



SENATE RESOLUTION #3110

TITLE: ASUW's Support of Experiential Learning Through Our LASSO Initiative

DATE INTRODUCED: 04/24/2026

AUTHORS: Senators Swingley, Keasling, and Director of External Public Affairs Fernholz-Hartman

SPONSORS: President Medina, Senators Pollock, Robinson, Smith, and Westman, First-Year Senators Martinez and Nevidomsky, Safety, Wellness, and Advocacy Committee; Accounting Club, United Multi-Cultural Council, UW American Nuclear Society

1. WHEREAS, the purpose of the Associated Students of the University of Wyoming
2. (ASUW) is to serve our fellow students in the best manner possible; and,
3. WHEREAS, the University of Wyoming is exploring opportunities that can be
4. provided to students through the process of experiential learning; and,
5. WHEREAS, Experiential Learning provides experience to students with hands-on
6. real-world activities through opportunities and internships; and,
7. WHEREAS, ASUW's 112th Vice President Paden Knull began discussions within
8. ASUW on this topic and developed the framework of Leadership and Student
9. Success Opportunities (LASSO) to fulfill the purposes of promoting experiential
10. learning and internships to the student body at large; and,
11. WHEREAS, the estimated enrollment of students at the University of Wyoming is
12. 11,000, and input gathered by ASUW regarding internships found that approximately
13. only 450 students (4% of the student population) gather internship experiences
14. despite greater interest being present; and,
15. WHEREAS, these efforts include the state level, with requests to aid in the finances
16. of these initiatives of \$2,300,000 as outlined in Priority #6 regarding internships,

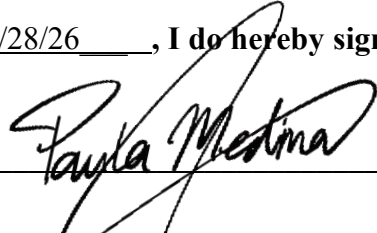
17. which is outlined in Addendum A; and,
18. WHEREAS, research demonstrates that students who have internship experience are
19. more likely to secure full-time employment upon graduation; and,
20. WHEREAS, experiential learning opportunities increase the return on investment
21. (ROI) of a college education by enhancing employability, shortening the job search
22. period, and improving long-term earnings potential; and,
23. WHEREAS, many organizations face issues in attracting and retaining skilled
24. workers and view internships as an opportunity to engage students early and
25. encourage them to stay; and,
26. WHEREAS, UW has signed a memorandum of understanding with the Wyoming
27. Business Alliance to establish a collaborative effort meeting the internship needs of
28. Wyoming businesses; and,
29. WHEREAS, ASUW has committed \$250,000 next year in support of providing
30. financial support for internships; and,
31. WHEREAS, the initial ASUW LASSO proposal (Addendum B) outlines the value
32. proposition of a wage matched internship program in the specific UW context; and,
33. WHEREAS, the Phase 2 LASSO report (Addendum C) answers a variety of
34. questions that arose through the internship working group meetings and
35. during meetings between ASUW directors and UW administrators; and,
36. WHEREAS, ASUW has produced mockups for both a student (Addendum D) and
37. employer (Addendum E) guide to LASSO, shaping the design and answering critical
38. questions about the mechanisms necessary to operate this internship program; and,
39. WHEREAS, by producing these reports, lobbying on behalf of the LASSO initiative,

40. and by coalition building across the UW network, ASUW has consistently
41. demonstrated a leadership role in the conception and architecture of this program.
42. THEREFORE, be it resolved by the Associated Students of the University of
43. Wyoming (ASUW) Student Government that we unequivocally support experiential
44. learning with a strong recommendation to pursue these through a framework such as
45. LASSO; and,
46. THEREFORE, be it further resolved that future ASUW administration in
47. collaboration with university administration and other relevant stakeholders continue
48. efforts on these initiatives to improve students' academic endeavors; and,
49. THEREFORE, be it further resolved that a copy of this resolution shall be forwarded
50. to: University of Wyoming Board of Trustees; 28th President of the University
51. Seidel; incoming 29th President Reeves; Provost Alexander; Vice President of
52. Student Affairs Courtney; Vice President of Governmental Affairs and Community
53. Engagement Smith; Vice President of Budget and Finance Kean; Vice President of
54. Research and Economic Development Chitnis; College of Agriculture, Life Sciences,
55. & Natural Resources Dean Crane; College of Arts & Sciences Dean Turpen; College
56. of Business Dean Beaulier; College of Education Dean Shim; College of Health
57. Sciences Dean Hardigan; Honors College Dean Parolin; College of Engineering and
58. Physical Sciences Interim Dean Dale; Haub School of Environment and Natural
59. Resources Dean Koprowski; School of Energy Resources Acting Executive Director
60. Quillinan; College of Law Dean Hill; and School of Computing Interim Director
61. McMillan upon its passage.

Referred to: _____ Committee of the Whole _____

Date of Passage: 04/28/26 Signed: Aidan McGuire
(ASUW Chairperson)

“Being enacted on 04/28/26, I do hereby sign my name hereto and approve this

Senate action.” _____

ASUW President

Addendum A

State of Wyoming
2027-2028
Biennium Budget Request



Agency 067: University of Wyoming

Prepared for the February 2026 Legislature.

The information in this budget request has been developed in accordance with the agency plan prepared according to W.S. 28-1-115 & 28-1-116 [W.S. 9-2-1011(b)(vi)].

Submitted by:

Signature: [Handwritten Signature]
Name: Edward Seidel
Title: President, University of Wyoming

Person(s) responsible for the preparation of this budget:

Alex Kean, Vice President Budget and Finance
Mike Smith, Vice President Government Affairs & Community Engagement



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DEPARTMENT UNIVERSITY OF WYOMING							DEPT 067
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Description	Code	Base Budget 2027-2028	Standard Budget	Total Dept Exception Request	Total Budget Request	Governor's Exception Changes	Governor's Recommendation
DIVISION							
STATE AID	6700	401,227,647	398,833,433	21,885,783	420,719,216	(2,800,000)	417,919,216
SCHOOL OF ENERGY RESOURCES	6800	42,857,808	21,107,808	12,090,000	33,197,808	0	33,197,808
TIER 1 ENGINEERING	6900	18,584,703	18,584,703	0	18,584,703	0	18,584,703
NCAR MOU	9600	1,528,316	1,528,316	0	1,528,316	0	1,528,316
ENDOWMENTS	9700	88,900,000	0	20,000,000	20,000,000	(7,500,000)	12,500,000
TOTAL BY DIVISION		553,098,474	440,054,260	53,975,783	494,030,043	(10,300,000)	483,730,043
OBJECT SERIES							
PERSONNEL	0100	67,692,862	69,798,648	0	69,798,648	0	69,798,648
GRANTS & AID PAYMENT	0600	485,405,612	370,255,612	53,975,783	424,231,395	(10,300,000)	413,931,395
TOTAL BY OBJECT SERIES		553,098,474	440,054,260	53,975,783	494,030,043	(10,300,000)	483,730,043
SOURCES OF FUNDING							
GENERAL FUND/BRA	G	534,098,474	440,054,260	53,975,783	494,030,043	(10,300,000)	483,730,043
OTHER FUNDS	Z	19,000,000	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL BY FUNDS		553,098,474	440,054,260	53,975,783	494,030,043	(10,300,000)	483,730,043
AUTHORIZED EMPLOYEES							
TOTAL AUTHORIZED EMPLOYEES							

SECTION 1. STATE OF THE AGENCY

Agency Overview

Vision - Use our unique strengths to make Wyoming and the world a better place.

Mission - As Wyoming's university, we unlock the extraordinary in every person through education, research, innovation, engagement, and service.

Values - As Wyoming's only public university, we are committed to scholarship, outreach and service that extend our human talent and technological capacity to serve the people in our communities, our state, the nation and the world. We value:

- Access to affordable, high-quality education.
- Real-world education where students learn by doing.
- A welcoming and supportive learning community fostered by integrity, inclusivity, freedom of expression, and respect.
- The growth, health, and leadership capacity of all members of the university community.
- Wyoming's wild and working lands as an asset to be utilized, understood, stewarded, and treasured.
- Our partnership and engagement with Wyoming communities in the creation and exchange of knowledge and resources
- Our role as a catalyst for innovation and economic vitality.

Agency Background & Structure

Founded in 1886, just four years before Wyoming achieved statehood, the University of Wyoming has long embodied the pioneering spirit of our state. As a land-grant institution, UW was established to provide accessible education, advance agricultural and mechanical sciences, and serve the public good. Over the decades, it has grown into a comprehensive research university, offering more than 200 areas of study and serving students from all 23 counties and beyond.

In September 1887, UW opened its doors to 42 students and 5 faculty members. As befitted the university of the Equality State, both the students and faculty included women from the first day. UW has produced generations of leaders, innovators, and public servants. Its alumni include governors, scientists, educators, and entrepreneurs who have shaped Wyoming's identity and contributed to its prosperity.

Given the University of Wyoming's nationally unique status as the only public university in the state, UW serves simultaneously as a land-grant, flagship, and research institution. Its commitments to scholarship, outreach and service extend to all corners of the state and require continuous assessment of the needs and values of a broad range of internal and external constituent and stakeholder groups.

Agency Challenges/Risks/Priorities

Rooted in the Morrill Land Grant College Act of 1862, the role of the University of Wyoming remains steadfast: to provide an education that empowers the people of Wyoming, however; UW faces, as does all higher education, headwinds but with Wyoming-specific challenges: a continually shifting budget landscape, evolving workforce needs, and the imperative to diversify both revenue and academic offerings. To meet these challenges head-on, UW continues to embrace transformation that honors our land-grant heritage while positioning the university as a driver of innovation, resilience, and opportunity across the Mountain West. Return on investment has become a central concern for students, families, and policymakers. Students specifically are evaluating college as a financial decision. UW continues to offer an exceptional value and 61 percent of graduates in 2024 had no student debt. That percentage increases to 67 percent for Wyoming residents that receive the Hathaway Scholarship. Although the return on investment does vary by degree type the reality remains that citizens that earn a bachelor's degree still earn significantly more than those with an associate's degree and nearly 85 percent more than those with only a high school diploma. To thrive in the future, UW must not only diversify its revenue sources, but also invest more heavily in student success, faculty retention, and a 21st century focus of excellence. UW must continue to identify efficiencies in resource use and redirect and pivot its investments into areas of education and research that will help drive Wyoming's innovation infrastructure and economic trajectory. UW is focused upon proactively and intentionally pivoting our focus to diversification of our revenues and educational offerings with clear future value to the state, region, nation and world. The university faces real challenges: demographic shifts, infrastructure gaps, and funding uncertainties. Yet, Wyoming ranks #2 nationally in science and engineering degrees as a share of total degrees, and UW is well-positioned to lead in areas like rural health-care, energy transition, and workforce development.

Agency Successes and Efficiencies

1. Carnegie R1 Research Status

- In 2025, UW earned the prestigious Carnegie R1 designation, placing it among the top tier of U.S. research universities.
- This recognition reflects significant growth in research activity, faculty scholarship, and interdisciplinary collaboration.

2. Record Research Growth

- UW reported \$166 million in annual research expenditures.
- Major areas of growth include energy systems, artificial intelligence, agriculture, and biomedical sciences.

3. Research and Innovation Excellence Awards

- In 2024, UW hosted its inaugural Celebration of Research and Innovation Excellence, recognizing outstanding contributions from faculty and departments.

4. Student Success Programs

- The Saddle Up program, a pre-semester onboarding experience, has increased retention rate among participants two years in a row.
- UW also launched the Navigate app, enhancing academic advising and degree planning.

5. Artificial Intelligence Initiative State Match

- UW launched a comprehensive AI Initiative, including:
 - New faculty and postdoctoral positions
 - Corporate partnerships
 - Campus-wide seed grants
- This initiative supports Wyoming's leadership in emerging technologies and workforce development.

These achievements reflect the University of Wyoming's proactive approach to institutional transformation and its unwavering commitment to serving the people of Wyoming. With continued legislative support, UW will build on this momentum to expand its impact across the state, region, and nation.

SECTION 6. DEPT. EXCEPTION REQUEST PRIORITIES

067 - University of Wyoming 2027-2028 Biennial Budget Request									
Priority	Unit #	Description	Department Request		Governor's Recommendation				
			Amount	Pos	Amount	GF	FF	OF	Pos
1	9705	Matching Funds - Endowment	\$20,000,000	0	\$12,500,000	\$12,500,000	\$0	\$0	0
2	6701	Career and Technical Education (CTE) • Construction • Equipment	\$5,000,000	0	\$5,000,000	\$5,000,000	\$0	\$0	0
			\$1,000,000	0	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000	\$0	\$0	0
3	6701	Athletic Operating Support	\$6,000,000	0	\$6,000,000	\$6,000,000	\$0	\$0	0
4	6701	Critical Minerals Initiative • Recurring • One-Time	\$300,000	0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	0
			\$4,500,000	0	\$4,500,000	\$4,500,000	\$0	\$0	0
5	6701	AI Initiative	\$2,500,000	0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	0
6	6701	Internship Program	\$2,300,000	0	\$2,300,000	\$2,300,000	\$0	\$0	0
7	6711	Clinician Assistant Professor - Casper Family Medicine	\$285,783	0	\$285,783	\$285,783	\$0	\$0	0
Totals			\$41,885,783	0	\$31,585,783	\$31,585,783	\$0	\$0	0
			General Fund	\$41,885,783					
			Federal Funds	\$0					
			Other Funds	\$0					
Total Request			\$41,885,783						

DEPARTMENT UNIVERSITY OF WYOMING
DIVISION STATE AID
UNIT BASE FUNDING

Wyoming On Line Financial Codes
DEPT DIVISION UNIT FUND APPR
067 6700 6701 001 670

PRIORITY # 6 – Internship Program

A. EXPLANATION OF REQUEST: Multiple reports, including those from the Lumina Foundation, Strada Education Foundation, and the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE), underscore the significant role of internships in promoting student retention in colleges and success after graduation. Research shows that students who complete internships—especially paid, career-aligned ones—are more likely to secure full-time employment upon graduation, receive higher starting salaries, and report greater job satisfaction. Strada Education Foundation's research highlights that internships are a key strategy in reducing underemployment among college graduates by ensuring students gain relevant work experience that aligns with their field of study. In their research, 73% of graduates who completed a paid internship have a first job that requires their degree, compared to 44 percent of those who did not complete an internship. These experiences increase the return on investment (ROI) of a college education by enhancing employability, shortening the job search period, and improving long-term earnings potential. The reports indicate that graduates with internship experience are less likely to end up in jobs that do not require a college degree—a common issue that diminishes educational value. By connecting academic learning with practical application, internships help students build career-aligned skills, clarify their goals, and transition more effectively into meaningful, well-compensated employment.

Wyoming employers across both business and non-business sectors increasingly recognize the value of internships in addressing workforce needs and developing a talent pipeline tailored to the state's unique economic landscape. Businesses in energy, agriculture, technology, finance, and tourism seek interns to support operations, gain fresh perspectives, and build a future workforce with local ties. At the same time, non-business employers—including government agencies, healthcare providers, schools, and nonprofits—require interns to assist with public service delivery, community programs, and administrative support. Many of these organizations face challenges in attracting and retaining skilled workers, especially in rural areas, and view internships as an opportunity to engage students early and encourage them to stay in Wyoming after graduation. To meet these needs, employers emphasize the importance of practical, project-based experiences that align with both academic preparation and regional workforce demands. UW has signed a MOU with Wyoming Business Alliance to establish a collaborative effort meeting the internship needs of Wyoming businesses. Indiana has established 'Work and Learn Indiana' program which can serve as a model for developing a Wyoming version for retaining Wyoming students as interns with Wyoming employees, thereby increasing chances of reducing brain-drain. UW is committed to providing internship opportunities to all students with potential employers in their career paths. There is strong interest from UW's student population; Associated Students of University of Wyoming (ASUW) has committed \$250,000 next year in support of providing financial support for internships. This commitment from UW and its students increases UW's attractiveness in increasing enrollment while enhancing the value of UW education for its graduates.

Based on the ASUW input, a large fraction of UW's 11,000 students would like to undertake internship experience, yet only ~450 students a year receive opportunities for paid internships on campus or outside. Our goal is to raise resources to support coordination and partial funding of internships for an additional 300 students every year. The Department of Workforce Services has an internship program that is focused on supporting Wyoming businesses. They provide funds to businesses to support ~115 interns every year. These interns are from all educational institutions in Wyoming and is only open to businesses but not to other types of organizations that UW students might be interested in pursuing. Thus, the DWS' internship program provides an important but insufficient resource for internship support to UW students.

DEPARTMENT UNIVERSITY OF WYOMING
 DIVISION STATE AID
 UNIT BASE FUNDING

Wyoming On Line Financial Codes
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Use of requested funds:

\$2,300,000 recurring funds per biennium:

- \$150,000 annually for the campus-wide internship coordination efforts (1) One Internship Director in UW's Research and Economic Development Division for coordinating the internship activities across the campus and among the potential employers in the state. The Director and his contacts in colleges/schools will work closely with Wyoming business and non-business employers to develop student experiences that advance student careers while meeting expectations of the employers. The staff will also assist the employers in obtaining internship funds from the Department of Workforce Services. A campus-wide coordination will allow increase the quality of internship experiences, characterized by clarity, oversight, and skill-development as part of an internship. The Director will also spearhead private fund-raising from individuals and industry to support internships in collaboration with UW Foundation and Office of Industry and Strategic Partnerships.
- \$1,000,000 annually for supporting intern stipends with up to 50% amount from the requested funds with the remaining funds contributed from the internship hosts (such as businesses, government agencies, K-12 schools, etc.). Criteria and processes will be developed to provide support in areas where paid internship opportunities are not readily available or the internship payments from the employers are not sufficient for a student to avail the opportunity without financial hardship (e.g., additional commuting or housing costs). This funding will be used only for internships in Wyoming, particularly in critical needs areas such as teaching interns in schools. Despite the importance of internships, the current supply of internships is insufficient, creating deep inequities in access, particularly in rural areas. In 2023, while an estimated 8.2 million learners wanted to intern nationwide, only 3.6 million had the opportunity, and just 2.5 million had a quality internship experience. State support will create additional internship opportunities in Wyoming for UW students.

The requested investments are expected to support at least new 300 internship opportunities for UW students. Currently approximately 450 UW students work as interns every year; the additional investments will maximize opportunities to over 750 students per year.

B. REQUEST BY OBJECT CODE, FUNDING AMOUNT & FUND SOURCE:

Object Code	Amount	Funding Source
1 0626 - Grant Payments	\$2,300,000	100% General Fund
Total	\$2,300,000	100% Revenue Code 1001 - General Fund

C. JUSTIFICATION / CONSEQUENCES: This exception request is consistent with UW strategic plan goals: (1) Enhance Student Success; (2) Pursue Institutional Excellence; and (4) Engage with and Serve the State of Wyoming. Without this support, UW graduates will be at a competitive disadvantage in seeking internship opportunities and Wyoming business and non-business employers will not be able to get interns and recruit qualified employees among their interns.

DEPARTMENT UNIVERSITY OF WYOMING
 DIVISION STATE AID
 UNIT BASE FUNDING

Wyoming On Line Financial Codes
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D. MAINTENANCE OF EFFORT OR MAINTENANCE OF EQUITY: N/A

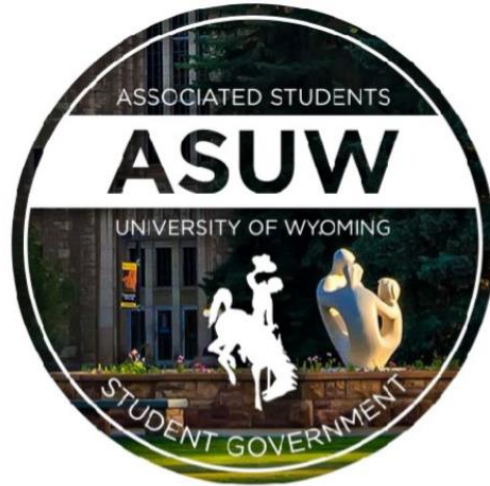
E. ETS APPROVAL NUMBER (IF APPLICABLE): N/A

GOVERNOR'S RECOMMENDATION

I recommend approval of \$2,300,000 for this ongoing request as submitted.

Passed 24-0-0

Addendum B



The Associated Students of the University of Wyoming

**Leadership and Student
Success Opportunities
“*LASSO*” Project**

December 18, 2025

A Project to Implement Priority #6 in the 2027-2028 Biennium
University of Wyoming Budget Exception Request

On behalf of Dylan Fernholz-Hartman, for the 113th ASUW

Executive Summary

This report offers a justification and implementation plan for the Leadership and Student Success Opportunities (LASSO) program. LASSO is a cross-cutting solution utilizing subsidized paid internship for University of Wyoming (UW) students to supply labor and innovative solutions to the Wyoming business community. The UW supplemental budget requests \$2.3 million for the biennium to support the priority internship program. These funds would enhance the value of a UW education by providing relevant job experience for students while simultaneously addressing acute workforce and outmigration problems facing Wyoming.

This proposal includes the following rationale and justification for investing in LASSO:

- **Recruitment and Retention:** Students with paid internships received over twice the job offers post-graduation and earned significantly higher starting salaries. Job prospects drive decision making to pursue higher education. The calculation students make about investing in college is increasingly financial. In a period of declining high school graduates, LASSO is a potent recruitment tool to differentiate UW from regional competitors.
- **Economic Impact:** The program is designed to combat out-migration of young talent, with similar state-subsidized models achieving a 70% retention rate in the North Dakota workforce after 2 years. By supporting small businesses and non-profits, the program is projected to generate growth easily outpacing the cost of the program.
- **Return on Investment:** A pilot year involving 50 students, growing to 250, is estimated to cost \$1.1 million annually, primarily through a \$3,600 wage match per student. This investment is projected to have a multiplier effect through students working, spending, and becoming permanent residents and taxpayers in Wyoming.
- **Alignment with Strategic Objectives:** LASSO aligns with state-level strategic initiatives, including the Wyoming Innovation Partnership (WIP), and presents a clear opportunity to achieve the university's goals for experiential learning.

The logistics section of this report tailors a subsidized internship program to UW based on interviews conducted by ASUW across the university and based on successful internship programs administered by other universities and states. We propose creating a landing page for jobs via a university-wide expansion of the Virtual Career Center. Internships will be sourced from the business community, the non-profit sector, and the University of Wyoming network itself. The wage match will be paid to students using the student account refund mechanism.

LASSO Recruitment Draw and Retention Boost

Overview of the data

Student retention is a critical metric for the institutional health of a university. At the University of Wyoming student retention has been around 80%, with numbers for older and first-generation students being around 70%¹. Increasing the retention rate marginally translates to substantial boosts in revenue from tuition and, more importantly, fulfills the university's educational mission. Data clearly suggests paid internships are one of the most effective interventions for post-grad career success, in turn bolstering retention.

Students who participated in paid internships could expect 1.61 job offers following graduation whereas students who did not participate in an internship could only expect 0.77 job offers². This indicates interns who worked for pay are more than two times as marketable. Data like this is a powerful motivator for students to pursue internships and finish their degree. Financial benefits accrue to students working a paid internship who could expect to earn \$62,500 following graduation in 2022. This was compared to a starting salary of \$42,500 which could be expected for unpaid interns. By making paid internships a standard part of the UW experience the state and university are increasing the value of a UW degree by investing in better job outcomes for graduates.

Connecting the classroom to job experiences

Internships when paired with course work are an effective antidote to the relevance gap. The relevance gap is a perceived disconnect where students feel coursework is overly abstract and disconnected from reality³. These feelings undercut student success but can be effectively mitigated by linking work experience with academic experience. Prospective college students are increasingly skeptical about the value proposition of higher education. A tangible experience in the workforce that utilizes the skills developed in the classroom will be an appealing prospect to students and a powerful recruitment and retention tool.

Data from the Gallup-Purdue Index illustrates this dynamic. The study found that recent graduates who participated in internships were more likely to secure full time employment following graduation, and those graduates were more likely to report being engaged in their job⁴. This effect of applied learning is recognized by the Association of American Colleges and Universities called internship a high impact practice with significant educational benefits to participants⁵. Internships are a powerful tool to transform the university experience from one of passively intaking knowledge to actively producing value in the workforce and community.

Financial considerations of internships for retention

Financial stress is consistently cited as the top reason for students dropping out of college. A subsidized internship program would tip the scales by ensuring students can pursue career building jobs while earning adequate wages to support their common expenses. Offering a program where students could count on a paid internship over the summer would alleviate the financial pressure that forces many of the 20% of students not retained to ultimately decide to drop out. By subsidizing wages to a competitive level, internships are transformed into a financial aid vehicle that has the co-benefit of students contributing their skills to the workforce.

This avenue for earning income over the summer is particularly vital for first-generation and low-income students. Research indicates that paid internships are critical levers for social mobility⁶. By directing subsidies towards non-profits and small businesses that could otherwise not afford to pay interns, UW also ensures the career benefits are distributed across sectors and colleges within the university more equitably.

Benefits for recruitment

The number of high school graduates is projected to decline 13% between 2025-2041⁷. This will lead to a period of increased competition for enrollment and retention for colleges and universities around the country. In this environment, traditional recruiting tools like new facilities or beautiful landscaping will be insufficient. Prospective students are becoming increasingly pragmatic with their views of higher education. If college cannot provide a better return on investment than direct entry to the workforce, why would one take on debt to attend college? A highly accessible internship program provides UW with a potent recruitment tool that directly addresses the concerns around employability and return on investment driving prospective students' decisions.

Career outcomes are the dominant factor in college selection, and the LASSO program presents UW an opportunity to differentiate itself from regional competitors. Career services are standard practice in universities, but few offer structured programs to access career building paid internships. By marketing LASSO and backing this commitment with funding UW offers a tangible program responding to the clear demand for career readiness and employability students are seeking from higher education. This approach can be transformative for the universities image shifting from a provider of education to a partner in charting a desirable career path.

Success at peer institutions

Several similar programs have been adopted in universities around the country. The University of Pittsburgh runs an internship prep program where students who complete a preparatory curriculum are guaranteed an internship⁸. Similarly, High Point University has built

a brand around life skills and an internship guarantee⁹, earning the honor of “best-run college in the nation”¹⁰. A co-op program has been adopted at the University of Cincinnati where students earned over \$94 million collectively¹¹. By embedding the internship program into the recruitment toolkit, UW signals it is an institution that understands the modern economy and prospective students' needs. An organized internship program shifts the conversation from what you can learn at the university to what you will *do* with a university education.

Economic Benefits to the State

Combatting outmigration

LASSO will expose students to the innovative small businesses and specialized firms that form the backbone of Wyoming's economy but may lack the visibility of major corporations. Once a student spends a summer working for a dynamic company in Laramie or Casper, the abstract concept of "staying in Wyoming" becomes a concrete career option. Data from North Dakota's Operation Intern, a similar state-subsidized model, shows an 80% retention rate of participants in the state workforce one year after program exit and 70% retention after 2 years¹². This suggests that the simple act of connecting a student to a local employer drastically increases the probability of them remaining in the state.

The Rural Works program, run by NC State specifically targets internships in rural counties and provides stipends to ensure competitive wages. NC State has effectively funneled engineering and business talent into rural communities¹³. The results of the Rural Works program are striking. Students who participated were significantly more likely to consider rural employment post-graduation. They cited the discovery of lower costs of living, community impact, and the high level of responsibility they were given as key factors. LASSO could serve as this mechanism to direct talent towards underserved areas across Wyoming, providing critical human capital to rural municipalities and businesses while showing students that building a career in their home state is both feasible and rewarding.

Supporting small businesses

Placing interns with small businesses allows those students to support marketing efforts, digitalization, or special projects the businesses have lacked capacity to undertake. With limited economic strain for intern wages, small businesses could prioritize growth projects that have been envisioned but await additional capacity. The cumulative economic impact of new projects, ideas, and support with operations will be substantial. With students helping in operations during the busy summer period, tasks like shipping online orders or taking inventory can be shared

allowing business owners flexibility to focus on core functions while students watch, learn, and help.

In Ohio, the Ohio Export Internship Program was started specifically to support small and medium sized businesses aiming to expand export efforts. From 2012-2018 the Ohio Export Internship Program graduated 231 students and generated \$31 million in estimated export sales for 136 Ohio companies. It also has led to 35 full-time job offers and 50 internship extensions¹⁴. Success in Ohio clearly demonstrates internship programs have benefits far outpacing the costs. Bringing together the Wyoming Innovation Partnership program and LASSO could lead to a similar success in expanding markets for Wyoming businesses.

Multiplier effect

If 50 students participate in the pilot year growing to 250 in subsequent years, the cost would be approximately \$1.1 million annually. With students working 10-12 weeks at \$18/hour the cost of the wage match per student is around \$3,600 or \$900,000 annually across the program. Two coordinator positions (\$150,000/year) could be created to serve as points of contact for businesses seeking to post LASSO positions. To support rural communities \$50,000 in grants would be administered for rural housing and travel to bring the program to students across the state.

This investment multiplies through retention, business growth, and tax revenue paid to the state. Currently 66% of young people end up leaving the state. In a class of 200 if this trend holds 133 out of those 200 will be out of Wyoming by the time they are 30¹⁵. After working in their field through an internship if an additional 5% of students stay long term the tax generation from these 10 retained residents easily offsets the cost to the program. If LASSO can recreate the success of the North Dakota's Operation Intern where 70% of program participants were still working in the state 2 years later, a majority of students could soon be staying in Wyoming rather than leaving.

Local economies around the state will be stimulated too. Using the economic multiplier effect of 1.74 for university expenditures¹⁶ the injection of \$900,000 to young people, who consume at the highest rates, would generate \$1.6 million in economic activity through wages, rent, goods, and services. The value proposition is clear for improving financial, education, social, and material conditions across the state through an investment in the current generation.

Benefits to rural communities

Rural economics depend on both business employers and public sector and non-profit organizations to support the range of services necessary for a safe, healthy, and thriving community. Many communities around Wyoming already face challenges securing a workforce

to staff schools, hospitals, and private businesses. Many towns see new jobs as a problem because the workforce is not only zero sum but declining. New jobs in one place directly take from somewhere else struggling to retain workers. When any one of the several necessary services becomes unavailable in a rural community, the future existence of that community is drawn into question. If young people are unable to find opportunities in critical rural sectors the workforce problems are all but guaranteed to worsen. The present and severe challenge in supporting rural workforce availability can be countered by using state capacity to support the LASSO program which could infuse hundreds of *new* workers across the state as soon as this summer.

A well-developed internship program has a multitude of benefits from employers too. Bringing in a cohort of interns each year brings fresh ideas and offers a low-cost pipeline for recruiting and hiring new staff. In business enterprises including energy, agriculture, and tourism, interns bring specialized skills making them highly capable of supporting operations and advancing new initiatives. In non-business employers, like government agencies, healthcare providers, schools, and non-profits interns can assist with core functions of operations, leading community programs, and providing administrative support.

Many high performing students at UW assume leaving Wyoming is the only way to get a job in their field. Showing students that there are opportunities in rural communities while giving them responsibilities to execute projects that grow businesses, or to gain experience providing the necessary services public institutions facilitate, will prove to students their time is valued and well spend reinvesting in their home state. Living and working in rural communities also develops an attachment to a sense of place, turning the staying in Wyoming from an alternative to default option.

LASSO Logistics

ASUW has earmarked \$250,000 to support a pilot version of the LASSO program. In researching and producing this report we observed strong interest for an internship program among students at UW, in the upper levels of the university, and in the state broadly. Learning from other internship programs and using tactical steps tailored to UW as described in this report, ASUW is confident in our ability to launch a pilot LASSO program. The legislature has a fantastic opportunity to capitalize on this plan by providing ongoing support ensuring a robust and growing statewide internship program capturing the benefits detailed in previous sections.

At present 450 students participate in internships at UW. With the funding provided by the legislature 250 additional paid internships would be offered through the LASSO program. With around 7,700 undergraduate students and 6,500 Wyoming residents enrolled across UW programs¹⁷ more than 10% of residents and nearly 10% of undergrads could be participating in these valuable career building experiences. With funding for 115 interns available through Wyoming Innovation Partnership (WIP) funds for intern wages are directly transferred to businesses. Between these two programs the state is on the way 1000+ internships operating via diverse public and private mechanisms.

Hosting internships

The first order of business to implement the LASSO program is to create a landing page for the jobs available to Wyoming students through Wyoming businesses. In our research for this report, we identified two viable paths to host a job board. The first is an expansion of the virtual career center model which is currently utilized by the College of Business and the Haub School of Environment and Natural Resources. The second would be to design and run a job board internally on the university website.

Virtual career center

This model starts with coordinators in the respective colleges scouring Handshake or other nationwide job boards to find jobs relevant to students in those colleges. Relevant jobs are then added to the “Virtual Career Center” hosted on the UConnect platform. Both the colleges using this platform are under contract with UConnect as part of their own departments budget. UConnect is a powerful platform that can host both internships and resources for students seeking to improve their resume, get interview tips, or access the professional career services staff at the university.

The benefits of this system are many. By university wide adoption of the UConnect or another similar platform, the engagement with career service would significantly increase. With a LASSO coordinator the Wyoming business community could have a clear point of contact at the university, streamlining the process of sourcing internships. The current cost to the College of Business is \$26,000/year for these services, but the marginal cost for additional colleges under a scenario of university wide adoption would fall well below this price point.

Internal job board

The job board could also be developed and hosted internally on the university website. The mechanics of the board would be relatively simple with the product largely functioning like a spreadsheet. With a LASSO coordinator the process for getting internships posted would be similar. We have had conversations with UW IT and with the Advising, Career, and Explanatory

Services (ACES) leadership. These conversations were productive, and ACES was receptive to the idea of hosting something like this. To execute an undertaking of this scale would require significant university capacity and strong executive support.

Sourcing internships

To source our target of 50 internships we foresee three primary sources of opportunities - the business community, the non-profit community, and the University of Wyoming. As the program grows to the target 250 and eventually university wide, the scope of partners will also continue to grow.

The Business Community

In developing this proposal ASUW executives met with the Laramie Chamber of Business Alliance (LCBA) to learn about the appetite for a project like this from local businesses. The LCBA was enthusiastic about the project and provided us with excellent suggestions about how to engage with similar organizations outside of Laramie. To expand the footprint of this project across the state we would reach out to all similar chambers of business in Cheyenne, Casper, Gillette, and other cities with chambers of business or commerce. After working with local partners around the state we would aim to partner with the Wyoming Business Council achieve a statewide scope. There are also resources in the university we could leverage to connect with partners in industry. The Office of Industry and Strategic Partnerships would be an excellent resource. Connections could also be made through the individual colleges like Haub, School of Energy Resources, Agricultural Science, Engineering, and College of Business, each of whom have cultivated relationships with industry partners and alums around Wyoming.

The Non-Profit Community

LASSO would source internship opportunities from the robust non-profit sector here in Laramie and around the state. These opportunities would be eligible for the largest subsidy to make internships available to organizations that may otherwise not have the means to pay an intern. To find opportunities we would reach out directly to high profile organizations like the Wyoming Conservation Corps, the Wyoming Outdoor Council, and Laramie Soup Kitchen. To expand this network statewide we would connect with the Wyoming Nonprofit Network (WNN) to centrally spread the word about the LASSO program. This connection would be facilitated relatively easily as the chair of the board of directors for the WNN is faculty at the University of Wyoming.

The University of Wyoming

The university will be another critical source of opportunities for students. With a wide range of disciplines and types of work going on at any time there are ample opportunities for internships within the University of Wyoming network. Another key partner will be the UW Casper campus, giving the LASSO program a foothold in Wyoming's second largest city. It is essential to the success of LASSO that this program is available to students at all UW campuses, and by working closely with partners opportunities will continue to grow.

Subsidizing internships

In learning about how other paid internship programs run on campus we propose using the student account refund mechanism to pay stipends to students who participate in the LASSO program. Logistics around enrolling in one credit over the summer or extending the final grade deadline of a spring course are mechanisms other departments have employed. Ideally LASSO would have a more streamlined mechanism. The refund mechanism is a common one for internal grants, like for conference travel funds, and provides a reliable and clear mechanism to get funds into the hands of students. An alternative would be to 'hire' students as non-benefitted employees, but this would require dozens of positions which at scale could pose unreasonable administrative burdens on university staff.

We propose a matrix system to determine the percentage match eligibility depending on the size of business and sector. The purpose of this sliding scale is to make internships more accessible in sectors that would otherwise be unable to afford paid internship, like municipal government and local non-profit organizations. A match would still be available for larger companies in sectors like energy and technology to encourage participation in the LASSO program but would be at or below 50% of wages. The proposed matrix would look something like this:

Number of Employees/ Sector	Not for Profit	Government	For Profit
<20	90%	90%	75%
<200	75%	75%	50%
>200	50%	50%	25%

Using LASSO to Accomplish Strategic Initiatives

State level program to broaden experiential learning

Looking to the Department of Workforce (DOW) service there has already been an effort to create this program by subsidizing employers to offer internships. Under the DOW program businesses are offered \$18/hour for intern wages. LASSO would offer a more cost-effective way to deliver this service. DOW provides clear guidance about the expectations of internships and parameters around eligibility¹⁸. LASSO could draw on this language in conjunction with the research around experiential learning ongoing at UW in the office of the provost to provide guidance for employers on how to host generative internships. LASSO would advance economic development strategies already being employed by the state and strategic objectives for UW.

This program also aligns with WIP goals to accelerate workforce development in critical sectors¹⁹. Bringing together innovation, workforce development, and entrepreneurship, if WIP lays out a vision, LASSO is the tactical steps needed to that bring the vision into reality. WIP in conjunction with UW could collect robust data on employment, quality of internships, retention, and workforce development. UW has signed a MOU with the Wyoming Business Alliance indicating buy-in for coordination at the state agency level. ASUW executives have met with the Laramie Chamber of Business Alliance who also was supportive of the project indicating appetite for paid internships at the local level.

Work and Learn Indiana is another state subsidized internship program where up to 50% of intern wages are eligible to be reimbursed. The state was broken into 12 districts where employers can post jobs into a “work-based learning matching marketplace”²⁰. The program has also produced an employer’s guidebook to internships which Wyoming could adapt for LASSO. Both states and universities have implemented similar programs successfully and with UW as the sole 4-year university in Wyoming the business community, government, and university could pursue a coordinated response. Drawing on these resources will reduce the administrative burden to bring LASSO online smoothly and rapidly so outmigration can begin to be mitigated.

Opportunity to enhance university wide career services

In research conducted for this report ASUW representatives gained a better understanding of the structure of career services across the university. Representing a network across all sectors in Wyoming, the utility of the personnel supporting students in job searching is excellent. The strength of this network is indispensable to the success of the LASSO program. The breadth and quality of relationships across the state maintained by career services will be highly capable in sustaining many LASSO internships.

There are also areas that this broader conversation about career services and student success could move to improve. Many colleges and departments have established pipelines and great relationships with industry partners providing ample opportunities. However, some colleges lack the resources or have sufficiently broad mandates that staff time is solely centered on students' logistical questions rather than cultivating relationships with external partners. In making internships a central part of the career services experience the positions(s) of LASSO coordinator will be crucial. We also see an opportunity for reorganization and retrenchment to remedy the most obvious problems facing career services. We raise three suggestions here and recommend a task force be created with members from career services across the university in partnership with student success staff and members who have been active in the campus wide internship meetings to address these challenges identified.

The first suggestion is to adopt a virtual career center campus wide. For a relatively modest cost the student experiences navigating resources for career readiness and to search for jobs relevant to their discipline could be streamlined and enhanced.

Second, we would suggest reevaluating the utility and cost of the handshake contract. It is our opinion that a more effective platform exists, and that the new job board should be selected with the intention of integrating smoothly with the virtual career center.

Finally, to improve the student planning and advising experience students must be able to audit their own degree progress. This should be a native part of WyoWeb allowing student to easily evaluate their completed course work against the requirements for any degree offered at the university. This is a standard operating procedure for universities across the country and there is no reason UW students should not have direct access to information about their own degree progress.

Conclusion

The LASSO program represents a clear value proposition and offers a timely, strategic, and lucrative investment to the State of Wyoming. By making paid internships a standard part of the UW student experience, this bold initiative directly addresses and remedies primary factors pushing students to dropout and driving post-graduation out-migration.

LASSO is more than a new service; it is a tactical mechanism that:

- Transforms the UW experience from passive knowledge intake to active value creation and skill development in the workforce.

- Differentiates UW in a competitive enrollment landscape by offering a tangible commitment to career readiness and employability.
- Provides critical human capital to underserved rural communities and bolsters the state's economic backbone of small businesses.

This program is clearly aligned with existing state economic development efforts and the vision of the Wyoming Innovation Partnership. LASSO's success, modeled on peer institutions, promises a powerful return on investment by improving the financial, educational, social, and material conditions across the state. LASSO's implementation can prove to students a rewarding career is possible in Wyoming.

Addendum C

The LASSO Project

Phase 2: Program Operations and Design

A Follow-Up Report to the ASUW LASSO Proposal

April 2026

Prepared for the LASSO Implementation Working Group

University of Wyoming

Introduction and Purpose

The January 2026 ASUW LASSO Proposal established the rationale for a state-subsidized internship program at the University of Wyoming. That document made the case for investment: it presented the evidence on outmigration, career outcomes, and the competitive enrollment landscape, and it outlined a \$2.3 million biennium budget request now moving through the legislative process. The proposal answered the question of why LASSO should exist.

This follow-up report answers a different set of questions: the operational ones. As the implementation working group has convened and the program's design has come into sharper focus, a series of practical problems have surfaced that the original proposal did not address in detail. Who is eligible? How does an internship become a LASSO internship? What does the coordinator actually do? How does the program relate to curricular internships that already exist in several colleges? What data should be collected, and by whom?

The working group's approach to these questions reflects a deliberate choice. Rather than rushing a pilot program to launch, the priority is to design LASSO as a flagship initiative. With thoughtful planning, LASSO can be integrated into the university's career services infrastructure, its employer networks, and its data systems from the outset. A program built on temporary scaffolding will produce temporary results. A program built with institutional roots will compound in value over time as its employer partnerships deepen, its outcome data matures, and its alumni network grows. The design work in this report is oriented toward that second outcome.

This report works through the operational questions section by section. Where a clear recommendation has emerged from the working group's discussions and the research compiled for this project, this report states it directly. Where reasonable paths forward remain open and a decision has not yet been made, this report presents the options and flags them for resolution. The intention is to provide a working document that the implementation team can use to build LASSO into a durable, university-wide program.

Throughout this report, the original ASUW proposal and the formal budget request are treated as the foundational documents. This report does not revisit the evidence base for internship programs, the cost-benefit analysis, or the strategic alignment arguments already presented. Readers seeking that context should consult the original proposal. This document is concerned with design and execution.

I. Student Eligibility

A central question for any subsidized program is who qualifies. The eligibility criteria for LASSO need to balance two objectives: keeping the barrier to entry low enough that the program reaches students who need it most, while maintaining enough structure that participants can represent UW well in a professional setting.

Baseline Requirements

To be eligible for a LASSO wage match, a student must be degree-seeking at any UW campus, enrolled at least half-time, and have completed a minimum of 18 credit hours at UW. The credit hour floor filters out first-semester students who have not yet established an academic footing, without imposing the kind of GPA cutoff that would exclude students who stand to benefit most from career-building experience. Good standing with the university is sufficient. These thresholds should be revisited after the first full year of operation, when the program will have data on whether participants at different credit levels perform differently in their placements.

Undergraduate and Graduate Students

Undergraduates are the primary population for LASSO. The program's legislative rationale centers on combating outmigration of young talent and improving the return on investment of a UW degree, both of which point squarely at the undergraduate experience. Graduate students should not be excluded entirely, however. Some master's and professional students face the same financial pressures and outmigration dynamics as undergraduates, and excluding them would be difficult to justify to the legislature or the public. The recommended approach is a soft cap: reserve 85 to 90 percent of available slots for undergraduates, and allow graduate students to apply for remaining capacity. This keeps the program focused without creating a rigid barrier.

Clinical, Student Teaching, and CTE Placements

Several colleges at UW already require internships, clinical rotations, or student teaching placements as part of their curricula. These experiences have their own funding streams, supervisory structures, and academic requirements. LASSO should not attempt to absorb or replace them.

The recommended distinction is functional, not disciplinary. LASSO internships are elective, career-exploratory experiences with a wage match. If a placement is a curricular requirement with its own funding and supervision, it falls outside LASSO regardless of the student's major. However, the program should remain open to students in those fields. A student in an education program who finds a paid summer placement at a rural school district through LASSO's employer network could qualify, provided the placement fits the LASSO criteria. The test is whether the internship meets LASSO's criteria, not whether the student happens to be in a major that also requires clinical work.

Exclusions and Participation Limits

Students currently on academic probation are not eligible. To spread access across the student body, a student may receive a maximum of two LASSO wage matches over the course of their enrollment. This cap prevents the program from concentrating benefits among a small number of repeat participants. International students are eligible provided they hold valid work authorization, consistent with the inclusive approach taken by comparable programs in Indiana and elsewhere.

II. How Internships Become LASSO Internships

Before LASSO accepts its first applicant, the program needs its core infrastructure in place: a coordinator, a quality checklist, an application process, a payment mechanism, and a network of employers ready to participate. This phase is devoted to building that foundation deliberately rather than improvising it under the pressure of a live cohort.

Phase 1: Foundation Building (Through Spring 2027)

During this period, the coordinator establishes relationships with chambers of commerce, nonprofit networks, and state agencies across Wyoming, converting general interest into concrete commitments to host interns. The Laramie Chamber of Business Alliance, Laramie Main Street, the Wyoming Non-Profit Network, and the Wyoming Association of Municipalities all have been brought into the loop on LASSO and could serve as starting points to contact similar organizations around the state.

The application form and quality checklist are drafted, tested against real position descriptions gathered from employer conversations, and refined. The pre- and post-internship survey instruments are designed in partnership with the Office of Institutional Analysis. Written coordination agreements are established with colleges that already run their own internship programs. And the working group resolves the open decisions flagged in this report — the coordinator's organizational home, the frontier-county geographic adjustment, and the early groundwork for the job board platform selection.

This phase also adopts an open-qualification model for the program's initial cycle: any eligible UW student who secures an internship with a Wyoming-based employer can apply for the LASSO wage match. Students submit a short application including proof of enrollment, employer information, a brief description of the role, expected hours, and the employer's proposed hourly wage. The coordinator reviews each application against the quality checklist described in Section IV. This "bring your own internship" approach generates real data about where students are finding work, what sectors are represented, and what the quality of placements looks like — information that will directly shape the curated system built in Phase 2.

Phase 2: Curated Listings Plus Open Qualification (Academic Year 2027–28)

Once the virtual career center or job board is operational, employers can apply to post positions as designated LASSO internships, pre-vetted by the coordinator. Students browse and apply through the platform. The open qualification path remains available in parallel: students who find their own placements can still apply for the wage match, subject to the same quality review. Over time, the balance should shift toward curated listings as the employer network matures, but the self-sourced path should never be fully closed. It rewards student initiative and captures opportunities the coordinator cannot anticipate.

Phase 3: Full LASSO Designation (Year 3 and Beyond)

By the third year, the program should have enough employer relationships and outcome data to establish a formal LASSO Employer Partner designation. Employers who meet quality standards and commit to mentorship and evaluation requirements are listed as LASSO partners. The coordinator actively recruits employers in underrepresented sectors and geographies. Self-sourced internships remain eligible but go through a more rigorous review, since the curated pipeline should be meeting most of the demand.

Application Mechanics

Applications are processed first-come, first-served within each cycle. If demand exceeds supply, a priority system could be devised to favor graduating students and those who have not yet had a LASSO internship. Two application windows are recommended: a primary deadline in early March for summer placements, and a secondary deadline in September for spring placements. Rolling review for late additions should continue as long as slots remain. This structure provides predictability for the coordinator while leaving enough flexibility to accommodate the reality that not all internship offers arrive on a tidy schedule.

III. The Role of the LASSO Coordinator

The coordinator position is the operational spine of the program. The \$150,000 annual allocation in the budget request covers 1 to 1.5 FTE positions. Defining the scope of this role clearly is essential to preventing the coordinator from being pulled in too many directions at once. The role should be organized around four core functions.

Employer Development

The coordinator serves as the single front door for Wyoming employers who want to participate in LASSO. This means building and maintaining relationships with chambers of commerce around the state, the Wyoming Nonprofit Network, state agencies, and UW's own internal hiring units. The Laramie Chamber of Business Alliance has already expressed enthusiasm for the

program, and the university's MOU with the Wyoming Business Alliance provides a foundation for statewide outreach. The coordinator's job is to convert that interest into posted positions with clear expectations.

Quality Assurance

Every internship placement, whether sourced through the curated job board or brought in by a student, must be reviewed against the quality checklist described in Section IV. The coordinator also conducts a structured mid-internship check-in with both the student and the employer supervisor. This is a brief, problem-identification conversation, not a heavy compliance exercise. The goal is to catch issues early: a student sitting idle, a supervisor too busy to provide guidance, a mismatch between the role description and the actual work.

Data Collection and Reporting

The coordinator administers the pre- and post-internship surveys, tracks completion rates, compiles outcome data, and produces the annual reports described in Section VIII. This function is essential to the program's long-term viability. The budget request was justified on the basis of retention and workforce development outcomes. If the program cannot demonstrate those outcomes with data, it will be difficult to sustain legislative support. A partnership with the Office of Institutional Analysis for longitudinal tracking is strongly recommended, and embedding a graduate assistant in the program specifically for data management should be considered.

Cross-Campus Liaison

This is the politically sensitive function. Several colleges at UW already have strong internship pipelines: Haub, Engineering, and the College of Business have cultivated deep relationships with industry partners. The coordinator should not duplicate or compete with those relationships. The coordinator's value is in sectors and departments that lack robust pipelines, and in supporting university-wide infrastructure including the job board, the wage match process, and the data management system. Regular coordination meetings with college-level career services staff should be a standard part of the role, framed as information-sharing and network-pooling rather than top-down direction.

Decision Pending: The budget request specifies that the coordinator sit in the Research and Economic Development Division. An alternative that has been discussed is housing the position within Advising, Career, and Exploratory Services (ACES), which would place it closer to the student-facing career services infrastructure. Both options have merits. R&ED offers stronger ties to employer and industry networks; ACES offers stronger ties to the student advising ecosystem. This decision should be made by the implementation working group in consultation with both divisions before the position is posted.

IV. What Makes an Internship Qualify for the Wage Match

Drawing on the Indiana employer guide, Wyoming DWS internship grant criteria, and the quality indicators identified in Strada Education Foundation research, an internship merits LASSO designation if it meets all of the following conditions:

- The position is based in Wyoming. Remote positions for Wyoming-based employers are acceptable if the student is also located in Wyoming during the internship period.
- The internship involves a minimum of 160 hours and a maximum of 480 hours of work. This range is flexible enough to accommodate both 8- to 12-week full-time summer placements and part-time semester placements.
- The employer designates a supervisor who commits to regular check-ins with the intern and completes a brief end-of-term evaluation.
- The work involves substantive, project-based tasks. Positions that consist exclusively of clerical, custodial, or routine labor do not qualify. The Strada research is clear that the career value of an internship depends on whether the work builds skills and expands professional networks; placements that do not meet this standard should not receive public subsidy.
- The employer agrees to participate in the post-internship survey and evaluation process described in Section V.

The Wage Match Sliding Scale

The original ASUW proposal introduced a tiered match structure based on employer size and sector, with the highest match rates directed toward nonprofits and small employers who are least able to fund intern wages independently. That framework remains the foundation. The match rates proposed in the original report are reproduced below for reference:

Table 1: Proposed Match Eligibility Scale (from ASUW Proposal)

Employees / Sector	Not for Profit	Government	For Profit
Fewer than 20	90%	90%	75%
Fewer than 200	75%	75%	50%
200 or more	50%	50%	25%

Geographic Adjustment for Frontier Counties

One modification worth considering is a geographic adjustment for employers located in frontier counties. Rural placements face additional barriers: housing may be scarce, transportation costs are higher, and the employer pool is thinner. The original ASUW proposal allocates

\$100,000 for rural housing and travel grants, but a modest bump in match eligibility for frontier-county employers would provide an additional incentive to participate. For example, a frontier-county employer could be treated as one tier higher on the sliding scale, so a for-profit business with fewer than 200 employees in a frontier county would receive the 75 percent match rate normally reserved for smaller firms.

Decision Pending: Whether to implement a geographic adjustment, and the specific definition of qualifying counties (Census frontier and remote designation, population threshold, or another metric), has not been finalized. This should be resolved before the connecting with employers, ideally in consultation with the Department of Workforce Services, which uses its own geographic criteria for grant programs.

V. Outcomes, Metrics, and Data Collection

The original proposal cites North Dakota's Operation Intern as the strongest comparable evidence for state-subsidized internship programs, with 80 percent of participants remaining in the state workforce one year after program exit and 70 percent after two years. Wyoming currently lacks equivalent data. Building a credible evidence base from the first cohort forward is not optional; it is the condition on which future funding depends.

The recommended data collection architecture has five touchpoints, sequenced to capture baseline, in-progress, and outcome information without imposing an unreasonable burden on students or employers.

Touchpoint 1: Application Intake

The application itself captures baseline demographics, major, credit standing, prior work experience, and whether the student self-sourced the internship or used the LASSO job board. This is the denominator data for every subsequent analysis. It should be designed with reporting in mind from the outset, using standardized fields that align with the categories the legislature and university administration will want to see: college, classification, Pell eligibility, first-generation status, and home county.

Touchpoint 2: Pre-Internship Orientation

A short, required online module covering workplace expectations and professional communication basics. The module includes a brief pre-survey capturing the student's career confidence, knowledge of Wyoming job opportunities, and intent to stay in-state after graduation. This survey establishes the baseline against which post-internship attitude change is measured. The orientation should be kept light. It is not a course, and adding academic requirements at this stage would deter participation.

Touchpoint 3: Mid-Internship Check-In

The coordinator contacts both the student and the employer supervisor at the midpoint of the internship. This is a structured but brief quality assurance conversation: Is the work meaningful? Are there any problems? Is the supervisor providing regular feedback? The check-in serves as an early warning system, not a data collection exercise. Notes from these conversations should be logged for the coordinator's reference, but they do not feed into the formal reporting pipeline.

Touchpoint 4: Post-Internship Surveys

This is the critical data moment. Two surveys are administered at the conclusion of the internship, one to the student and one to the employer supervisor.

The student survey captures skills developed, professional network expansion, career clarity, overall satisfaction, and updated intent to stay in Wyoming. **The employer survey** captures the quality of the intern's work, likelihood of extending a full-time offer, willingness to host a LASSO intern again, and an assessment of which skills were most and least developed during the placement.

Both surveys should be required as a condition of receiving the wage match. The recommended mechanism is to withhold the final refund disbursement until the student survey is complete. Employer survey completion should be a condition of remaining in good standing as a LASSO partner, though enforcement will need to be handled diplomatically in the early years while the employer network is still growing. North Dakota's experience is instructive here: only 44 percent of Operation Intern employers responded to post-program data requests, a gap the state is now addressing by making responsiveness a condition of future participation.

Touchpoint 5: Longitudinal Follow-Up

A brief survey sent to former LASSO participants at six months and one year after the internship, asking about employment status, geographic location, and whether the internship influenced their career trajectory. This is where the program builds the retention data that will justify continued funding. It is also the hardest data to collect. Response rates will be imperfect, especially for the one-year follow-up. The recommendation is to begin collecting from the first cohort, accept that early datasets will be incomplete, and invest in the alumni engagement infrastructure that makes longitudinal tracking possible over time. A partnership with the Office of Institutional Analysis is essential for this work, particularly for matching LASSO participants against enrollment and graduation records.

Skills Taxonomy

Using the post-internship surveys, the program should develop a set of skill and experience tags for each placement: categories like data analysis, client-facing communication, field research, grant writing, or equipment operation. Over time, this builds a searchable database that helps future students choose placements aligned with their development goals and helps employers

understand what LASSO interns typically bring. This is a Year 2 feature, not a launch requirement. The pilot year should focus on getting the survey instruments right; the taxonomy can be built from the data those instruments generate.

VI. LASSO and Existing Curricular Internships

This section addresses a question that will generate significant internal discussion if not handled carefully: how does LASSO relate to the internship and clinical placement programs that already exist within individual colleges?

The Recommended Framing

LASSO is a complementary, co-curricular program. It exists to create opportunities where they do not currently exist—for students in majors without built-in internship pipelines, for students who want a second experience beyond a curricular requirement, and for students who want to explore a career direction outside their major. The program should not be positioned as a replacement for or competitor to established departmental programs.

The original proposal notes that approximately 450 UW students currently participate in internships each year. The internship mapping report referenced in the ASUW proposal would provide a more granular breakdown by college. Understanding where those 450 placements are concentrated is important: if a large majority are in three or four colleges, that tells the implementation team where LASSO's additive value is highest across colleges with less representation.

Where Programs Intersect

There will be cases where a student in a department with an internship requirement finds a placement through the LASSO employer network, and that placement meets both the department's curricular standards and LASSO's quality checklist. In those cases, there is no reason the experience cannot count for both purposes. The wage match flows through LASSO; the academic credit flows through the department. This avoids forcing students to choose between financial support and academic credit, and it respects departmental authority over curriculum. The coordinator's role in these cases is to facilitate, not to adjudicate academic requirements.

This dual-counting arrangement should be documented in a brief written agreement between the LASSO program and each participating college's career services or internship coordinator. The agreement does not need to be elaborate, but it should establish the principle and clarify who is responsible for what: the department handles academic supervision and credit, LASSO handles the wage match and program-level data collection.

VII. The Job Board and Platform Question

The most immediate platform option is Handshake, which UW already contracts with and which is widely adopted across higher education for employer engagement and job posting. Handshake has the advantage of existing infrastructure, institutional familiarity, and a national employer network that could be filtered and configured to surface Wyoming-specific opportunities for LASSO participants. If Handshake can support the program's needs — dedicated LASSO listings, employer tagging by sector and geography, and integration with the wage match application process — it represents the most straightforward path forward and avoids the cost and timeline risk of building or adopting a separate system.

Two alternatives remain worth evaluating if Handshake proves insufficient. The first is expanding the UConnect virtual career center platform already in use at the College of Business and Haub School, which offers career resources and job listings in a more curated, college-specific format. The second is developing and hosting a job board internally on the university website, which would give UW full control over design and data but would require significant IT capacity and sustained executive support. The following sections offer alternatives, as the decision depends on institutional factors including cost, platform capability, and integration requirements, but assumes Handshake will be the initial host of LASSO opportunities.

Alternative A: University-Wide UConnect Adoption

UConnect is already under contract with two colleges and provides a platform capable of hosting job listings, career resources, resume tools, and interview preparation materials. University-wide adoption would give the LASSO program a ready-made platform with native support for the kinds of features career services staff have identified as valuable. The current cost to the College of Business is approximately \$26,000 per year, and the marginal cost for additional colleges under a university-wide license would fall below that figure. The primary advantage is speed to launch: the platform exists, staff in two colleges already know how to use it, and LASSO listings could be added without building anything new.

Alternative B: Internally Developed Job Board

An internal job board would give UW full control over design, data, and integration with existing university systems like WyoWeb. However, conversations with UW IT have made clear that building a platform of this scope would require significant development capacity and sustained executive support. The timeline for an internal build is less predictable than adopting an existing platform, and the risk of complications is higher.

Decision Pending: The choice between Handshake, UConnect adoption, or an internal job board has not been made with finality. This decision should be informed by a cost comparison, a realistic timeline assessment from UW IT, and input from career services staff across colleges. The status quo of Handshake appears to be a feasible option at present with a specific filter for LASSO eligible positions envisioned as a future feature.

VIII. Program Evolution

LASSO should be designed with room to grow. Three directions for evolution are worth building into the program's architecture now, even if they are not implemented until the program has a year or two of operational experience.

Micro-Internships and Project-Based Placements

The Strada Education Foundation research identifies shorter-duration, project-based work experiences as a promising complement to traditional internships. As LASSO matures, placements of 40 to 80 hours could be added as a lighter-touch option for students who cannot commit to a full summer internship. This is particularly relevant for first-generation and working students who face scheduling and financial constraints that make a 10-week, full-time commitment difficult. Micro-internships would carry a smaller wage match and a simplified evaluation process. They should be considered as a formal program expansion in Year 3, once the core program is stable.

Credit Integration

Working with the Provost's office to develop a university-wide option for students to earn elective credit for LASSO internships, regardless of major, would strengthen the program's academic legitimacy and appeal. This does not require every department to create a new course. A single cross-listed experiential learning credit of one to three hours, graded pass/fail with a reflective component, would be sufficient. The implementation working group should initiate this conversation with the Provost's office, recognizing that curricular changes move on an academic governance timeline that is slower than the program's operational timeline.

Alumni and Employer Network Effects

The original proposal describes a virtuous cycle: LASSO interns become Wyoming employees who later host LASSO interns themselves. This dynamic should be built into the program identity from the beginning. A simple LASSO Alumni designation, created in the first year, gives the program a mechanism to invite former participants back as mentors, employer contacts, or advocates. Over time, this network becomes a self-reinforcing asset that reduces the coordinator's burden and strengthens the program's connection to the Wyoming workforce.

IX. Reporting and Accountability

The program's funding comes through a legislative appropriation, which creates an obligation to demonstrate that the money is being spent effectively. Three recurring reports are recommended. More than three would consume coordinator time that is better spent running the program.

Annual report to the legislature. This is a critical accountability and communication document. It should focus on participation numbers, demographic breakdown, employer sectors,

geographic distribution of placements, and whatever retention data is available. The format should be concise and data-forward. Legislators want evidence that the investment is producing results.

Internal report to UW administration. A more detailed document covering quality metrics, employer feedback, coordinator workload, and recommendations for program adjustments. This report goes to the Vice President for Research and Economic Development and the Provost, and it serves as the basis for internal decision-making about program design changes.

Brief to ASUW. Given the program’s origin in student government, a short annual update to ASUW is appropriate. This maintains the relationship that created the program and ensures student government remains an informed advocate.

X. Open Questions and Next Steps

This report has flagged several decisions that remain open. For clarity, they are collected here along with a recommended timeline for resolution.

Open Question	Recommended Resolution Timeline
Organizational home for the coordinator position (R&ED vs. ACES)	Before position is posted (June 2026)
Job board platform selection (UConnect vs. internal build vs. Handshake evaluation)	Before Phase 2 launch (Spring 2027)
Grant program for rural and remote communities	Before promoting LASSO to employers (Fall 2026)
Definition of qualifying rural and remote counties (Census designation, population threshold, or other)	Concurrent with designing the grant program decision
Credit integration pathway through Provost’s office	Initiate conversation by Fall 2026; target implementation Year 2
Wage match payment mechanism (student account refund vs. alternatives)	Clear path, but not yet finalized

Beyond these specific decisions, the implementation working group should prioritize the following actions in the near term:

- Finalize and post the LASSO coordinator position description ahead of July 1 when funds become available.
- Draft the quality checklist and application form for the Phase 1 open-qualification model.
- Design the pre- and post-internship survey instruments, ideally in partnership with the Office of Institutional Analysis.
- Establish written coordination agreements with colleges that have existing internship programs.
- Begin employer outreach through the Laramie Chamber of Business Alliance and Wyoming Business Alliance contacts.

Not every question in this report needs to be resolved simultaneously, but each one needs to be resolved well. LASSO is not a temporary initiative or a pilot to be evaluated and sunsetted — it is intended to become a permanent feature of the University of Wyoming, embedded in the institution's career services infrastructure, its employer relationships, and its value proposition to students and families across the state. That ambition requires deliberate integration: the coordinator position needs to be housed where it can build lasting relationships across colleges, the job board needs to connect to systems students and employers already use, and the data architecture needs to produce the longitudinal evidence that justifies sustained public investment. The working group should approach each open decision with that long-term vision in mind. The goal is not to launch quickly and iterate — it is to build something that earns the confidence of the legislature, the trust of Wyoming employers, and the loyalty of students who come to see LASSO as one of the defining experiences of their time at UW.

LASSO

Leadership and Student Success Opportunities

Student Guide

University of Wyoming

2026–2027

DRAFT — For Working Group Review

1. What Is a LASSO Internship

LASSO stands for Leadership and Student Success Opportunities. It is a University of Wyoming program that connects students with paid internships at Wyoming employers. The core idea is straightforward: UW supplements a portion of your wages so that more employers across the state—including small businesses, nonprofits, government agencies, and rural organizations—can afford to bring you on as a paid intern.

A LASSO internship is not a scholarship, a work-study position, or a classroom requirement. It is a real job with a real employer, where you work on substantive projects, build professional skills, and earn a paycheck. The difference is that UW provides a wage match to your employer, which means positions exist through LASSO that may not otherwise be available.

LASSO is open to students in every college and every major at UW. You do not need to be in a specific program or field of study to participate. The program was created to increase the value proposition of a UW degree, to enhance career success for students, and to invigorate local economies. LASSO exists to change that by making it easier for you to find meaningful work here in the state—so that staying in Wyoming becomes a real option, not an afterthought.

LASSO is open to students across all colleges and majors at every UW campus.

2. Is This for Me?

If you want to gain professional experience in Wyoming while earning fair compensation for your work, LASSO was built for you. The eligibility requirements are deliberately straightforward.

Who Is Eligible?

Degree-seeking students at any UW campus who have completed at least 12 credit hours and are in good academic standing. Both undergraduate and graduate students may apply, though the program prioritizes undergraduates. International students are eligible provided they hold valid work authorization in the United States.

What Kinds of Work Count?

LASSO internships span a wide range of sectors and job functions. Qualifying positions involve substantive, project-based work—the kind where you can point to something you contributed at the end of the experience. These are not limited to corporate or technical roles.

Students can find LASSO-eligible opportunities in energy, agriculture, healthcare, education, water and natural resource management, municipal government, nonprofits, tourism, technology, finance, and many other fields. If an employer in Wyoming has meaningful work for you, there is a good chance it qualifies.

Where Can I Work?

Anywhere in Wyoming. LASSO internships are available in Laramie, Casper, Cheyenne, and communities across the state, including rural and remote placements. Remote work for Wyoming-based employers is also eligible, provided you are located in Wyoming during the internship. For students considering rural

placements, the program is developing housing and travel support to help offset the additional logistics—more on that in Section 8.

If you want to work in Wyoming this summer, LASSO was built for you.

3. What's in It for You?

You Get Paid

The wage match is the foundation of the program. UW covers a portion of your hourly wage, with the match rate depending on the size and type of employer. For small nonprofits and government agencies, the university may cover up to 90 percent of your wages. For larger private-sector employers, the match is lower but still meaningful. The result is the same: you earn a fair wage for the work you do, and employers who could not otherwise afford an intern are able to bring you on.

Stronger Career Outcomes

The data on paid internships is clear. Students who complete a paid internship receive roughly twice as many job offers after graduation as students who do not complete any internship. They also earn significantly higher starting salaries—nationally, paid intern graduates earn approximately \$20,000 more per year than unpaid interns in their first position. Beyond the numbers, a paid internship gives you a professional reference, a portfolio of real work, and the confidence that comes from contributing to something that mattered.

A Wyoming Network

One of the most valuable things you take away from a LASSO internship is not on your resume—it is the professional relationships you build in the state. Your supervisor, your coworkers, the people you meet through the organization become your network. If you want to stay in Wyoming or return after graduate school, those connections are how opportunities find you.

Quality You Can Count On

Every LASSO placement is reviewed to ensure it meets program quality standards. Your employer will have a designated supervisor who provides regular feedback and completes an evaluation at the end of your internship. The LASSO coordinator checks in at the midpoint to make sure the experience is going well. This is not a program that places you and walks away—there is structure and accountability built in.

Rural Placements Offer Distinct Advantages

If you are open to working in a smaller community, rural LASSO placements offer something difficult to find in larger markets: high responsibility early in your career, lower cost of living, and the chance to make a visible impact. Students at other universities who have participated in rural internship programs report that the experience changed their perception of rural careers—discovering firsthand the quality of life, the scope of the work, and the strength of community ties.

4. How to Find a LASSO Internship?

There are two pathways to a LASSO internship, and both are equally valid. The program rewards initiative whether you browse available listings or source your own opportunity.

Pathway A: Browse Available Positions

LASSO-eligible positions will be listed on Handshake. You can filter for positions designated as LASSO internships to see what is available. Once you identify a position and are offered the role, contact the LASSO coordinator to begin the wage match process. As the program grows, the platform and listing process may evolve, but Handshake is the starting point for the current cycle.

Pathway B: Bring Your Own Internship

If you find an internship on your own with a Wyoming-based employer, you can bring it to the LASSO coordinator to determine whether it qualifies for the wage match. Students can discover opportunities through personal connections, faculty contacts, or prior work relationships—and LASSO is designed to support that kind of initiative. You can review the qualification criteria in Section 6 of this guide to get an initial sense of whether the position is eligible, and then work with the coordinator to confirm.

The LASSO Coordinator

The LASSO coordinator is your primary point of contact for the program. This person helps you navigate the application process, works with employers to verify that positions meet quality standards, and serves as a resource if questions or issues come up during your internship. The coordinator is not a gatekeeper—they are there to make the process work for you. Contact information for the coordinator will be posted on the LASSO program page and updated as the position is filled.

Talk with Career Services and Your Professors

Your faculty and departmental career services staff are valuable connectors in this process. Many departments have established relationships with Wyoming employers and can point you toward opportunities aligned with your field of study. Faculty who teach in your area of interest often have

professional networks that include potential LASSO employers. These conversations are worth having early. Faculty and career staff are not responsible for managing the LASSO process—that is the coordinator’s role—but they can help you identify the right opportunities and make introductions that matter.

Research consistently shows that mentorship and faculty connection during work-based learning experiences strengthens the outcomes for students. A brief conversation with a professor about how an internship connects to your coursework can deepen what you take away from the experience.

5. How to Apply for the Wage Match?

The application process is designed to be sequential and manageable. Below is the step-by-step path from finding an internship to receiving your wage match.

1. **Find a qualifying internship.** Browse LASSO listings on Handshake or identify an opportunity on your own with a Wyoming employer.
2. **Confirm eligibility with the coordinator.** The LASSO coordinator reviews the employer and position against program criteria. This applies to both listed and self-sourced positions.
3. **Submit your wage match application.** Application details and forms are forthcoming and will be available through the LASSO program page. The coordinator can walk you through the process.
4. **Complete the pre-internship orientation module.** A brief, online module covering workplace expectations and professional communication basics. This also includes a short baseline survey about your career goals.
5. **Do the internship.** The coordinator will check in at the midpoint to ensure the experience is on track. Your employer pays their share of your wages directly to you throughout the internship.
6. **Complete the post-internship survey.** Required to receive your final wage match disbursement. The survey covers your skills developed, professional network growth, and career plans.

How the Wage Match Is Paid

The university’s share of your wages is delivered through your student account, using the same refund mechanism used for travel grants and internal scholarships. This is a familiar process—funds appear in your student account and are disbursed to you through your selected refund method. Your employer pays their portion of your wages directly, through their normal payroll or stipend process.

Application Windows

The primary application deadline is in early March for summer placements. A secondary deadline in September is available for spring placements. Rolling review continues as long as slots remain in each cycle.

6. What Makes an Internship Qualify?

If you are bringing your own internship to the program, you need enough information to judge whether it is likely to be approved. The following criteria determine whether a position qualifies for the LASSO wage match.

- The position is based in Wyoming. Remote positions with Wyoming-based employers are acceptable if you are also located in Wyoming during the internship.
- The internship involves a minimum of 160 hours and a maximum of 480 hours of work. This accommodates both full-time summer placements and part-time semester placements.
- The employer designates a supervisor who commits to regular check-ins with you and completes a brief end-of-term evaluation.
- The work involves substantive, project-based tasks. Positions that consist exclusively of routine clerical or custodial labor do not qualify. The work should build your skills and expand your professional exposure.
- The employer agrees to participate in the program’s end-of-term evaluation process.

A practical test: if you could describe a specific project you worked on and what you contributed at the end of the internship, the position likely qualifies. If the role consists entirely of tasks you could do with no training and no professional development, it probably does not.

The Wage Match Scale

The university’s share of your wages depends on the size and sector of your employer. The match is highest for small nonprofits and government agencies—organizations that provide critical services but often lack the budget to pay interns independently. Larger private-sector employers receive a smaller match, reflecting their greater capacity to fund internship positions. The table below summarizes the proposed match rates.

Employer Size	Not for Profit	Government	For Profit
Fewer than 20	90%	90%	75%
Fewer than 200	75%	75%	50%
200 or more	50%	50%	25%

These rates are proposed and may be adjusted as the program develops. The coordinator can confirm the specific match rate for your placement.

7. Where Wyoming Needs You Most

LASSO internships are open to employers across all sectors—eligibility is based on geography and position quality, not industry. That said, several areas of Wyoming’s economy face acute workforce challenges and represent growing fields where internship experience is especially valuable. If your academic interests align with any of the following, you may find a particularly strong set of opportunities through the LASSO employer network.

- Nuclear fuel cycle and advanced energy technologies
- Hydrology, water quantity, rangeland, and socio-ecological system management
- Critical minerals exploration and mining
- Electricity generation and export infrastructure
- Rural and remote critical services: healthcare, K–12 education, and municipal government

These sectors are highlighted because they represent areas of strategic importance to Wyoming’s economic future and where the pipeline of skilled workers is thinnest. Students in engineering, agriculture, environmental science, public health, education, and natural resources should look here first—but the list is not exclusive. Any student whose interests intersect with these areas is encouraged to explore what is available.

8. Rural and Remote Placements

Rural placements are a distinctive feature of LASSO and deserve specific attention, because the barriers are real and the program is specifically designed to address them.

What Rural Placements Offer

Working in a smaller Wyoming community gives you something that an internship in a large metro area rarely can: early responsibility and direct impact. In a rural hospital, school district, or small business, you are not watching from the sidelines. You are contributing to operations, leading projects, and seeing the results of your work in real time. The cost of living is lower, the pace of professional relationships is faster, and the sense of community is tangible.

Students at other universities who have participated in rural internship programs consistently report that the experience reshaped how they think about where they want to build a career. Discovering the quality of life, the scope of the work, and the strength of local ties changed rural communities from an abstraction into a serious option.

What LASSO Is Doing About the Barriers

The program recognizes that rural placements come with logistical challenges that urban placements do not. Housing may be limited. Transportation costs are higher when the internship is far from campus. The program is developing targeted support to address these barriers.

- Housing support: A stipend for students placed in communities where affordable housing is scarce is under development. Details and eligibility criteria will be published as this component is finalized.
- Travel support: Assistance for students placed far from their home campus is also being developed. The coordinator can discuss available options for your specific placement.
- Enhanced wage match: Employers in frontier counties may qualify for a higher match rate, reducing the financial barrier for rural organizations to participate.

Rural placements take more planning, and the LASSO coordinator is specifically available to help with that. If you are interested in a rural opportunity, reach out early so there is time to work through the logistics.

Students from rural Wyoming communities—LASSO is a pathway back to the places that shaped you.

9. Frequently Asked Questions

Can I earn academic credit for a LASSO internship?

Possibly. Academic credit is handled by your college or department, not by LASSO. The program manages the wage match; credit is a separate conversation with your academic advisor. In some cases, a LASSO internship can satisfy a departmental internship requirement and carry the wage match simultaneously—talk to your advisor and the LASSO coordinator to explore that option. The university is also working on a cross-listed experiential learning credit option, which would be available regardless of major. That pathway is not yet in place, but it is under development.

Can I do more than one LASSO internship?

Yes, up to a maximum of two wage matches over the course of your enrollment at UW. This cap exists to spread the benefit across as many students as possible.

What if my employer cannot afford to pay even their share of wages?

The sliding scale is designed to address exactly this situation. For small nonprofits and government agencies with fewer than 20 employees, the wage match covers up to 90 percent of your wages, meaning the employer's contribution is minimal. Encourage your employer to contact the LASSO coordinator to discuss their options.

What if I am an international student?

You are eligible for LASSO provided you hold valid work authorization in the United States. This is consistent with the approach taken by comparable programs at other institutions.

I already have an internship lined up—can I still apply?

Yes. If the position is with a Wyoming employer and the work meets the program's quality criteria, it may be eligible for the wage match. Contact the LASSO coordinator with the details of your placement.

Does LASSO replace my college's internship program?

No. LASSO is a complement to existing programs, not a replacement. If your department requires an internship or clinical placement, that requirement and its supervision remain with your department. LASSO can provide wage support alongside a departmental placement if the position meets both sets of criteria.

What happens during the mid-internship check-in?

The coordinator contacts you and your supervisor briefly at the midpoint of your internship. The purpose is to confirm that the work is meaningful, that you are receiving feedback, and that no issues need to be addressed. It is a short conversation, not a compliance exercise.

Is the wage match taxable income?

You should consult university financial services or a tax professional for guidance on your specific situation. The wage match is disbursed through your student account.

10. Get Started

You do not need to wait until every detail of the program is finalized to begin. Here is what you can do right now.

- **Browse LASSO-eligible positions on Handshake.** Filter for LASSO internships to see what is currently posted.
- **Contact the LASSO Coordinator.** Contact information will be posted on the LASSO program page as the position is filled. In the meantime, check with your college's career services office for the latest updates.
- **Talk to your faculty and career services staff.** They know the employer landscape in your field and can help you identify opportunities early.
- **Review the qualification criteria in Section 6.** If you already have a lead on an internship with a Wyoming employer, you can assess whether it is likely to qualify before reaching out to the coordinator.

The application form, orientation module, and direct coordinator contact information will be linked from the LASSO program page as each component goes live. Bookmark the page and check back.

Addendum E

LASSO Employer Guide

Leadership and Student Success Opportunities

A Guide for Wyoming Employers

University of Wyoming

April 2026

DRAFT

What Is LASSO?

LASSO — the Leadership and Student Success Opportunities program — is a University of Wyoming initiative that connects Wyoming employers with qualified UW students through subsidized, paid internships. The program was conceived by students, funded by the State of Wyoming, and is administered by the university.

The core mechanic is straightforward. You hire a UW student for a substantive internship. LASSO pays a portion of the student's wages directly, reducing your cost while ensuring the student earns a competitive wage. The wage match is paid to the student through the university; you pay only your share.

LASSO exists because Wyoming faces a generational challenge. Sixty-six percent of the state's young people leave after graduating. The businesses, agencies, and organizations that make up the state's economy need skilled workers, and UW students need career-building experience

that makes staying in Wyoming a realistic option. LASSO is designed to make both of those things happen at the same time.

The program is coordinated by a dedicated LASSO Coordinator housed at UW, who serves as your single point of contact for questions, applications, and support throughout the process.

Why Host a LASSO Intern?

Subsidized talent for real work. LASSO covers a significant share of your intern's wages — up to 90 percent for small nonprofits and government agencies, and up to 75 percent for small for-profit businesses. This is not a token discount. For many employers, LASSO makes the difference between affording a paid intern and not having one at all.

A low-risk recruiting pipeline. An internship is an extended interview. You get to evaluate a student's skills, work ethic, and fit over weeks or months before making a hiring decision. Nationally, employers who use internship programs report lower recruiting costs and higher retention rates among hires who started as interns.

Fresh capacity for projects you haven't had bandwidth for. Every organization has a list of projects that matter but never get done: the website refresh, the data cleanup, the grant application, the customer survey. LASSO interns bring current skills in areas like data analysis, digital communication, and project management, and they bring the time to execute.

For small businesses and nonprofits: LASSO was designed with you in mind. The highest wage match tiers are reserved for the organizations that could not otherwise offer a paid internship. If you have wanted to bring in a student but could not justify the cost, LASSO changes that math.

For rural employers: The program includes housing and travel stipend support for students placed in rural communities, removing one of the biggest logistical barriers to rural internships. Additional details on this support are forthcoming as the program finalizes its rural placement framework.

Potential to stack with DWS funding. The Wyoming Department of Workforce Services operates its own internship grant program, reimbursing eligible businesses up to \$18 per hour for intern wages. Because LASSO and DWS grants flow through different channels — LASSO pays the student directly, DWS reimburses the employer — a single internship may be eligible for both programs simultaneously. This can dramatically reduce or eliminate the employer's out-of-pocket wage cost. A worked example is provided in the wage match section below.

What Qualifies as a LASSO Internship?

Not every job is a LASSO internship. The program is designed to fund positions where students do substantive, career-building work — the kind of experience that develops professional skills and expands a student's network. To qualify for the LASSO wage match, a position must meet all of the following:

- **Wyoming-based.** The position must be located in Wyoming. Remote positions for Wyoming-based employers are acceptable, provided the student is also located in Wyoming during the internship period.
- **Substantive, project-based work.** The internship must involve meaningful tasks that build skills. Positions that consist exclusively of routine clerical, custodial, or manual labor do not qualify. This does not mean interns cannot help with day-to-day operations — it means the role should include projects or responsibilities that develop the student professionally.
- **Supervised.** You must designate a supervisor who commits to regular check-ins with the intern and completes a brief evaluation at the end of the placement.
- **160 to 480 hours of work.** This range accommodates both full-time summer placements (8–12 weeks) and part-time semester placements. A 10-week, 40-hour-per-week summer internship falls squarely in the middle.
- **Open to a UW student.** The intern must be a degree-seeking student at any UW campus, enrolled at least half-time, and in good academic standing.
- **Participation in program evaluation.** You agree to complete a short end-of-term evaluation and participate in a brief post-program survey. This data is essential to sustaining the program’s funding and improving the experience for future employers and students.

If you are unsure whether a position qualifies, contact the LASSO Coordinator. The coordinator’s role is to help you shape a placement that works — not to create obstacles.

The Wage Match

LASSO subsidizes student wages on a sliding scale. The percentage of wages covered by LASSO depends on your organization’s size and sector, with the highest match rates directed toward the employers least able to fund internships independently.

Wage Match Rates

Employees / Sector	Not for Profit	Government	For Profit
Fewer than 20	90%	90%	75%
Fewer than 200	75%	75%	50%
200 or more	50%	50%	25%

How the Money Flows

The LASSO wage match is paid directly to the student through the university’s student account refund system. You are not reimbursed; instead, you pay only your share of the wage. The student receives the combined total: your direct payment plus the LASSO match.

A geographic adjustment for employers located in frontier or rural counties is under consideration and would likely provide a bump of one tier on the match scale. For example, a for-profit employer with fewer than 200 employees in a qualifying rural county would receive the 75 percent match rate normally reserved for smaller firms. Details will be confirmed before the program's launch.

Stacking LASSO with DWS Internship Grants

The Wyoming Department of Workforce Services (DWS) operates an internship grant program that reimburses eligible businesses up to \$18 per hour toward intern wages, for up to 480 hours. Because LASSO and DWS use different payment channels — DWS reimburses the employer, LASSO pays the student — both programs can apply to a single internship. Here is what that can look like:

Worked Example: Small For-Profit Business (Fewer than 20 Employees)

Assume the student is paid \$20 per hour for a 10-week, 40-hour-per-week summer internship (400 total hours).

	Per Hour	Total (400 hrs)
Student's total wage	\$20.00	\$8,000
LASSO wage match (50%)	\$10.00	\$4,000
Employer's share before DWS	\$10.00	\$4,000
DWS reimbursement (up to \$18/hr)	\$10.00	\$4,000
Employer's net cost	\$0.00	\$0

In this scenario, the student earns a full \$20-per-hour wage, and the employer's net out-of-pocket cost is zero. The DWS reimbursement applies only to the employer's remaining share after the LASSO match, so the DWS claim in this example is \$10 per hour (the employer's share), not the full \$18 per hour. Exact figures will vary based on your organization's size, sector, and the student's hourly rate. The LASSO Coordinator can help you model the numbers for your situation.

Note: *DWS grants are available to businesses and have separate eligibility requirements. Not all LASSO employers will qualify for DWS funding. Government agencies, nonprofits, and other non-business employers should consult with the LASSO Coordinator about other available support.*

How to Become a LASSO Employer

The process has two steps, designed to be as simple as possible.

Step 1: Contact the LASSO Coordinator. Reach out to the LASSO Coordinator to discuss the position you have in mind. The coordinator will review the role against the quality criteria described above and work with you to ensure it qualifies. This is a collaborative conversation, not an audit. If a position needs minor adjustments to meet the program's standards — for example, adding a structured project component to a role that is currently routine — the coordinator will help you get there.

Step 2: Post and recruit. Once the position is confirmed as LASSO-eligible, you post the position on Handshake (UW's current job board platform) or your own normal recruiting channels, and the coordinator can flag it as a LASSO opportunity for UW students. When you and a student agree on a placement, the student registers for the wage match through the university, and the coordinator confirms the student's eligibility.

If you already use the DWS internship grant program, the LASSO Coordinator can help you navigate both applications at the same time, so you do not have to manage two separate processes independently.

LASSO Coordinator Contact

[Info TBD once a coordinator position is posted and filled]

Note on the job board: The university is evaluating options for a dedicated LASSO internship platform that would provide a centralized listing of all LASSO-eligible positions. Until that platform is in place, Handshake and direct coordination with the LASSO Coordinator are the primary channels. This guide will be updated as the platform decision is finalized.

What You Commit To

LASSO is designed to be low-friction, but it does ask a few things of participating employers. These commitments are what keep the program credible and fundable.

- **Designate a supervisor.** Assign someone in your organization to serve as the intern's primary point of contact. This person does not need to be a manager — they need to be available for regular check-ins and willing to provide feedback on the student's work.
- **Provide substantive work.** Give the intern real responsibilities. This is in your interest as much as the student's: you get more value from an intern working on a meaningful project than from one filing papers.
- **Participate in a mid-internship check-in.** The LASSO Coordinator will contact you and the student midway through the placement for a brief conversation. This is an early-warning check, not a compliance review. If something is not working — the student is underutilized, the project scope has changed, the schedule needs adjusting — this is the moment to address it.
- **Complete an end-of-term evaluation.** A short assessment of the intern's performance, submitted at the conclusion of the placement. This is required for continued participation as a LASSO employer.
- **Participate in post-program data collection.** A brief survey after the internship concludes. The questions focus on your experience with the program, the skills the

intern demonstrated, and whether you would consider hiring a LASSO intern again. This data is essential: the program's state funding depends on the ability to show that the investment is producing results. Your responses directly support the program's continuation.

That is the full list. There is no application fee, no lengthy contracting process, and no ongoing reporting burden beyond what is described above.

What Happens After the Internship

A direct hiring pipeline. LASSO interns are UW students who have already demonstrated their ability to work in your organization. If the fit is right, extending a full-time offer to a former intern is the lowest-risk hire you can make. You already know what you are getting.

Alumni network and future mentors. Former LASSO interns are encouraged to stay connected to the program as mentors, employer contacts, and advocates. If a student you hosted goes on to build a career in Wyoming, they become part of the network that sustains LASSO and strengthens the state's workforce. That cycle is the program's long-term design.

LASSO Employer Partner designation. As the program matures, employers who consistently meet quality standards and commit to hosting interns will be recognized as LASSO Employer Partners. This designation signals to UW students and the broader community that your organization invests in developing Wyoming's workforce. Details on the partner program will be developed as LASSO moves beyond its initial pilot phase.

Frequently Asked Questions

Can I hire an intern for fewer than 160 hours?

Not under the current LASSO framework. The 160-hour minimum ensures the internship is long enough to provide meaningful career development. If you are interested in shorter project-based engagements, contact the LASSO Coordinator to discuss options as the program evolves.

Does the intern have to work in person?

Remote positions are acceptable if the employer is based in Wyoming and the student is located in Wyoming during the internship. Hybrid arrangements also work.

Can I hire more than one LASSO intern?

Yes. There is no cap on the number of LASSO interns an employer can host, provided each position meets the quality criteria and funding is available.

Do I have to pay the intern above the minimum wage?

LASSO does not set a specific wage requirement, but the program is designed around a target wage range of \$18 to \$20 per hour. The wage match is calculated at the front end of the process, based on the size and type of organization.

What if the internship is not going well?

Contact the LASSO Coordinator. The mid-internship check-in is designed to catch problems early, but issues can arise at any time. The coordinator can help mediate and, if necessary, facilitate an early conclusion to the placement.

Can the intern earn academic credit for the LASSO internship?

In many cases, yes. Several UW colleges already offer academic credit for internship experiences. The university is also developing a cross-campus option for students to earn elective credit for LASSO placements regardless of major. Students should discuss credit options with their academic advisor.

Is my organization eligible if we are outside Laramie?

Absolutely. LASSO is a statewide program. Employers in any Wyoming community are eligible, and the program specifically prioritizes expanding internship opportunities beyond Laramie. Rural and frontier-county employers may qualify for enhanced match rates.

Get Started

Hosting a LASSO intern begins with a single conversation. Contact the LASSO Coordinator to discuss the position you have in mind, and the coordinator will guide you through qualifying the role, posting the position, and connecting with a UW student.

LASSO Coordinator

[Name to be inserted]

[Email to be inserted]

[Phone to be inserted]

Reference Materials

- Wyoming DWS Internship Grant Program: dws.wyo.gov
- University of Wyoming Career Services: uwyo.edu
- LASSO internship listings: available on Handshake (current) and a dedicated platform (forthcoming)