



INNOVATION FOR ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Robert Macy brings leadership and academic expertise to his role leading the Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation.



By Micaela Myers

Last year, Robert Macy joined the University of Wyoming as director of the Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation (CEI). The center aims to propel UW to the forefront of entrepreneurship and innovation. It leverages coordination, collaboration, promotion and support to nurture an entrepreneurial mindset and to enhance the university's entrepreneurial ecosystem.

"Robert Macy brings a comprehensive blend of academic, venture capital and creative industry experience to UW," UW President Ed Seidel says. "His expertise is key to the success of the

CEI and supports our mission to connect theory with practice and enhance innovation and entrepreneurial endeavors that serve the state of Wyoming."

A Seattle native, Macy pursued law school at the University of Oregon with the goal of helping entrepreneurs with their startup ventures. He then added an MBA and a Ph.D. In addition to being an entrepreneur and angel investor himself, Macy worked as an innovation and entrepreneurship director and professor at Pennsylvania State University, served as the Bill and Sharon Sheriff Endowed Chair in Entrepreneurship at New Mexico State University and, most recently, served as an associate professor of entertainment

management at the University of Central Florida.

When Macy was an undergraduate in the 1990s, he started a multiplayer online role-playing game company, which he and his partner later sold. It was that experience that led Macy into academia.

“My partners and I did well, but mainly it was a lot of luck,” Macy says. “It would have been nice to have had some mentoring and programs, which didn’t exist as much back then. I really like working with students.”

Now, Macy gives UW students the resources he once hoped for. The CEI supports numerous initiatives, including the University Student Entrepreneurship Club, NSF I-Corps for startups, Technology Commercialization Fellowship Program, University Venture Capital Fund, Venture MBA Program Instruction, Engineering Senior Design Assistance, CEI Faculty Fellows Program, Innovation Consulting Course and the Master Craftsman Program.

“We’re currently working on taking entrepreneurship university-wide and reaching colleges that we haven’t been able to assist yet as well as reaching out to community more,” Macy says.

One of the CEI’s newest programs for students is the Engineering Senior Design Assistance Fund. Companies and organizations contact UW with products or projects they need help with, and UW engineering seniors form teams and gain hands-on experience. However, sometimes materials are costly, and the new fund will take these projects to the next level.

Macy also wants to reach entrepreneurs in the creative economy, which the Master Craftsman Program will help achieve. The program offers students real-world experience creating functional art to help secure careers in industries such as manufacturing, design and fabrication.

Because UW doesn’t offer a film or television program, Macy — himself a film producer — has brought in guest speakers on these topics.

“I want to help students see that there’s more to the film industry than acting,” he says. “There’s a business side, and those positions tend to be easier to get into and pay better. For example, line

producers are always in demand. I want more opportunities for our students who are not as technologically or business-minded.”

Macy also wants to offer hands-on learning opportunities to UW College of Law students. There are many legal aspects to starting a business, and law students are key to the Technology Commercialization Fellowship Program, which hires UW graduate and honors students to look through the university’s patent portfolio and help move those ideas to commercialization.

Macy also works closely with IMPACT 307, which offers business incubators in Laramie and Casper.

“We are working to integrate our various programming rather than having stand-alone offerings,” he says. “This not only cuts costs but

Gene Humphrey, left, from the 9H Research Foundation, presents a Senior Design Challenge award to College of Engineering and Physical Sciences students Cedric Bond, Jay Matter, Mason Tomac, Zachary Woith and Jayden Riley.



also provides better end-to-end services. We want to cover everything from brand-new student ideas through nurturing businesses in academic and extracurricular programs and on into the incubators.”

You can read about many CEI initiatives on the following pages.

Macy’s wife, Marisa Macy, serves as the John P. Ellbogen Foundation Professor of Early Childhood Education. Together with their daughter, they enjoy all the outdoor recreation Wyoming has to offer. “From winter sports to hiking, there’s more than any human being could ever possibly do,” Macy says.



MEET THE NEW ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

*Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation Assistant Director
Alexander Hegeman-Davis shares why he's passionate about
helping Wyoming businesses thrive.*

This spring, the Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation (CEI) welcomed its new assistant director. We sat down with Alex Hegeman-Davis to learn more about his background and passion for entrepreneurship.

Tell us a bit about your background in entrepreneurship:
Before stepping into this role, most of my background centered on business and entrepreneurship. I grew up working in my family's bike shop in Champaign, Ill., which is really where my love of customer service and small business started. I went to the University of Wisconsin and earned a degree in history while working full-time in restaurant management. After college, I worked in several management roles at a large e-commerce company before returning home to run our family's bike shop as president. That role gave me firsthand experience in leading a small business and growing it from the inside out.

What are your responsibilities as CEI assistant director?
In this role, I help promote everything the center is doing and work on launching new programs and events that support entrepreneurship at UW and across Wyoming. That includes building relationships on and off campus, working with students and faculty, and helping shape workshops, speakers and resources that make a difference. I'm excited to support a wide range of entrepreneurial activities — whether that's helping students pitch their first business idea or strengthening ties with local business partners.

What drew you to this position?
I've always been interested in all things business, but what really drives me is helping others succeed in their own ventures. While running my bike shop, we were able to grow sales and streamline operations, and over time I started helping other shop owners around the country do the same. I found that I truly loved the mentoring side of things — helping people work through challenges, improve what they're doing and grow stronger businesses. After I sold my own business, I knew I wanted to keep helping others in this space, and this position at UW felt like the perfect fit.

What do you hope to accomplish?
In the short term, I want to help strengthen the center's

role on campus — connecting students, faculty and the broader community with great resources, mentorship and programming. Long term, I'd love to see UW become a real hub for entrepreneurship in the state. Wyoming's economy depends heavily on small businesses — about 65 percent of the workforce is employed by them, which is pretty incredible. I want to help support those businesses and also encourage new ideas and startups that will help shape the future of Wyoming in exciting ways.

“There's something really special about helping someone take a spark of an idea and watching it grow into something meaningful.”

— Alex Hegeman-Davis

What do you love about this field?
Wyoming was really built on the spirit of entrepreneurship, and I love that. Whether it's a new product, a service or a totally fresh idea, I'm always inspired by the creativity and problem-solving that people bring to the table. Being part of a university setting where students are constantly coming up with new ideas — and getting to help turn some of those into real businesses — is just a really exciting place to be. It's energizing, and I can't wait to see what comes next.

What do you love about living and working in Wyoming?
I love how easy it is to feel connected — both to the land and to the people. In my role as CEI assistant director, I get to work with students, faculty and community members who are full of big ideas and genuine drive. There's something really special about helping someone take a spark of an idea and watching it grow into something meaningful.

Outside of work, you'll usually find me on a trail — hiking in the mountains or biking quiet gravel roads. The open space here clears my head and brings me peace. Wyoming has a way of slowing things down just enough to notice what matters. It's a place that encourages creativity, resilience and grounded ambition — and I feel lucky to call it home.



UW'S NEW VENTURE CAPITAL CLUB GIVES STUDENTS HANDS-ON EXPERIENCE IN PRIVATE EQUITY FUNDING WHILE AIDING WYOMING EARLY STARTUPS.

**By UW Communications
and Micaela Myers**

Emerging companies in Wyoming need venture capital — private equity financing — to get off the ground. In addition, business students need to learn hands-on about private equity funding and due diligence. Teaming up with the University of Wyoming Foundation, Robert Macy — who is director of the Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation — put the two needs together to create an entrepreneurial finance class that will now morph into a year-round club.

“There’s a funding gap between the startup phase of a company and when it becomes suitable for institutional capital from a large venture capital firm,” Macy says. “We aim to fill that gap.”

The program is generously funded by the Fisher Incentive Funds in Entrepreneurship, an endowment established in 2017 by Donne and Sue Fisher. The Fisher funds are aimed at creating a lasting legacy by empowering students through real-world entrepreneurial experiences.

“This is a mission-based seed fund, which means it’s designed to do something other than just make money

for investors,” Macy says, adding that it’s specifically geared to promote UW-affiliated startups.

Investment from the fund requires a UW touchpoint such as a student, staff, faculty or alum or a startup using intellectual property generated by UW. Businesses that wish to work with the program as a source of funding need to contact Macy directly before the process of evaluating the investment opportunity begins with the students. Macy serves as the managing director of the fund.

“Qualified businesses will be invited to pitch the fund, and there will be startups referred by various sources in Wyoming’s entrepreneurial ecosystem,” Macy says.

Once prospective startups are lined up, they will make their pitches to students in the club. Students then perform due diligence on the companies and vote whether to invest. Typical investment amounts are expected to be about \$100,000, depending upon funding availability each year.

“We conducted due diligence on one company to potentially invest in them,” says Venture MBA student Emily Jarrell of Sanford, Fla., who took part

in the initial course this past spring. “It was such an eye-opening experience to see things from the venture capital side. This class is not something students would typically get to participate in. When it comes to venture capital firms, it’s extremely hard to get into without any background. Internships are particularly difficult to secure, so it’s a great resume builder.”

Jarrell is currently launching a business — Cowboy Country Milling (see page 57) — with two other UW students in the College of Business and College of Law. The class has helped the team evaluate whether seeking outside investment is the right path.

Startups that are invested in through the UW venture capital fund will receive in-kind business services such as training, legal and accounting consultations. If or when a company goes public, gets sold or is acquired,

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—Emily Jarrell



Venture MBA student Emily Jarrell (center) took part in the inaugural entrepreneurial finance course. Stuart Lerwick (left), J.D. Corson (right) and Jarrell started Cowboy Country Milling, which brings to market quality, Wyoming-grown wheat.

the fund will retrieve any returns on the investments, allowing larger or additional investments to be made in the future.

“Our students are getting invaluable hands-on experience with an important aspect of business

funding and growth before they even graduate,” says Parag Chitnis, UW’s vice president for research and economic development. “It’s this type of experiential learning that helps set UW apart — giving students real-world

learning opportunities to be more competitive as graduates of UW. It’s a win-win because venture capital from this fund can provide qualified businesses with a critical injection of capital to grow and thrive in our Wyoming economy.”

Next-Gen Entrepreneurs

For 25 years, the John P. Ellbogen \$50K Entrepreneurship Competition has encouraged and rewarded the next generation of entrepreneurs.



By Micaela Myers

For 25 years, the John P. Ellbogen \$50K Entrepreneurship Competition at the University of Wyoming has been encouraging students across the state to turn their ideas into thriving businesses. Open to all UW and community college students, the competition awards cash prizes to top ventures with strong business potential. Participants gain access to business consulting, mentorship from C-level executives, financial guidance and a network of investors and partners. Multidisciplinary teams are encouraged, fostering diverse skill sets essential for success.

“The Ellbogen Entrepreneurship Competition was a transformative experience for our team,” says MBA student Chooi Kim Lau, whose team was a 2025 finalist. “It provided the structure and mentorship needed to refine our business model and build a strong foundation for Carbonado Technology. We developed a full-scale business plan including marketing strategies, financial projections and a competitor analysis. Most importantly, we gained valuable training in delivering a compelling business pitch — an essential tool for attracting investors and engaging community partners. This experience helped us transition from concept to company with clarity and confidence.”



Competition Evolution

In 2000, the competition launched with contributions from First Interstate Bank and the Woodson Family Foundation. It grew in 2005, when First Interstate made another commitment that was matched by the state of Wyoming. Five years later, the John P. Ellbogen Foundation made a donation that was also matched by the state of Wyoming. In 2011, the prize money increased to \$30,000, and the event was renamed the John P. Ellbogen \$30K Competition. In 2017, First Interstate and the John P. Ellbogen Foundation made additional commitments matched by the state of Wyoming that increased the cash prize given each year, so the name changed once more to become the John P. Ellbogen \$50K Entrepreneurship Competition.

The competition has also grown in entries and business types.

“We were delighted this year with the broad range of entrepreneurs,” says College of Business Senior Assistant Dean Ben Cook. “Entries ranged from a business that created a clothing brand focused on the waterfowl hunting industry to a business focused on repurposing spent nuclear fuel to generate additional power.”



The competition also adjusted its scheduling, reducing from two days of spread-out events to one

streamlined day to make it easier for interested parties to observe and participate.

“One of the guiding principles we had this year was to make the event all-encompassing — one event that everybody comes and sees, from the business pitches all the way to the awards. In order to do that, we needed to make sure that the event was constrained to a reasonable time, so we were very diligent about making sure that the individual participants had an explicit amount of time to pitch and to address questions.”

A resource fair benefits participants and the public, offering tabling for entrepreneurial resources such as the Small Business Development Center, the Wyoming Business Council and the Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation. Lunch was served while the judges deliberated, and then the winners were announced.

“We wanted to make it a high-production value,” Cook says. “It was very professional, with an amazing stage setup and environment.”

To make sure students from Wyoming community colleges and various majors could participate, the competition also changed the previous course requirement to a series of workshops that cover everything from marketing and operations to financing and pitch practices with coaching.

“This year we had 28 applicants in round one,” says College of Business Entrepreneurial Activity and Events Coordinator Hannah McLean-Leonard. “They were all expected to do a written summary with the key points about the business idea. The top 16 progressed to round two, where they

wrote a full business plan and gave a six-minute virtual pitch.”

Each round utilized a different set of judges, who all volunteer their time and expertise. In December, the eight finalists were announced. All the finalists went through the educational workshops and pitch practices, received mentorship and coaching, and completed a full business plan before the May competition.

Another aspect of the competition that evolved is how the award money is distributed.

“In the past, some entrants would walk away with nothing from the competition, and we felt like that didn’t really reward the level of effort,” Cook says. “Under the new format, all businesses that make it to the second round receive some funding.”

All finalists receive additional funding that can be used for things like product prototypes or graphic design for a business logo. In addition to the top three prizes, there are a number of individual prizes, such as audience choice, small-to-medium enterprises, innovation and ethics awards. Half of the prize money is given up front, and the other half is given several months later after a progress report.

The mentorship continues after the end of the school year. “Every participant is encouraged to apply for our Venture Mentoring Service, which we launched this year,” Cook says. “It brings in entrepreneurs from our alumni network and other businesspeople to offer virtual mentoring. Teams can get three to four businesspeople to serve as confidential guides and mentors for them to continue developing.”

Cook is grateful to the many entities that support the competition, including the Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation.

DeWitt AeroTech Inc.

DeWitt AeroTech Inc. specializes in advanced drone technology for industrial inspections and earned this year's honorable mention and third-place awards. The company is led by College of Business student Korbin DeWitt of Shoshoni and College of Engineering and Physical Sciences students Nolan Nachbar of Evansville and Nile Young of Laramie. DeWitt serves the energy, infrastructure and agricultural sectors. The company enhances safety and efficiency through its cutting-edge micro-drone, the MicroScout. Compact, modular and highly adaptable, the MicroScout is designed to access tight spaces and gather critical data with precision.

"MicroScout was born out of countless conversations with our friends and family — many of whom work in emergency response such as firefighters, EMTs, law enforcement officers, and search and rescue professionals," DeWitt says. "These are people we're close to, and they kept telling us the same thing: They need something small, fast and simple that gives them intel before they enter dangerous or unknown environments. That's what drove us to build MicroScout."

The Ellbogen Entrepreneurship Competition gave the team pitch experience and helped it communicate the value of MicroScout more clearly in a high-pressure setting. The team plans to continue development, testing and refinement of the platform as it prepares for early field deployment.



Korbin DeWitt, Nile Young and Nolan Nachbar



John Beier

Prene Outdoors

Led by College of Business student John Beier of Sidney, Neb., Prene Outdoors is an emerging waterfowl brand that produces high-quality apparel and gear for hunters. The company's product line includes field drinkware, dry bags and call lanyards, all designed for durability in harsh outdoor conditions. While currently focused on waterfowl hunting, Prene is exploring expansion into deer, turkey and upland bird markets. The company took home the Daniels Fund Ethical Startup Award and the Micale Community Award.

"The idea for Prene came from the desire to create gear and apparel that is specifically designed and made for waterfowl hunters and to create a company that had a strong community feel and not just another disconnected brand," Beier says. "I gained tons of knowledge from the Ellbogen competition, including speaking skills that I never had before. I also gained business knowledge and access to incredibly smart mentors."

Beier plans to double the product line within a year.

Cowboy Country Milling

This year, Cowboy Country Milling took home the first place and First Interstate Audience Choice awards. The team is made up of College of Business students Stuart Lerwick of Pine Bluffs, Emily Jarrell of Sanford, Fla., and College of Law student J.D. Corson of Baggs.

“The idea came from the roots of a fifth-generation family farm in Albin, Wyo.,” says Lerwick, the team’s leader. “I was concerned with the lack of Wyoming representation in the flour industry and wanted to change that. This turned into understanding the process of how flour is made and realizing how over-processed and chemically treated wheat is through the process of milling.”

Cowboy Country Milling brings Wyoming-grown wheat to bakers, offering flours crafted to meet the needs

of artisanal and home baking. Using traditional milling techniques and a variety of wheat types, the company aims to celebrate Wyoming’s agricultural heritage while providing high-quality products.

“Through the competition, we’ve gained lots of experience with preparing for meetings and pitches, along with invaluable lessons and feedback from those who know best,” Jarrell says. “Experiential learning is arguably the best way to gain knowledge, and this competition really taught us that. The people we’ve met along the way continue to positively impact us as people and business owners.”

Corson adds, “Expect to have flour on your table soon!”

Stuart Lerwick harvesting wheat on his family’s farm



Carbonado Technology LLC

Kam Ng and Chooi Kim Lau



This year's runner-up, Carbonado Technology LLC, is pioneering coal-derived materials to sustain Wyoming's communities amid the state's evolving energy landscape. The company has developed 12 patented construction materials, including char bricks and stone veneers. While breaking into the construction market requires significant investment, Carbonado is currently focusing on small artisanal products with fewer regulatory barriers.

It was founded on years of dedicated research and development by MBA student and Department of Civil and Architectural Engineering Research Scientist Chooi Kim Lau and College of Engineering and Physical Sciences Professor Kam Ng. Motivated by a shared mission to repurpose Wyoming's abundant coal resources in an environmentally responsible way, they applied their engineering expertise to develop a process that transforms coal byproducts into eco-friendly construction materials. These innovations are protected under patents licensed through UW and are ready for commercialization.

The core innovation behind Carbonado originated from Lau's master's thesis, which earned the UW 2024 Outstanding Master's Thesis Award. Titled "Investigating the Lifecycle and the Techno-Economic

Analysis of Coal-Derived Carbon Building Materials for Low-Rise Buildings," it laid the technical and economic foundation for Carbonado's mission. Her work is a compelling example of how academic research can drive real-world innovation and economic development in Wyoming and beyond.

"Our patented product line — developed in partnership with UW — includes bricks, stone veneers, block pavers, aggregates, mortars, grouts and carbon-based structural units," Ng says. "These materials are non-combustible and lightweight and offer superior thermal insulation, making them ideal for modern sustainable construction." Thus, they are well-suited for resilient, sustainable and energy-efficient construction.

"Our immediate goal is to establish a small-scale manufacturing facility in Wyoming to produce lightweight customizable stone veneers for local builders and contractors," Lau says. "This pilot production phase will help us meet initial demand, validate our product in real-world settings and generate early revenue. At the same time, we're actively pursuing partnerships to scale our operations, broaden our product offerings and expand into regional and national markets. We're excited to continue building a cleaner carbon-smart future — one stone at a time."

Corey Billington and Jacob Kirby

Skála

Winner of the Small-Medium Enterprise Award, Skála created the Truck Bed Hammock System, which is designed to transform truck beds into versatile comfortable spaces. With a quick-install stake pocket design, the system maintains access to the truck bed and hitch while providing a durable lightweight relaxation solution for camping, tailgating and outdoor events.

“The idea for Skála came from a place of frustration,” says Zachary Pinc of Moline, Ill., who entered the competition with fellow College of Business student Sarah Drewry of Lander. “As someone who spends a lot of time outdoors, I was tired of how complicated and limiting traditional outdoor gear could be, especially rooftop tents and bulky setups that take over your truck bed. I wanted something simple and intuitive, something that hooks up easily to the bed of your truck so you can start relaxing in nature comfortably, simply and often.”

Over the next year, the company is focusing on growth and validation. It plans to file for a provisional patent, to secure additional funding and to begin building a marketing campaign to generate brand awareness. Once it gains traction, it plans to begin scaling manufacturing and preparing for a broader product launch.

“The Ellbogen competition gave me access to incredible mentorship that I know will continue to benefit me long after the competition,” Pinc says. “More importantly, it taught me to chase my ideas and trust the entrepreneurial process. I found that I genuinely love seeing an idea come to life, and having a platform to share it with others was a powerful and validating experience.”



Sarah Drewry and Zachary Pinc



RenU Fuel Solutions

College of Business student Jacob Kirby of San Marcos, Texas, teamed up with College of Engineering and Physical Sciences student Anh Hoang Minh Nguyen of Vietnam to earn the Benson Impact and Innovation Award for their concept, RenU Fuel Solutions.

RenU delivers nuclear fuel cycle and spent fuel supply chain solutions to U.S. government agencies and commercial nuclear power providers. The company is committed to building critical nuclear infrastructure in Wyoming, which will create high-quality stable jobs in both the federal and commercial sectors.

The idea was born when a group of international nuclear scientists came to UW for the 2024 Nuclear Innovation Bootcamp. “We had two weeks to solve some of the biggest problems in the nuclear industry, and that is where the concept was born,” Kirby says. “Our mission is to solve the problem of nuclear waste by turning it into a revenue-generating asset. During the Ellbogen entrepreneurship competition, we received exceptional guidance from our coach, Steve Hanlon, and insightful feedback from the entire coaching team. The competition helped us transform our idea into a detailed business plan and provided seed funding for our logo and early startup costs.”

They are now exploring partnerships with institutions to support their experimental work. They also plan to pursue additional contests to generate funds and onboard high-caliber talent.

PetNet

PetNet is developing an all-in-one platform for pet owners, integrating social networking, expert advice and a curated marketplace. The app will allow users to create pet profiles to track health records, milestones and care preferences and will connect owners with veterinarians, groomers and pet service providers.

“PetNet came from my love for animals and the chaos of trying to care for them in today’s world,” says College of Agriculture, Life Sciences and Natural Resources student Josephine Walton of Sheridan, who teamed up with College of Engineering and Physical Sciences and Haub School of Environment and Natural Resources student Lilly McGever of Phoenix, Ariz., and College of Business students Karsten and Keaton Stone of Cody.

“As a lifelong pet owner, I know how much a pet can change your life — coming home to that wagging tail, that unconditional love,” Watson says. “I truly believe pets make us better people — happier, more grounded and far more present. I wanted to build something that supports that bond. That’s where PetNet began: a one-stop platform where everything from pet profiles to a dedicated marketplace could come together. More than just a tool, it’s a community rooted in passion, built with purpose and designed to make pet care feel less overwhelming and more connected.”

The team is currently developing the app and reaching out to local small pet businesses.

“The Ellbogen competition was extremely transformative,” Watson says. “It gave my team the structure, mentorship and opportunity to take our idea seriously and grow our business. Being surrounded by so many passionate experienced professionals gave us the inspiration to dream bigger and think deeper. My team walked away with an understanding about what it takes to build a business and a plan to succeed. We are incredibly grateful to have had the chance to compete throughout the Ellbogen competition.”



Josie Walton

AT YOUR SERVICE



The University Center helps fund economic impact studies and launched Wyo BizLink to offer entrepreneurs a one-stop shop for resources.

By Micaela Myers

In 2023, the University of Wyoming was selected by the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) to receive \$200,000 a year over five years to establish an EDA University Center Economic Development Technical Assistance Program.

“The EDA University Center designation will broaden the reach of and access to both university assets and other regional and statewide inclusive entrepreneurial, startup and small-business resources and services in Wyoming,” Parag Chitnis, vice president for UW’s Research and Economic Development Division, said at the announcement in

2023. “As the University Center, UW’s Research and Economic Development Division will be the hub of this expansion of access to resources, focusing on advancing high-growth entrepreneurship and cultivating innovation.”

Currently, the University Center is funding two key initiatives: Wyo BizLink, which connects entrepreneurs to resources across the state, and economic studies through the UW Center for Business and Economic Analysis.

“We’re able to help enable economic impact studies for Wyoming organizations that could not otherwise afford them,” says Robert Macy, director of the Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation. “The other initiative

makes it easier for Wyoming businesses to navigate through the complicated entrepreneurship ecosystem when looking for resources.”

WYO BIZLINK

Nationally, a website called SourceLink offers innovators and job creators networks of support, technology solutions and consulting services. The University Center helped to fund Wyo BizLink (www.wyobizlink.com), a Wyoming-focused site using SourceLink technology. The site offers resources for Wyoming businesses and entrepreneurs looking for assistance with licensing and permits, funding and grants, sales and marketing

strategies, manufacturing support, business planning and strategy, and compliance and legal guidance.

“We worked closely with the Wyoming Business Council to create the Wyo BizLink site,” Macy says. “It’s a one-stop repository for entrepreneurs to find the resources they need. Say you’re starting a company and you want to know where to find certain supply chain resources, you go to the Wyo BizLink. It’s a way to connect all parts of the business and entrepreneurial ecosystem for the state. If you want to do something innovative, creative or entrepreneurial, start here.”

Taylor Vignaroli, entrepreneur development manager for the Wyoming Business Council, explains that the team first conducted a state ecosystem map and helped resource providers create profiles on the platform. The site includes a digital searchable database that Wyo BizLink hosts.

“The Wyoming Business Council is focused on solving problems in ways that can create more successful and sustainable

communities and businesses,” Vignaroli says. “A lot of companies have difficulty trying to navigate the great resources Wyoming has to offer for budding and existing businesses. That’s at the heart of the project. Wyo BizLink will make it easy for businesses to find the resources and support they need all in one place. With a hub of vetted trusted organizations in Wyoming and beyond, new and existing businesses across the state can more easily find a pathway to success.”

Vignaroli calls on state business resources to join the project and create free profiles on the site. Examples of the resources entrepreneurs and businesspeople will find on Wyo BizLink include the College of Business Center for Business and Economic Analysis, the High Plains American Indian Research Institute, Manufacturing Works, the Wyoming Small Business Development Center Network, the Wyoming Department of Workforce Services and UW Extension.

While the Wyoming Business Council spearheaded Wyo BizLink’s overall management, generous support also came from Laramie County Community College, Wyoming Libraries to Business (WL2B) and UW. The University Center is specifically investing in a second layer to the website.

“That will be a referral source,” Macy says. “So, if you go on the site looking for things and still need additional help, someone will help direct you, similar to a concierge service.”



CENTER FOR BUSINESS AND ECONOMIC ANALYSIS

The other major project the EDA University Center funds is economic studies through the College of Business Center for Business and Economic Analysis, which supports the economic growth and diversification of Wyoming’s economy through applied economic and business analytics for communities, industries and entrepreneurs who desire a thriving and prosperous Wyoming.

“We are extremely grateful for the University Center grant funds from the U.S. Economic

“WYO BIZLINK WILL MAKE IT EASY FOR BUSINESSES TO FIND THE RESOURCES AND SUPPORT THEY NEED ALL IN ONE PLACE.”

— TAYLOR VIGNAROLI



The Center for Business and Economic Analysis, housed in the UW College of Business, conducted an economic impact study for Laramie Jubilee Days.

Development Agency,” says Center for Business and Economic Analysis Director David Aadland. “The funds have allowed us to offset the cost of three to four research projects per year for Wyoming communities and nonprofits that would have otherwise been too expensive. Many of the groups we work with are made up of volunteers and community members who simply don’t have the means to pay for a full economic study. By using the EDA funds, we can lower the cost to Wyoming stakeholders and still provide complete and thorough analysis.”

Three recent examples are Laramie Jubilee Days, the National Outdoor Leadership School and the Big Horn Basin Dinosaur and Geoscience Museum.

For Laramie Jubilee Days, the center updated the event’s previous economic impact study using cell phone and credit card data to track visitation and spending at the event to help market Laramie to potential visitors.

With the National Outdoor Leadership School, the center studied the overall economic impact to Wyoming from the school, which is headquartered in Lander. Those impacts include

total number of jobs, contribution to gross state product and tax revenue generated.

For the City of Greybull, the center estimated the construction, operations and visitation impacts resulting from the then-proposed Big Horn Basin Dinosaur and Geoscience Museum.

Visit www.uwyo.edu/research/economic-development to learn more about the EDA University Center and other resources.

