watershed during both fall and spring semesters. To accomplish this, the course was 3 credits over a full year (1 or 2 variable credits per semester) where the students chose which semester to take for 2 credits based on their schedules. This allowed students to gain experience in making observations during all seasons of the hydrologic cycle from low flow in the fall to snowpack measurements mid-winter, etc. The course followed the format of a vertically integrated project (VIP) in which each group was responsible for specific components of instrumentation/monitoring. The VIP structure is designed for mentoring purposes: Dr. Webb mentored graduate students that mentored undergraduates, and more experienced undergraduates mentored new

undergraduates. Thus, the course was organized similar to a company with Dr. Webb as the owner. The groups came together as a larger team to assess observations and conduct data analyses. The company-like structure of the course prepares students to work within teams of people from different backgrounds and skills to work towards a common goal of monitoring a watershed in a manner similar to what may be found as a consultant. This course is a major educational component in Dr. Webb's awarded NSF CAREER grant that will expand on his educational and research sites around Laramie.

Dr. Jonathan Brant, (Ph.D., Environmental Engineering, University of Nevada, Reno)
Vincent O. Smith Professorship in Engineering

Dr. Brant's projects aim to reduce the energy consumption of desalination processes, making them more viable for rural communities, such as those in Wyoming. Such technologies serve as the linchpin for making municipal and industrial water reuse a viable option for Wyoming. Water reuse is particularly needed to combat ongoing droughts and to support new industrial uses of Wyoming's water, such as data centers. A second research area is the development of new materials and processes for recovering critical minerals from produced waters and coals. The benefits of Dr. Brant's work to Wyoming include expanding our ability to use the state's resources effectively, diversifying our water resources, and enhancing environmental protection.

During the 2025-26 academic year, Dr. Brant taught three courses: Introduction to Environmental Engineering (junior level), Design of Wastewater Treatment Facilities (senior level), and Water Reuse (graduate level). He supervised four postdoctoral scientists, advised three MS students in Environmental Engineering, and one staff member (master technician). He served as Principal Investigator on four active research grants focused on developing technologies to treat oil and gas produced waters and extract critical minerals, such as lithium and rare earth elements, from brines. Funding agencies for these projects included the Department of Energy (DOE) and the National Science Foundation (NSF). Dr. Brant submitted 10 patent applications (all under review) covering his work on magnetic devices that convert carbon dioxide and other feedstocks into fuels and convert coal and coal chars into graphitic materials. For his research efforts, Dr. Brant was awarded an Excellence in Research Award from the University. Dr. Brant has continued to grow his spin-off company, MAGNESIS Corporation, by soliciting investment and executing several pilot demonstrations. His core technology is a magnetic approach to manipulating molecular properties without external energy or chemical inputs. Applications for this technology include enhancing hydrogen yield during electrolysis, converting carbon dioxide into higher-order molecules for fuel applications, and improving the energy efficiency of desalination processes. MAGNESIS Corporation represents a concerted effort by Dr. Brant to contribute to and diversify Wyoming's burgeoning economy. At the conclusion of the Spring 2026 semester, Dr. Brant will take on the role of Department Head for Civil and Architectural Engineering and Construction Management.

Dr. Daniel Dale, (Ph.D. Physics, Cornell University)
Harry C. Vaughan Professorship in Astronomy

Professor Dale's research focuses on star-forming galaxies. He gathers astronomical data from NASA's *Hubble* and *James Webb Space Telescopes*. He aims to understand how galaxies convert gas clouds into stars and how the life cycles of those stars impact the formation of the next generation of stars. He published 35 refereed publications in the 2025 calendar year and oversaw a research group of one postdoc, three graduate students, and 3 undergraduate students. He has averaged 14 refereed publications per year for the 25 years that he has been on the faculty at UW. In 2025 Professor Dale oversaw 7 extramural grants that brought \$883K to UW. One of these federal grants involves Professor Dale directing a summer internship program for astronomy undergraduates. A

critical aspect to Professor Dale's work is the career preparation that student interns receive as they carry out research in his group. Students learn marketable skills in computer programming, public speaking, and technical writing in addition to gaining teamwork and leadership experience. Professor Dale also served as the director of the *UW Harry C. Vaughan Planetarium* (~8000 visitors/year), as director of *Wyoming Astro Camp* for two dozen middle school students (100% free to participants), and as head coach of the UW Women's hockey team (for the 17th consecutive year!). He also visited K-12 school districts to do hands-on experiments with school children. In 2025 he made all-day visits to the Rock Springs and Gillette school districts.

Dr. Anthony Denzer, (Ph.D. Architecture, University of California, Los Angeles)
Thomas and Shelley Botts Endowed Chair

Dr. Denzer has served as Department Head for Civil and Architectural Engineering and Construction Management since 2015. The Department has 24 full-time faculty, 50 graduate students, and 380 undergraduate students, plus about 180 seats filled in the online Land Surveying program. Undergraduate degrees in Architectural Engineering and Civil Engineering are accredited by ABET, while Construction Management is accredited by ACCE. Accreditation status is strong. Undergraduate students in all three majors pass their disciplinary exams at better rates than the national averages.

Under Dr. Denzer's leadership, the Department of Civil and Architectural Engineering and Construction Management recorded numerous accomplishments and activities in the 2025-26 academic year. The Land Surveying program won the 2025 NCEES Engineering Education Award. The department initiated the process for new B.S. degree program in Land Surveying, which is ongoing. The department completed a major renovation of computer lab facilities benefitting undergraduate students. Dr. Denzer helped facilitate two new scholarship funds being established with the UW Foundation. Dr. Denzer helped onboard one new faculty member, and supported one faculty member to be tenured and promoted to Associate Professor and another to be promoted to full Professor. He nominated and supported faculty for two major awards. In all three majors, career-placement is excellent: virtually all graduating students who seek a career position have multiple offers in-hand. Employer-relations are very strong.

Finally, Dr. Denzer maintains an active research program as an architectural historian focusing on housing & energy use and a strong teaching role—67 students in ARE/ART 3030: History of Architecture in F25; and 30 students in ARE 2060: Architectural Design Studio II in S26.

Vacant – Donald L. Blackstone, Jr. Professorship in Geology, NEW

Vacant – Roy J. Shlemon Professorship in Applied Engineering and Environmental Geology, NEW

Dr. David Mukai, (Ph.D. Civil Engineering, University of Washington)
H.T. Person Professorship of Engineering

During the 2025–26 academic year, Dr. David Mukai served as the H.T. Person Professor of Engineering with a strong emphasis on instructional leadership that directly benefits University of Wyoming students and the State of Wyoming. He supported the continued growth and effectiveness of the Engineering Science (ES) unit, which provides foundational coursework essential to all engineering disciplines. Instructional excellence within the unit was again recognized through a Promoting Intellectual Engagement (PIE) award, reflecting sustained high-quality teaching that supports student success, retention, and preparation for Wyoming's engineering workforce. Dr.

Mukai also contributed to the final year of the Saddle Up design challenge for first-year students, which provided valuable hands-on, team-based engineering experience. As the structure of Saddle Up has evolved, he is actively pursuing new approaches for delivering a freshman design experience that continues to emphasize creativity, teamwork, and engineering fundamentals relevant to Wyoming industries and infrastructure needs.

In addition to instructional activities, Dr. Mukai contributed to the university's broader research and outreach mission. Although not directly funded through the endowed professorship, his research program centers on long-standing collaboration with the Institute of Science Tokyo, focusing on the behavior and performance of concrete structures during earthquakes. This work advances national and international understanding of infrastructure resilience, with implications for the safety and durability of critical structures in seismically vulnerable regions. The collaboration typically results in approximately two peer-reviewed journal publications and ten conference papers annually, providing research opportunities and professional development for graduate students and strengthening the University of Wyoming's visibility in structural and earthquake engineering. Dr. Mukai also continued to manage student funding through UWEFE fees, teach courses in Engineering Science and Civil and Architectural Engineering, and engage in activities that support UW's mission as Wyoming's land-grant institution.

Dr. Maohong Fan, (Ph.D. Chemical Engineering, Osaka University)

Carrell Family Energy and Petroleum Professorship in the College of Engineering and Physical Sciences (see SER Professor of Chemical and Biomedical Engineering).

Dr. Lamia Goual, (Ph.D., Petroleum Engineering, Imperial College in London, UK)

Castagne Professor in Petroleum Engineering

Dr. Goual is a Professor of Energy and Petroleum Engineering and holds the A. J. Castagne Professorship in the College of Engineering and Physical Sciences. Her research in petroleum colloid and interface science explores how intermolecular and surface forces influence subsurface flow and wetting phenomena. These multiscale investigations support essential advancements in energy production and storage, carbon sequestration, and environmental remediation. Over the past year, Dr. Goual has taught graduate courses and mentored M.S. and Ph.D. students through large-scale research projects on gas and foam-based enhanced oil recovery. These initiatives, supported by the State of Wyoming and ThermoFisher Scientific, aim to revitalize the state's mature oilfields through pilot-scale implementation of advanced gas injection technologies. Her scholarly output includes three peer-reviewed articles, a research patent, and a conference paper. As the Graduate Program Director, she expanded the M.Eng. program, established several inter-university MOUs to bolster enrollment, and guided students toward timely graduation. In addition to serving on five graduate committees and co-managing the EERB Hydrocarbon Laboratory, Dr. Goual chaired a successful faculty search for Fall 2026. She continued her editorial leadership as an Associate Editor for *Energy & Fuels* and organized a special issue for the Petrophase international conference in Alaska. Expanding her impact to community outreach, she co-launched a summer camp in 2026 at the Center of Innovation for Flow through Porous Media. This program engages students in grades 6-12 with subsurface research, positioning the University as a premier hub for STEM engagement and energy innovation.

Vacant, Williams, J. Richard & Hjalma Person Engineering Dean's Excellence Fund

Dr. Jonathan Naughton, (Ph.D. Mechanical Engineering, Pennsylvania State University)
A.J. Castagne Professorship in the College of Engineering and Physical Sciences

Jonathan Naughton's research focuses on the application of unsteady aerodynamics to the transportation and energy fields. Specific applications include better understanding the performance of wind turbine and helicopter blades as well as reducing drag on aircraft. Dr. Naughton and his students investigate these aerodynamic flows using experiments carried out in wind tunnels at the university as well as with partners such as NASA. Since student mentorship is central to the University's mission, Dr. Naughton's research group is made up of students from all levels (undergraduate, Masters, and Doctoral students). In the classroom, Dr. Naughton teaches courses in fluid dynamics and aerodynamics including a two-course introductory fluid dynamics series for first-year graduate students. Students from Dr. Naughton's research group go on to further education at other universities and jobs in both the public and private sector in the aerospace and energy industries.

The impacts of Dr. Naughton's research and teaching are felt from local to global levels. For example, a study was carried out at NASA-Langley Research Center in partnership with Resono Pressure Systems (a spin-off company located in Wyoming) on the Space Launch System that recently launched 4 astronauts on their way around the moon. This effort characterized the rocket's response to atmospheric winds during launch and was awarded a NASA Group Achievement Award. Other work performed in conjunction with a Wyoming company (Wyoming Instrumentation Development) assess materials developed to improve aircraft performance by reducing drag during flight. Dr. Naughton also works in wind energy contributing to large international efforts as well as working with a Wyoming Company – Airloom – to develop their unique wind energy conversion system.

Dr. Dongliang Duan, (Ph.D. Electrical Engineering, Colorado State University)
G.J. Guthrie Nicholson Professorship in Electrical Engineering

Dr. Dongliang Duan is an associate professor in the Department of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science, College of Engineering and Physical Science. He was the leading PI for an NSF MRI grant, under which support a hybrid real-time digital simulation platform which could conduct real-time simulations of large power systems was acquired. The major goal for his Nicholson professorship was to further promote the usage of the platform for various interdisciplinary research on power system monitoring, optimization, and cyber security issues and for strengthening our power engineering curriculum.

During the AY 2025-2026, a MS student in Dr. Duan's group worked on the Opal RT platform to accomplish her thesis. With the Opal RT simulations, she studied the effects of increasing integration of renewable resources such as wind energies on power system stability. Her work has been presented at an IEEE conference. Furthermore, Dr. Duan obtained additional support from the college to upgrade the Opal RT platform in both hardware and software.

Dr. Mohammad Piri, (Ph.D. Petroleum Engineering, Imperial College London)
Thomas and Shelley Botts Endowed Chair in Unconventional Reservoirs in the College of Engineering and Physical Sciences (See WY Excellence Endowment Report)

Dr. Mohammad Piri, (Ph.D. Petroleum Engineering, Imperial College London)
Alchemy Sciences Petroleum Engineering Chair (See WY Excellence Endowment Report)

Dr. Minou Rabiei, (Ph.D. Applied Statistics-Reservoir Engineering, Curtin University of Technology, Perth)
Lynch Engineering Excellence Professor

During the 2025–26 academic year, Dr. Minou Rabiei advanced research in digital innovation for subsurface energy systems, with a focus on integrating data analytics, machine learning, and knowledge graph technologies to improve infrastructure safety and environmental stewardship. As Principal Investigator of a U.S. Department of Transportation–funded project, she led the development of a geospatial knowledge graph framework for monitoring geohazards and assessing risks to pipeline systems across multiple states. This work supports more proactive and data-driven decision-making for pipeline operators and regulators, directly benefiting Wyoming’s energy sector by enhancing infrastructure integrity, reducing environmental risks, and promoting safer energy transportation. Her research also explored applications of data analytics in emerging areas such as carbon storage and hydrogen systems, aligning with Wyoming’s strategic priorities in energy transition and sustainability.

In parallel, Dr. Rabiei significantly expanded instructional offerings to prepare students for the evolving energy workforce. She developed and delivered new courses in energy data analytics, visual analytics, and machine learning applications, emphasizing practical skills in Python, data-driven decision-making, and digital technologies relevant to industry. Through these efforts, students gained hands-on experience working with real-world datasets and tools used in the energy sector, improving their readiness for careers in Wyoming’s oil, gas, and emerging energy industries. Additionally, she contributed to the development of a new undergraduate certificate in Subsurface Energy, including a Digital Innovation focus area, designed to equip students from diverse engineering disciplines with critical skills at the intersection of energy and data science. Collectively, her instructional and research activities have strengthened workforce development, supported industry collaboration, and contributed to the long-term economic and environmental resilience of Wyoming.

Dr. Daniel Dale, (Ph.D. Physics, Cornell University)
Carrell Family College of Engineering and Physical Sciences Deanship

The Carrell Family College of Engineering and Physical Sciences Deanship fund has been critical to providing unique professional development opportunities, boosting the morale of faculty and staff, and enabling creative avenues for recruiting the next generation of bright engineers, scientists, and mathematicians. The College has had enormous success bringing in a professional coach to lead separate training sessions for students, faculty, staff, and department heads. Topics from the past year included navigating change, the power of delegation, team building, utilizing emotional intelligence in the workplace, and building resilience. Deanship funds are also deployed to each department to recruit both undergraduate and graduate students. Some units use these funds exclusively to bring in a large cohort of prospective graduate students to campus on the same weekend. Such large-group events immediately begin laying the foundation of team building which can enhance our abilities to attract students who might otherwise be lured elsewhere. Other departments use deanship funds to recruit undergraduate students, such as well-trained transfer students from two-year technical schools in Canada. A new international recruiting effort began in Summer 2025 when eight junior-level STEM students from Vietnam were brought to UW for four-week internships in CEPS research labs. The goal with this program is raise awareness for UW in East Asia and boost the quality of our graduate recruiting. More locally, the deanship funds are regularly used to help with food security through monthly lunches provided for all CEPS students.

Dr. Francois Jacobs, (Ph.D. Education Human Resources Studies in Construction Management, Colorado State University)

Roy L and Caryl L Cline Distinguished Professor in Engineering

Dr. Jacobs has been leading the Construction Management (CM) program in the College of Engineering since 2019. Under his leadership, the program has achieved significant milestones, including continued student growth, now reaching 173 declared majors. The program also benefits from strong and sustained industry support, contributing to an exceptional 100% job placement rate for graduates.

Additional information about the CM program is available at the following link: <https://www.uwyo.edu/civil/construction-management/index.html>. Highlights include the program's accreditation through the American Council for Construction Education (ACCE), robust student engagement opportunities, and the accomplishments of the Senior Capstone course. Notably, CM students have exceeded the national average on the American Institute of Constructors (AIC) certification exam by 7.3% for three consecutive years, consistently ranking among the top five programs nationwide.

The Construction Management (CM) program steers two key funding platforms under the leadership of Dr. Jacobs, both of which have demonstrated continued success. The first initiative, “*Evening with Industry*” <https://www.uwyo.edu/civil/construction-management/evening-with-industry.html>, provides CM students with the opportunity to connect with construction companies in a relaxed, social setting held the evening prior to the fall and spring career fairs. This event strengthens student–industry engagement and enhances career networking opportunities.

The second initiative, the “*Industry Partner Program*” https://www.canva.com/design/DAGUhM2OTUc/RfpENzYDs3wKbDIZcmt-5w/view?utm_content=DAGUhM2OTUc&utm_campaign=designshare&utm_medium=link&utm_source=editor, offers construction companies a structured way to support the CM program through annual sponsorship tiers of \$3,000 (Bronze), \$5,000 (Silver), and \$10,000 (Gold). During the 2025–2026 academic year, this program generated \$91,000 in industry support, under the leadership of Dr. Jacobs.

In addition, the CM program secured an additional \$33,000 in funding through the Wyoming AGC in support of the Construction Management Club, further enhancing student engagement and professional development opportunities.

Dr. Jacobs also led the implementation of a mandatory Internship Program, requiring every student in the Construction Management (CM) program to complete at least one internship experience, each internship requires a minimum of 240 supervised work hours and provides hands-on exposure to real-world construction roles such as project engineering, scheduling, and field operations.

To further support this initiative, a dedicated summer internship course (CM 4970) was introduced for the first time in the Spring 2026 semester. The course saw strong engagement, with an enrollment of 50 students, reflecting both student interest and the program’s emphasis on experiential learning.

Cline funding greatly contributed to the development and implementation of a “Career and Technical Education” (CTE) website/database for distribution across all high schools and community colleges in Wyoming, to help promote CTE as a valuable career path, including construction and related trades. The hyperlink:

<https://datahub.uwyo.edu/wycte/> navigate users to the website and database, which is managed and housed in the College of Engineering.

Dr. Jacobs currently serves on the Board of Directors on the Southeast Wyoming Builders Association (SEWBA) <https://cheyennehomebuilders.com> . Dr. Jacobs continue to serve as a Board Member on the AGC of America Education and Research Foundation, <https://www.agc.org/learn/agc-education-and-research-foundation> and serves as a Trustee Member on the Board of the American Council of Construction Education (ACCE) <https://www.agc.org/learn/agc-education-and-research-foundation>

Dr. Haibo Zhai, (Ph.D. Environmental Engineering, North Carolina State University)

Roy L and Caryl L Cline Distinguished Chair in Engineering. (See WY Excellence Endowment Report)

Dr. Vladmir Alvarado, (Ph.D. Chemical Engineering, University of Minnesota)

Gene Humphrey Professorship

Professor Alvarado dedicated activities in the international arena, as committed in the original proposal to request this professorship. As indicated, one of the objectives of this professorship focused on decarbonization efforts. Continuation of collaborative activities with the University of Bologna continued. Three main activities were developed at the University of Bologna:

1. Samples of porous rocks were treated and shipped to Prof. Bortolotti to run a proof of concept of measure very tight porous rock Field-Fast Cycling Nuclear Magnetic Resonance (FFC-NMR), a unique experimental technique unavailable at the University of Wyoming. The experiments demonstrated that it is possible to obtain enough signal from the samples to generate relatively clean relaxation rates as a function of the magnetic field. This hypothesis was formulated during Dr. Alvarado's sabbatical in 2024. This provided unique data to understand how porous media surfaces are modified by exposure to a number of exogeneous fluids. Potential applications under consideration is stimulation of shale reservoirs, rock geochemical modification by carbon dioxide and hydrogen, among other applications.
2. A PhD student in Dr. Alvarado's group, Johanna Romero, was sent to Dr. Bortolotti's group to train on NMR techniques with particular attention to FFC-NMR. She successfully collected data during her training and an experimental matrix was designed with the group in Bologna to send samples for additional measurements. A presentation by the student at the Interpore Conference in Nantes, France (May, 2026) was conducted, attracting attention from different international groups in attendance. A peer-reviewed article is being planned to report these results, once the experimental matrix is completed.
3. Collaboration with Prof. Pellegrini was reinitiated after a hiatus of several months to complete the publication of pending peer-review articles. Plans for preparation of a new funding proposal took place.

Dr. Kam Ng, (Ph.D. Civil Engineering, Iowa State University)

Hoy Engineering Fellowship

Dr. Kam Ng is a professor in the Department of Civil and Architectural Engineering and Construction Management at the University of Wyoming (UW). Dr. Ng is also an adjunct professor in the School of Energy Resources (SER). Ng's research focuses on transportation geotechnics, energy geotechnics and innovative construction materials. He has established a national reputation in developing design and construction

recommendations for driven pile foundations in intermediate geomaterials. Dr. Ng has been developing the Energy Geotechnics research program at the UW by acquiring advanced high temperature and high pressure (HTHP) polyaxial equipment from the National Science Foundation (NSF) and upgrading the conventional HTHP triaxial equipment from the Department of Energy (DOE). The energy geotechnics program has attracted multiple research fundings from the DOE and SER on CO₂ sequestration, hydrogen storage and Mowry Shale.

Dr. Ng was named the Hoy Engineering Fellow in Spring 2024 with his research focusing on innovative construction materials from coal-derived materials, mining residues, and CO₂ utilization. Building upon his research accomplishments on coal-derived materials, the Hoy Engineering Fellowship will elevate the UW as the leader in advancing uses of coal and mining residues for non-energy or non-fuel applications. Dr. Ng's research team has published 36 peer-reviewed journals, presented 7 conference proceedings, and filed more than 20 provisional patents on coal-derived materials and applications. Dr. Ng has published 107 peer-reviewed journals, 68 conference proceedings, and 28 technical reports. Dr. Ng has received more than 14 million research funding since joining the UW in 2012. Particularly, Dr. Ng received research funding on innovative construction materials from DOE, NSF, EPA, SER, and WYDOT. He has supervised 2 postdoc, 7 Ph.D. and 24 MS students. He is the recipient of the UW's President Innovation Fellow. He is currently supervising one research scientist, 2 Ph.D., 5 MS students, and 1 undergraduate research assistant. He also co-founded a startup company, Carbonado Technology LLC, to facilitate the commercialization of innovative construction products and applications. He has developed and taught courses on soil mechanics, foundation engineering, rock mechanics, slope engineering, and design studio for undergraduate students. Alongside his research and teaching responsibilities, he remains active in professional and institutional service. His roles include serving on the College Tenure and Promotion Committee and the CAECM Graduate Committee, chairing the ASCE Rock Mechanics and Engineering Committee, serving on a proposal review panel for the Canadian Foundation for Innovation, reviewing for journals, contributing to the organizing committee for the 2026 ASCE GeoCongress, and serving as a session chair for the American Rock Mechanics Association.

Dr. Soheil Saraji, (Ph.D. Petroleum Engineering, University of Wyoming)

Le Norman Endowed Leadership Chair in Petroleum Engineering and Subsurface Energy and Digital Innovation Center (See SER Professor of ***Subsurface Energy and Digital Innovation Center***)

James Ward (M.S. Computer Science, University of Wyoming)

General Samuel Phillips Professorship for Instructional Excellence

Mr. Ward is a faculty member of the Electrical Engineering and Computer Science Department, since 2001. He is the General Samuel Phillips Professorship for Instructional Excellence. He focuses on undergraduate teaching and research with the nUWtech lab. He went to the Technical Symposium on Computer Science Education (SIGCSE TS) which is organized by the ACM Special Interest Group on Computer Science Education (SIGCSE) and is the organization's flagship conference. An update of VR and AR equipment is also being carried out in the lab.

The nUWtech Lab provides undergraduate research opportunities to engineering students by housing equipment such VR headsets, robots, and mobile devices such as android phones. The students can use the equipment in the lab that would be far too expensive for them to purchase on their own. For academic year 2025 to 2026. This equipment also is used to support many electrical engineering and computer science courses such the mobile programming, advanced mobile programming, virtual reality, animation, and augmented reality courses. As well as our senior design I and II course with Nine groups, several used the lab directly, plus the honors capstone projects.

It is also used for an independent study course for multiple students that wish to do research on topics of their own design. This has been a boon for students, as they have a place to work on topics and interests that excite them to both get jobs after their undergraduate degree or to get them interested in continuing to a masters or PHD.

Interdisciplinary

Dr. Tarissa Spoonhunter (Ph.D American Indian Studies, University of Arizona)
Liliane and Christian Haub Professorship

Dr. Tarissa Spoonhunter holds an administrative appointment as the Director of the High Plains American Indian Research Institute and a faculty appointment as an Assistant Professor in the Haub School of Environment and Natural Resources split with Native American Indigenous Studies (NAIS) in the Department of American Cultural Studies in the College of Arts and Sciences. Through her directorship she serves as liaison to the Eastern Shoshone and Northern Arapaho Tribes of the Wind River Indian Reservation. She has worked to improve the processes and systems relative to work engaged on the WRIR as a Land Grant Institution. As the director of HPAIRI she worked with the Research and Economic Development Division (REDD) and specifically the National Science Foundation EPSCoR RII Track 1 Wyoming Anticipating Climate Transitions research team to deliver a product/template on how to engage and collaborate with tribes. This product tracks the collaboration with tribal entities (programs/nonprofits/educational institutions) and UW to report on outreach activities and reporting to the Wind River Council. REDD now has a box on the Green Sheet that researchers/faculty must check if planning to work with the tribal nations and fully integrated into Roam Wyo and the Institutional Review Board applications as of January 2026. This tool allows transparency for the tribes with mutual benefit in research and scholarship. This survey has guided HPAIRI outreach working with other tribal collaborations not in Wyoming such as the Merkle Lab data agreement with Native American Fish and Wildlife Society MOU with UW and has led to discussions with other universities—Colorado State University, Kansas University, and iRES at the University of Arizona.

The L&C Haub Professorship has grounded Spoonhunter in outreach work with the Wind River Tribal Buffalo Initiative through collaboration for science, data collection, Indigenous Traditional Ecological Knowledge workshops, K-12 STEM curriculum teacher programming, and tribal student pathways of mentorship, internship, graduate assistantships, and current directorship in Science and Business at WRTBI. Her research is focused on Buffalo as wildlife on tribal trust and fee lands in the states of Wyoming and Montana under tribal sovereignty and treaty rights on public lands. She has mentored students as interns now employed by her tribal collaborators in Tribal Historic Preservation Offices, Wind River Tribal Buffalo Initiative, Central Wyoming College Faculty, and educators in the WRIR public schools. Outreach work and connecting students to tribal partners has been her passion to build capacity to support the needs in Environment and Natural Resources and having a presence in the tribal community has been key to collaboration.

As faculty in ENR, she has served on various graduate committees and mentored tribal and non-tribal students on issues facing tribal nations. Spoonhunter has opened an extension STEAM lab at Central Wyoming College and manages outreach offices at the Frank B Wise Building in Fort Washakie for Indian Education for All liaisons and college interns. Spoonhunter has developed a field course titled Natural Resources on Western Indian Reservations that takes UW students and faculty to the WRIR to visit and understand the government-to-government relationship, Treaty Rights upheld by the US Constitution to hunt fish and gather, oil and gas, buffalo as wildlife, Indigenous land conservation, tribal land allotment and ranching/farming, and water issues.

Dr. Kelly Dunning, (Ph.D. Natural Resources Planning and Policy, Massachusetts Institute of Technology)
Timberline Associate Professor of Sustainable Outdoor Recreation and Tourism

During the 2025–2026 academic year, Dr. Kelly Dunning advanced the University of Wyoming’s land-grant mission through integrated teaching, research, and applied policy engagement focused on Wyoming’s wildlife and natural resource systems. She taught Conservation Planning and Human Dimensions of Natural Resources, both of which emphasized Wyoming-based case studies and experiential learning with state stakeholders. Students engaged directly with partners including the Wyoming Game and Fish Department and Trout Unlimited, gaining hands-on experience in wildlife policy, stakeholder engagement, and applied research. Graduate students presented their work at two statewide conferences in Jackson, Wyoming, sharing findings on invasive trout removal, wolf management, and grizzly bear delisting. These opportunities provided workforce-relevant training and strengthened professional pathways for students entering Wyoming’s natural resource sectors.

Dr. Dunning’s research program directly supported wildlife management and policy in Wyoming and the broader West. During the reporting period, she produced 17 peer-reviewed and public-facing publications, including work on grizzly bear delisting, wildlife governance, and hunter behavior. Her scholarship informed real-world decision-making through two applied reports delivered to the Wyoming Game and Fish Department on waterfowl hunter preferences and mule deer management, both intended for direct use in agency decision processes. Dunning and her research trainees, including graduate students and postdoctoral associates, also presented findings to the Wyoming Game Commission on pronghorn hunter motivations and was invited to share research at national venues including the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership and the national R3 Conference, highlighting Wyoming’s leadership in addressing declining hunter participation. Additional support included a \$50,000 grant from the National Center for Atmospheric Research (NCAR) to fund student fieldwork and research on resource management. Through partnerships with the Wyoming Game and Fish Department and the Bridger-Teton National Forest, Dr. Dunning’s work continues to provide actionable insights that benefit Wyoming’s wildlife, outdoor recreation economy, and rural communities.

Dr. John Koprowski, (Ph.D. Biology (Systematics and Ecology), University of Kansas)
International Wildlife Conservation Chair (See WY Excellence Endowment Report)

Dr. Drew Bennett, (Ph.D. Geography, Oregon State University)
Whitney MacMillan Program in Private Lands Management in the West

Dr. Bennett leads the Whitney MacMillan Private Lands Stewardship Program as the MacMillan Professor of Practice, a position he has held since 2018. The MacMillan Program includes 2 research scientists, 3 graduate students, and 4 undergraduates working on outreach, engagement, and research projects relevant to the stewardship of private lands in Wyoming and the West. During the 2025-26 academic year, Dr. Bennett published a peer-reviewed article in *Biological Conservation* examining virtual livestock fencing's promise and implementation barriers for wildlife and rangeland conservation, along with a peer-reviewed article in *Conservation Science and Practice* on tradeoffs between large landscape conservation and wildlife viewing in protected areas. He also authored or co-authored two research reports: "Investing in Natural Capital: Lessons from the American West," published through UW's Ruckelshaus Institute, and a report developed with colleagues at Australia's Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization (CSIRO) on measuring the social impacts of land stewardship investments. Dr. Bennett taught Conservation Entrepreneurship, integrating case studies and insights from his international research collaborations to give Wyoming students concrete examples of entrepreneurial approaches to conservation challenges.

Dr. Bennett is also co-leading a multi-year evaluation of the USDA's Migratory Big Game Initiative in Wyoming, examining how Wyoming landowners perceive and adopt conservation opportunities to protect big game migration corridors. He also began new collaborative work with the Beyond Yellowstone Living Lab to develop financing strategies for stewarding big game migration corridors on private lands, and with the Headwaters of the Colorado Initiative on cross-boundary landscape restoration to reduce wildfire risk, increase water availability, and enhance wildlife habitat — an effort that created two paid student internships in communications. Through his outreach and engagement efforts, Dr. Bennett helped coordinate two upcoming workshops, co-sponsored with the Property and Environment Research Center (PERC), bringing together livestock producers, conservation organizations, and land management agencies to explore applications of virtual fencing technology for wildlife and rangeland conservation. These collective efforts support the stewardship of private lands in Wyoming and the West while connecting University of Wyoming students, researchers, and stakeholders to address complex land management challenges facing the state.

Vacant, Eldon & Beverly Spicer Chair in Environmental and Natural Resources

Dr. Jacob Hochard, (Ph.D. Economics, University of Wyoming)
Knobloch Chair/Professorship in Conservation Economics

The Knobloch Program in Conservation Economics continued to support conservation economics teaching, research, and outreach at the Haub School during FY26. Endowment income supported master's student Caden Bogus and partially supported doctoral students Katie Fisher and Sam Nonemaker, expanding their opportunities to conduct research, publish findings, and build professional expertise. The research program produced six scholarly publications, including three in Nature Portfolio journals, addressing nature-based climate solutions, grizzly-bear management, virtual livestock fencing, the economic value of elk populations, natural-capital accounting, and community agreements with data-center developers. The program also contributed leadership to the published IPBES Business and Biodiversity Assessment and supported instruction through Economics of Climate and Critters, a Canary Islands field course, and the Haub School seminar series. Most visibly, the fund supported Data × Power 2026, which convened senior leaders from Google, Microsoft, Meta, Amazon Web Services, CoreWeave, TerraPower, utilities, government, and academia in Wyoming and attracted approximately \$250,000 in primarily industry support. Additional outreach included advising the State of Wyoming, the City of Laramie, congressional and federal audiences, and philanthropic organizations on ecosystem services, critical minerals, and data-center development. Together, these activities helped prepare students for careers in conservation and natural-resource economics while providing Wyoming businesses, communities, and policymakers with practical research and analysis.

School of Energy Resources

Dr. Caleb Hill, (Ph.D. Chemistry, University of Alabama)
J.E. Warren Chair of Energy and the Environment (left UW prior to submitting report)

Dr. John Kaszuba, (Ph.D. Geochemistry, Colorado School of Mines)
John and Jane Wold Centennial Chair of Energy and SER Nielson Faculty Fellow (See SER Professor of Geology and Geophysics)

Dr. Soheil Saraji, (Ph.D. Petroleum Engineering, University of Wyoming)

Le Norman Endowed Leadership Chair in Petroleum Engineering and Subsurface Energy and Digital Innovation Center

During the 2025–26 academic year, Dr. Soheil Saraji advanced interdisciplinary research, workforce development, and instructional innovation at the University of Wyoming through his roles as Department Head and Associate Professor in the Department of Energy and Petroleum Engineering, Director of the Subsurface Energy and Digital Innovation (SEDI) Center, Principal Investigator of the Richard & Marilyn Lynch Multidisciplinary Advanced Stimulation Laboratory (MASL), and holder of the LeNorman Endowed Leadership Chair in Petroleum Engineering and the Richard & Marilyn Lynch Chair in Subsurface Energy and Digital Innovation. His research activities focused on enhanced hydrocarbon recovery from conventional and unconventional reservoirs, digital transformation of subsurface energy systems, and emerging energy technologies. His work included applications of artificial intelligence and machine learning for reservoir characterization and enhanced oil recovery, blockchain-enabled environmental monitoring systems, and technologies related to carbon storage, geological hydrogen generation, and critical mineral recovery. These efforts support Wyoming's energy sector by improving resource recovery efficiency, advancing environmental stewardship, and strengthening the state's technological competitiveness in evolving energy markets.

Dr. Saraji continued to lead collaborative research initiatives involving faculty, graduate students, undergraduate researchers, and industry partners through the SEDI Center and MASL. During the academic year, he helped expand partnerships with energy companies, national stakeholders, and academic institutions while mentoring students in experimental research, digital energy applications, and data-driven engineering workflows. His work provided students with hands-on experience in emerging technologies directly relevant to Wyoming's workforce needs and future energy economy. Through MASL, students received advanced training in subsurface energy experimentation, reservoir stimulation, and integrated digital-physical workflows applicable to oil and gas, geothermal, carbon storage, and other subsurface energy systems.

In instruction and academic leadership, Dr. Saraji taught undergraduate and graduate courses in enhanced oil recovery and digital energy technologies while continuing development of innovative curriculum in areas such as blockchain applications in energy. He also led strategic departmental initiatives focused on student recruitment, workforce readiness, industry engagement, and modernization of petroleum engineering education. Under his leadership, the department continued expanding experiential learning opportunities, industry collaboration, and interdisciplinary training to better prepare students for careers in Wyoming's traditional and emerging energy sectors. Through research, teaching, and outreach activities, Dr. Saraji's work continues to contribute to the University of Wyoming's land-grant mission and supports the long-term sustainability and innovation capacity of Wyoming's energy industry.

Dr. Bryan Leonard, (Ph.D. Economics, University of California Santa Barbara)

SER Environment & Natural Resources

Dr. Bryan Leonard completed his second year at the University of Wyoming as the SER Chair and Associate Professor in the Haub School of Environment and Natural Resources and the School of Energy Resources. Dr. Leonard taught a course on federal public land law for the Professional Land Management major in SER and developed and taught an online course on Environmental and Natural Resources Law and Policy in the Haub School. Dr. Leonard joined the committee of five PhD students in Economics. He hired and supervised two undergraduate RAs across several departments including the Haub School and Political Science as well as an additional graduate research assistant in the Economics Department. He also partnered with the Foundation for

Teaching Economics to develop and deliver curriculum for high school students and teachers focused on environmental economics, energy economics, and the Colorado River Crisis.

Dr. Leonard's scholarship focuses on the impact of property rights and political institutions on natural resource use in Wyoming and the Western United States, with emphasis on the historical foundations of contemporary issues in water and energy resources. During the 2025-2026 academic year, Dr. Leonard published a book on the economic significance and modern legacy of the Homestead Act with Cambridge University Press. He published articles in *The Journal of Historical Political Economy* and *The Environmental Law Report*. The latter paper was selected for Honorable Mention in the 2026 *Environmental Law and Policy Annual Review*. Dr. Leonard also received a "Revise and Resubmit" at *Nature Water*. He currently has one paper under review at *Nature Ecology and Evolution* and is finalizing papers for submission to *Science*, *Nature Sustainability*, *the Journal of the Association of Environmental and Resource Economists*, *the Quarterly Journal of Economics*, and *the American Economic Review*. Dr. Leonard submitted proposals that are still pending for over \$1 million in research funding from USDA and NASA on projects related to water and energy resource optimization. Dr. Leonard gave invited research talks at Yale, the University of British Columbia, the University of Victoria, Simon Fraser University, and UC Davis.

Dr. Leonard also made substantial contributions to the University and the State through his engagement in academic service and applied research projects. He served on the Haub School Awards Committee, as well as several promotion and tenure review committees for Haub, SER, and Economics. He assisted with the completion of a contract with the Department of Energy to examine federal leasing of pore space for carbon capture and storage. He participated in the Teton Group's Fall meeting and supported the Ruckleshaus Institute in the Haub School by participating in a conference on large landscape conservation, and guest editing and contributing an article to the most recent issue of *Western Confluence*. He also participated in a series of workshops

Dr. Tara Righetti, (J.D. Law, University of Colorado Boulder)

Occidental Petroleum Corporation Chair in Energy and Environmental Policies (See SER Professor of Law)

Dr. Saman Aryana, (Ph.D. Energy Resources Engineering, Stanford University)

Occidental Petroleum Corporation Chair in Energy and Environmental Technologies

Dr. Saman Aryana is a Professor and the Occidental Chair in Energy and Environmental Technologies in the Department of Chemical and Biomedical Engineering at the University of Wyoming (UW) and serves as Associate Dean for Research in the College of Engineering and Physical Sciences (CEPS) and as an Adjunct Professor in the School of Energy Resources (SER). He stepped into the Associate Dean role in 2025 after serving as Head of the Department of Chemical and Biomedical Engineering, during which time he led a doubling of the faculty. As Associate Dean for Research, Dr. Aryana has focused on building college-wide research capacity that benefits faculty and graduate students across CEPS and, by extension, the State of Wyoming, including coordinating shared instrumentation access, launching internal funding mechanisms for instrumentation and graduate-student bridge support, and contributing to ongoing efforts to reopen the UW Elk Mountain Observatory. He also convened and chaired a college-wide Materials Science and Engineering Working Group that delivered its report to the Dean in spring 2026, drawing membership from most CEPS departments and from SER.

During 2025–26, Dr. Aryana's research program advanced an integrated portfolio in subsurface energy storage, low-carbon hydrogen, and unconventional formations, with substantial alignment to Wyoming's energy economy. He maintains two active SER-funded projects on the Mowry Shale and on hydrogen production through coal gasification. In a recent meeting with senior geologists and engineers from Occidental (Oxy), his group presented

four current research lines, three of which are explicitly Wyoming-focused: scalable modeling of gas adsorption and transport in the Mowry Shale; integration of hydrogen generation into petroleum system basin modeling using Wyoming as a case study; and supercritical water gasification of organic-rich materials, including a planned characterization of oil shale samples obtained through an agreement with Wyoming trona mine operators. The SER-collaborative hydrogen work is being positioned for an NSF CBET Particulate and Multiphase Processes proposal on engineered in-situ geobarriers — a subsurface containment technology directly relevant to Wyoming's strategic interest in hydrogen storage and carbon management. The group filed two patent applications in subsurface storage during the year, including one focused on in-situ geobarrier engineering. Research output included eight peer-reviewed journal papers, six invited talks, and completion of a book manuscript, *Lattice Boltzmann Method – Gas Transport, Flow and Adsorption in Confined Complex Porous Media Systems* (De Gruyter, in press). Dr. Aryana's group hosted a visiting PhD scholar from PUC-Rio (Brazil) and graduated a PhD student now placed as a postdoctoral scholar at Rice University; a current PhD student in his group received first prize in the CEPS Three-Minute Thesis competition; one former PhD student secured a faculty position internationally during the year, and another was promoted to full professor with tenure. Dr. Aryana taught the opening segment of a graduate course in the department in fall 2025 and handed off instruction to a newly hired faculty member to support their onboarding, continues to serve as faculty advisor to the UW Student Chapter of the National Society of Black Engineers (NSBE), and chaired a departmental search committee for an SER-funded faculty position in ChBE.

University Libraries/Honors College

Janice Grover-Roosa, (M.L.S. Library Science, Emporia State University; MA, University of Wyoming)
Carol J. McMurry Endowed Librarian for Academic Excellence

Janice Grover, M.A., M.L.S., Carol J. McMurry Distinguished Librarian for Academic Excellence at the University of Wyoming, advanced a range of instructional and scholarly initiatives during the 2025-26 academic year focused on undergraduate research, information literacy, and creative engagement. Through her work with the Honors College, Grover taught Honors Colloquium courses that emphasized interdisciplinary inquiry, research development, and critical thinking while also expanding library support for student scholarship and creative work. She continued development of the Honors Library as a space that encourages intellectual curiosity and exploratory learning, including support for nontraditional and independently published zines. These efforts created additional opportunities for students to engage with research, creativity, and storytelling in accessible and community-centered ways.

A significant focus of Grover's work this year involved undergraduate meaning-making, creative scholarship, and community engagement through zine programming and the Wyoming Zine Exchange (WYZE). In Spring 2026, Grover presented at the Western Regional Honors Conference on zines, informal learning, and student meaning-making as forms of intellectual work. She also expanded the Honors Library internship program, supporting student-led programming and creative engagement initiatives that were later featured in communications from the University of Wyoming Foundation. In addition, Grover continued scholarship related to compassion-centered library practice and information literacy pedagogy through the ongoing Compassion Audit research project. Collectively, these activities contributed to the University of Wyoming's land-grant mission by supporting student success, fostering public engagement, and strengthening Wyoming's creative and intellectual communities.

College of Health Sciences

Dr. Katelyn Kotlarek, (Ph.D. Communication Sciences and Disorders, East Carolina University)

Maggie and Dick Scarlet Chair in Speech-Language Pathology

Dr. Kotlarek is the current Maggie & Dick Scarlett Chair in Speech-Language Pathology. She directs the Speech Imaging Lab at the University of Wyoming, where her research focuses on improving care for speech and feeding disorders in children with cleft palate and related craniofacial differences. Dr. Kotlarek's NIH-funded research program integrates advanced imaging and clinical speech outcomes to inform more effective care for children with cleft palate, with an emphasis on scalable approaches such as remote and asynchronous delivery. These strategies are particularly relevant for rural Wyoming families, reducing travel burdens, treatment delays, and healthcare-related costs. During the 2025–26 academic year, her work resulted in 6 peer-reviewed publications and 11 national/international presentations. Dr. Kotlarek's work was also invited for international presentation in Kyoto, Japan and Glasgow, Scotland.

Through her instructional and mentoring activities, Dr. Kotlarek trains undergraduate and graduate students studying speech-language pathology, as well as WWAMI medical students, preparing them for careers in clinical settings within Wyoming's healthcare workforce by providing hands-on experience in imaging, data analysis, and interdisciplinary collaboration. She also provides continuing education to practicing clinicians, supporting ongoing skill development in a high-need field. Collectively, Dr. Kotlarek's efforts expand access to care, reduce barriers in rural communities, and support efficient, high-quality healthcare delivery for Wyoming residents.

Dr. Brittany LaFontaine, (Ph.D. Physical Therapy, University of North Dakota)

UW-Cheyenne Regional Medical Center (CRMC) Faculty Partnership

Dr. Brittany LaFontaine was appointed to her role in the UW-Cheyenne Regional Medical Center (CRMC) Faculty Partnership position in January 2026. During the first four months of her appointment in this academic practice partner role, Dr. LaFontaine focused on establishing the foundational relationships and structures needed to strengthen Wyoming's nursing workforce and advance the goals of the partnership. These goals include increasing the number of BSN- and graduate-prepared nurses at CRMC, enhancing evidence-based practice (EBP) expertise and scholarly output, strengthening students' ability to apply EBP across clinical and didactic settings, and infusing EBP practices throughout the CRMC. She partnered with CRMC leadership to align expectations for the academic practice partner role, contributed to nurse residency curriculum development, and collaborated with nurse managers, performance improvement, and pharmacy teams to determine how she can utilize existing organizational processes to best support frontline nurses in applying EBP at the bedside. These early efforts support the broader aim of preparing highly skilled and competent nurses who can meet the healthcare needs of Wyoming residents and employers.

Dr. LaFontaine is working to advance EBP capacity in ways that enhance student learning and strengthen new-nurse transition to practice. Her instructional activities—including co-teaching in the BSN completion program and participating in clinical and simulation days with junior students—have helped reinforce students' clinical competence and ability to apply EBP in the clinical setting. She supported clinical teams at CRMC by locating and synthesizing research for multiple quality-improvement initiatives, contributed to revisions of CRMC's Research and Human Subjects Oversight policy, and prepared her own scholarly work on a nurse-driven late-preterm infant feeding protocol for national dissemination.

Looking ahead, Dr. LaFountaine plans to continue strengthening research foundations at CRMC, supporting nursing-led scholarly projects, and aligning CRMC's new-graduate competencies with the University of Wyoming curriculum to help close the academic-practice gap. Her future scholarly work will focus on new-nurse transition to practice and nursing turnover, which are crucial to building and sustaining a well-prepared nursing workforce in Wyoming.

College of Law

Jacquelyn Bridgeman, (J.D. Law, University of Chicago)
Kepler Distinguished Professorship of Law

Jacquelyn Bridgeman, is the Kepler Distinguished Professorship of Law. In FY 2026, Professor Bridgeman continued her focus on high impact and community-based projects. In particular, she helped co-found a local, non-partisan community group in Albany County geared towards better supporting community members and building infrastructure and support geared to helping all community members thrive. She also continued her work as a member of the consultative groups for Copyright law and Constitutional torts as part of the American Law Institute, working with leading lawyers, judges, and academics throughout the country to improve the law and the legal system. Professor Bridgeman also continued working on her next book, focusing on issues of equality, particularly in the context of economic issues and structures. She is working on finalizing a book proposal for submission in fall of 2026. Finally, Professor Bridgeman taught courses on Race, Gender, and the Law, Social Justice and the Law, Employment Law and Sports & Entertainment law throughout the 2025-2026 academic year and was selected as a finalist for the UW College of Law Outstanding Faculty Member award for the fourth year in a row.

Stephen M. Feldman, (J.S.M. Law, Stanford University, J.D. Law, Oregon State University)
Jerry W. Housel/Carl F. Arnold Distinguished Professor of Law

Professor Feldman has been the Jerry W. Housel/Carl F. Arnold Distinguished Professor of Law and Adjunct Professor of Political Science since 2002. His recent publications include the following: *Religious Freedom for Me, Not Thee: The Roberts Court Behind the Veil of Originalism*, Wm. & Mary Bill Rts. J. _ (forthcoming); *How Many Supreme Court Justices Can Stand on the Point of a Needle? Originalist Scholarship, Political Neutrality, and other Constitutional Nonsense*, _ Wash. & Lee J. C.R. & Social Justice _ (forthcoming); *Law and Postmodernism*, in *Elgar Concise Encyclopedia of Legal Theory and Philosophy* (John Linarelli ed., forthcoming); *Free Speech, Social Justice, and Brandenburg*, in *"Fight Like Hell": Free Speech and Incitement in the Twenty-First Century* 65 (Eric T. Kasper & JoAnne Sweeney eds., State University of New York Press, 2025). As he does regularly, Professor Feldman taught Constitutional Law I, Constitutional Law II, and Jurisprudence. His research and writing projects emphasize national concerns and are of national interest. As such, they benefit the University of Wyoming, the state of Wyoming, and Wyoming residents. His articles and essays consistently rank in SSRN's Top Ten Percent Total New Downloads List as well as SSRN's Top Ten Percent Total All-Time Downloads List. His readership report from the Law Archive of Wyoming Scholarship shows over 22,000 downloads. He is the faculty adviser for the American Constitution Society Wyoming student Chapter.

Jason Robison, (J.D. Law, University of Oregon, S.J.D. Law, Harvard University)
Carl M. Williams Professor of Law & Social Responsibility

Dr. Robison is a Professor at the College of Law, the Co-Director of the Gina Guy Center for Land & Water Law, and an Adjunct Professor at the Haub School of Environment & Natural Resources. Dr. Robison's teaching, research, and service focus on the field of energy, environmental, and natural resources (EENR) law, with a particular emphasis on the intersection of transboundary water law and federal Indian law in western North America.

Highlights of Dr. Robison's work during the 2025-2026 academic year include:

- Teaching several EENR courses to law students and non-law graduate students, including (1) a Water Law & Policy course offering a survey of key laws, policies, and organizations associated with water management in the United States; (2) an Advanced Water Law & Policy seminar addressing the complex legal framework controlling management of the Colorado River system, including relevant to the Green River Basin; and (3) a Public Land & Natural Resources Law course examining the laws governing management of lands administered throughout the western United States by the Bureau of Land Management, Fish and Wildlife Service, National Park Service, and U.S. Forest Service.
- Teaching law students a Federal Courts course examining (1) the relationships between the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of the federal government (*i.e.*, separation of powers), and (2) the relationships between the federal and state governments, particularly their respective judiciaries (*i.e.*, federalism).
- Publishing an updated edition of Dr. Robison's long-running water law treatise, *Law of Water Rights & Resources* (Thompson Reuters, 2025). In addition, publishing an extensive law review article addressing the intersection mentioned above between transboundary water law and federal Indian law in the western United States: *Tripartite Water Cosovereignty*, 135 Yale L.J. ____ (forthcoming 2026).
- Conducting research on transboundary water law and policy at the international level for two upcoming law review articles—tentatively titled, *Andean Hydroimagination* (forthcoming 2027) and *Water in the World Court* (forthcoming 2028).
- Completing service for the Gina Guy Center for Land & Water Law, including (1) organizing a Wind River Water Forum in Fort Washakie examining important tribal water management priorities; and (2) organizing free, open-to-the-public research presentations at the UW College of Law by Professor Robert Keiter from the University of Utah College of Law and Professor Alex Erwin from the University of Florida College of Law.
- Also completing service, including co-authoring two policy briefs, for two organizations focused on water management issues in the Colorado River Basin: (1) the Colorado River Research Group, and (2) the Water & Tribes Initiative in the Colorado River Basin.

James Delaney, (J.D. Law, Gonzaga School of Law)
Carl M. Williams Centennial Distinguished Professor

During the academic year 2025-26, Professor Delaney taught four courses at the College of Law. He taught Trusts & Estates, Business Entities Taxation, Federal Income Taxation, and Estate & Gift Taxation. Based on Prof. Delaney's teaching efforts, the College of Law's Class of 2026 voted Prof. Delaney as the most outstanding professor for the 2025-2026 academic year. As the outstanding faculty member, Prof. Delaney was honored during the graduation ceremony in May 2026. Further, based on his outstanding teaching, scholarship, and other service to the College of Law, in the fall of 2025, the Dean honored Professor Delaney by awarding him the Carl M. Williams Centennial Distinguished Professorship. He served in this capacity throughout the 2025-2026 academic year. In December 2025, Dean Hill also awarded Professor Delaney the College of Law's Extraordinary Merit Award for his service as chair of the Faculty Appointments Committee.

With respect to scholarship, Prof. Delaney authors two books that he continues to update. He authors *Federal Income Tax*, Carolina Press Q&A Series. Second edition was released for publication in the fall of 2018. He also authors *Federal Estate & Gift Tax*, Carolina Press Q&A Series 2009/2012/2019. The Third Edition was released for publication in the fall of 2019. Prof. Delaney co-authors this second book with Dean & Prof. Elaine Hightower-Gagliardi, University of Montana School of Law. These two books are both extensively used by Wyoming law students in their legal studies. They are also used regionally and by many law students across the nation. In July 2025, Professor Delaney (with co-authors Bruce McGovern and Cassady Brewer) published the following article: *Recent Developments in Federal Income Taxation: The Year 2024* in TAX LAWYER. That publication is the nation's premier, peer-reviewed tax law journal. Professor Delaney's article is 120 pages. It was co-authored with Prof. Bruce A. McGovern, V.P., Associate Dean of Academic Administration, and professor of law at the South Texas College of Law, Houston and Prof. Cassady V. Brewer, Professor of law at Georgia State University College of Law.

Alan Romero, (J.D. Law, Harvard Law School)
William T. Schwartz Professor of Law

Professor Romero also serves as Senior Associate Dean and Director of the College of Law's Rural Law Center. During the 2025-2026 academic year, he taught the required first-year Property I and Property II courses. Because of his administrative assignment, he currently teaches fewer courses. Nevertheless, because the entire first-year class takes those courses, he still taught more student credit hours than all but two of the tenure-track faculty. Property I is especially labor-intensive, with three timed writing assessments during the semester, in addition to the final exam, to help students develop their reasoning and writing skills and receive feedback to help them prepare for their first law school final exams.

During the academic year, Professor Romero did substantial research and writing on a law review article, *Exaction Actions*, which he expects to publish this summer. The article contributes to the development of the law regarding land use exactions, analyzing the appropriate and unique remedies arising from two different causes of action arising from such exactions. As Director of the Rural Law Center, Professor Romero organized and hosted several events, including a presentation by Judge James Kaste about rural practice in Wyoming and, in collaboration with the Wyoming State Bar, the sixth annual Solo, Small & Rural Law Forum at the College of Law, at which he also presented research about assessing and addressing the need for attorneys in rural Wyoming. He also supervised a research project by the Rural Law Center's Legislative Research Service, developing a comprehensive guidebook for the Wyoming Association of Rural Water Systems.

Melissa Alexander, (J.D. Law, University of Virginia)
Carl M. Williams Professor of Law & Ethics

Professor Alexander serves as the Carl M. Williams Professor of Law and Ethics. She is a nationally recognized health law and bioethics scholar dedicated to serving the State of Wyoming. Professor Alexander currently teaches Health Law, Bioethics, Public Health Law and Ethics, Intellectual Property, and Civil Procedure II. This year's graduating law class selected her as a faculty honoree in appreciation for her teaching excellence.

In 2026, recognizing her extensive publications on health law and policy, the College of Law awarded her its Faculty Research Award, and UW's Research and Economic Development Division awarded her its Celebration of Excellence in Research and Innovation Award. Her recent publications include a prestigious book and a solicited law review article. [Questions & Answers: Health Law](#) (Carolina Aca. Press 2024) is a comprehensive health law resource designed to enhance student success and aid institutional excellence. Professor Alexander's most recent law review article is *Pro and Con Choice? Moral Equality, Neutrality, and Abortion Pill "Reversal,"* 78 OKLA. L. REV. 1 (2025). This article argues, from philosophical and public policy perspectives, for less state regulation of individual health care decisions that involve moral disagreement and scientific uncertainty. In the last year, Professor Alexander also presented at a national conference on Title X preemption of state parental notice and consent laws, suggesting the proper statutory interpretation and recommending a focus on achieving the statute's goals through new social media, telehealth, and delivery mechanisms. She is now researching and writing a new article, *Is BearCare Bearable? Preemption and Policy When States Sidestep Essential Health Benefits*. This work in progress examines the Wyoming Department of Health's proposed short-term, emergency care-only health insurance, identifies structural barriers to affordable insurance in rural areas, analyzes preemption, and recommends alternative solutions. She has been selected to present her emerging work at the American Society of Law, Medicine, and Ethics' Health Law Professors Conference in Atlanta.

Professor Alexander has served the state in several unique ways this year. In addition to ongoing work on Ivins Memorial Hospital's Ethics Committee, she published an article in the [Wyoming Lawyer](#) magazine on incorporating generative artificial intelligence into law practice, helping Wyoming lawyers utilize large language models more effectively and ethically. She is also now working with WWAMI to begin teaching Wyoming's medical students some of the ethics panels on reproduction and abortion.

Dr. Darrell Jackson, (Ph.D. Educational Foundations, Policy, and Practice, University of Colorado)
Winston S. Howard Distinguished Professor of Law

For Dr. Darrell D. Jackson, the Winston Howard Distinguished Professor of Law, the 2025–2026 academic year reflected continued local, national, and international leadership in interdisciplinary legal scholarship, experiential legal education, and public engagement. Dr. Jackson's momentum was extremely challenged this academic year. At the beginning of the academic year, his father became gravely ill with lung cancer that metastasized to his spine and organs. His father died in January 2026. Managing his father's transition, his estate, and his 92 years old mother's life adjustment has taken Dr. Jackson to the brink.

Nevertheless, Dr. Jackson tried to soldier through. He continued to make progress on a book that is under contract with Carolina Academic Press. He advanced, generally, the University of Wyoming's (UW) international presence, and more specifically, the University of Wyoming College of Law's (UW Law) clinical international presence, by presenting at the International Journal of Clinical Legal Education's 2025 Conference in Melbourne, Australia. Moreover, regarding UW Law's clinics, Dr. Jackson continued supervising and expanding practical

legal training opportunities through UW Law's Prosecution Assistance Program, which provides students with direct experience in criminal law, oral advocacy, legal writing, and professional ethics while supporting legal institutions and communities throughout Wyoming. Through classroom instruction, experiential learning opportunities, mentorship, and public scholarship, Dr. Jackson's work continues to advance the University of Wyoming's land-grant mission by preparing students for public service and legal practice while contributing to broader conversations affecting Wyoming, the legal profession, and higher education.

Vacant, *E. George Rudolph Distinguished Visiting Chair*

Dona Playton, (J.D. Law, University of Wyoming)
Grek Dyekman Endowed Clinical Professor

Professor Dona Playton's research and instructional work this academic year focused on improving access to justice for Wyoming families, strengthening student learning through experiential education, and developing practical reforms for family law cases involving self-represented litigants. Through her teaching in family law, child advocacy, dispute resolution, and the Family & Child Legal Advocacy Clinic, Professor Playton provides students with opportunities to develop the judgment, professionalism, interviewing, counseling, advocacy, and problem-solving skills needed to serve Wyoming residents. Her work benefits not only students, but also Wyoming families, courts, employers, and communities by helping future lawyers understand how unresolved legal problems in family, housing, safety, and financial matters affect health, mental health, employment, education, and family stability. National data continue to show that the civil justice gap is significant: low-income Americans receive no or inadequate legal help for approximately 92% of their civil legal problems, and access-to-justice research confirms that the inability to obtain affordable legal help also affects middle-class families, small businesses, and rural communities.

During the academic year, Professor Playton's proposal to the Equal Justice Wyoming Foundation was accepted to support the University of Wyoming College of Law's Family & Child Legal Advocacy Clinic in partnering with Legal Aid of Wyoming to launch a pilot Early Dispute Resolution program in the First Judicial District Court for self-represented litigants in family law matters. The pilot is designed to provide earlier, more meaningful assistance in divorce, custody, parenting time, and child support cases before conflict escalates and before families expend scarce resources navigating the court system without counsel. This work responds directly to the large number of Wyoming residents who must represent themselves in high-stakes family law cases, often involving children, safety, housing, income, and long-term parental relationships. By combining student instruction, limited-scope legal assistance, mediation, and court-connected problem-solving, the project will help prepare law students for practice while offering Wyoming residents a more efficient and practical pathway to resolve family disputes. It also benefits Wyoming businesses and industries by helping parents stabilize family conflict, maintain employment, reduce missed work, and address legal problems that otherwise spill over into workplaces, schools, healthcare systems, and local communities.