

2023 Distinguished Alumni Award Winner

Caitlin Long

By Micaela Myers

Caitlin Long grew up right here in Laramie. Her father was a University of Wyoming professor for nearly 40 years, and her mother was a rural teacher in Rock River. When it came time for college, Long earned her bachelor's degree in political economy (1990) from UW, making lifelong friends through Pi Beta Phi sorority, cheering on the Cowboys basketball and football teams during a highly successful period, and learning a new way of thinking from her favorite course — an English class taught by Professor Cedric Reverand.

"It taught me how to be a systemic thinker," Long says. "I took the thought processes that he taught me and applied them to the business world and technology."

Long went on to earn a master's degree in public policy and a law degree from Harvard, both in 1994. Back then, a high-level finance career required living and working in a big city, preferably for an investment bank. Long headed to New York, where she began as an associate at Salomon Brothers, then managing director at Credit Suisse. From there, she became managing director at Morgan Stanley. After her 20-plus year career on Wall Street, she served as president and chairman of the board for Symbiont, a smart contracts platform for institutional uses of blockchain technology. Along the way, she garnered many accolades.

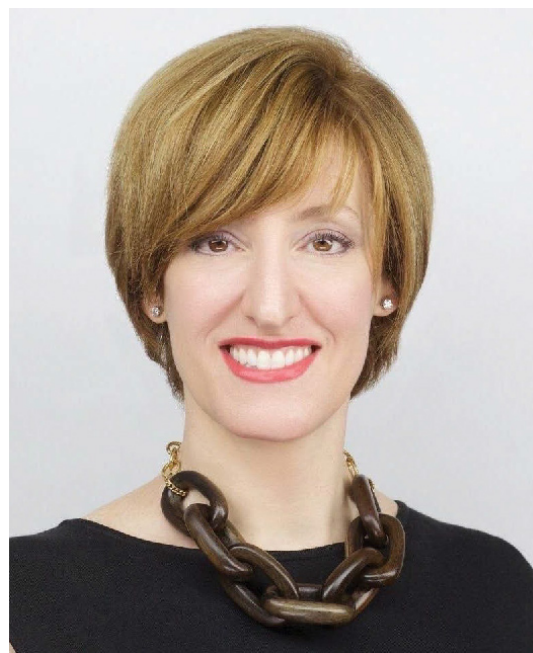
"I'm a curious person and have always found very interesting and challenging things to work on," Long says.

However, she never forgot her Wyoming roots and served on UW's College of Arts and Sciences Board of Visitors and the UW Foundation Board. She hoped to return to Wyoming upon retirement, but a gift to the university changed her trajectory.

In 2017, Long wanted to endow a scholarship for female engineers at UW via appreciated bitcoin. (Bitcoin is based on blockchain, which is a growing technology that enables cryptocurrencies and digital assets but also has many other uses.) However, the gift couldn't be accepted due to Wyoming's outdated money transmission law. Long agreed to help Wyoming update its law, but state Rep. Tyler Lindholm and others wanted to take things much further in order to make Wyoming a leader in blockchain and a home for related businesses.

"The Wyoming Blockchain Initiative is a passion project that is part of my desire to give back to Wyoming," Long says. "This is an economic development initiative that absolutely has the ability to become as important to the state over time as fossil fuels."

In the first few years of those efforts, Long served as gubernatorial appointee for the Wyoming Blockchain Task Force and the cofounder of the



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Wyoming Blockchain Coalition. UW launched the Center for Blockchain and Digital Innovation in 2020, and Long chairs the related WyoHackathon, a nonprofit annual event offering challenges and bounties for software developers, entrepreneurs and business professionals that has raised several million dollars for UW and brought many tech luminaries to Laramie.

In 2019, Long decided to move back to Wyoming and founded Custodia Bank, which provides banking and financial services for customers navigating the digital asset frontier. She appreciates that technology offers the chance to live and work anywhere: "If your job is digital, you don't have to live in a city and deal with high taxes, crime and traffic. It's a much better quality of life in Wyoming."

Long's dedication to the university and state make her one of this year's UWAA Distinguished Alumni Award winners.