WyCEI 2023 Q1 Report

- Sponsored State FBLA Conference—WyCEI Assistant Director Mike Martin judged the competition.
- WyCEI Director Penelope Shihab partnered and paneled at the UW Arab League Event.
- Reflected on Q4 WyCEI events during 2022.
- Announced the creation and launch of the Innovate Wyoming website and the Innovate Wyoming course.
- Hired new faculty, staff, and interns.
- WyCEI Director Penelope Shihab visited Sisecam Mining, Simplot Phosphates Inc., KelTec Firearms, and Western Wyoming Community College in Rock Springs, WY.
- Participated in the Governor’s Proclamation of Entrepreneurship Week
- Participated in the Wyoming-Japanese Business Forum
- Visited Railspur, a marketing firm turned restaurant in Cheyenne.
- Visited Dominion Energy
- Toured Wyoming Public Radio

Helping Entrepreneurs Reach Their Peak
The WyCEI sponsored the Wyoming State Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA) state conference held February 15-17, 2023 at UW’s College of Business. Our investment allowed us to partner with the Wyoming Business Council to sponsor lunches for the 500 participants along with dozens of judges and other volunteers. Mike Martin, Acting Assistant Director judged three sessions on March 16th along with several partners from the Business Resource Network (BRN). The connection to the K-12 education was strong as the students are interested in entrepreneurship and business careers.
WyCEI Director Penelope Shihab partnered and paneled at the UW Arab League Event.

First event in collaboration with University of Wyoming Arts and Sciences College.
Reflected on 2022 Q4 WyCEI events

The WyCEI held and participated in multiple events during the last quarter of 2022. From October to December, the WyCEI hosted Entrepreneur Talks and Workshops for students interested in learning more about entrepreneurship and innovation from individuals who have unique experiences within those realms. Our guests included, Even Brande, Dan Lee, Sal Coca, and Jeff Dods (in partnership with SBDC).
Announced the creation and launch of the Innovate Wyoming website and the Innovate Wyoming course.

The WyCEI, in collaboration with the marketing firm BARK, developed the Innovate Wyoming website. In addition, the WyCEI partnered with the UW Honors College and College of Business to create the Innovate Wyoming Course, which starts May 22nd and runs through June 7th.

Visit innovatewyoming.org or scan the QR code listed above.
Hired new faculty, staff, and interns.

The WyCEI hired Acting Assistant Director, Michael Martin, Program Manager, Conor McCracken-Flesher, and three new interns: Logan Raper, Jesica Tzompa Martinez, and Kaden Redding.

**Michael Martin, Acting Assistant Director**

Michael Martin joined UW’s Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation as the Acting Assistant Director in early 2023 and is excited to continue to build partnerships across his home state of Wyoming and serve his Alma Mater. Michael launched a management consulting firm, 2M Strategies, Inc., in 2021. He works collaboratively, along with his wife Kelley, to improve the strategic and operational elements of small businesses across the United States. He also is a licensed securities professional and provides financial services to a growing client base.
Prior to the launch of 2M Strategies, Inc., Mike served over 8 years as Chief Lending Officer at Blue Federal Credit Union. Mike’s talented team supported the credit union’s 20 branches and more than 100,000 members by offering all types of consumer loans, commercial loans and mortgage loans. Mike administered the credit union’s large loan portfolio, managed the mix of loans and monitored loan performance.

Prior to joining Blue, he was Manager of Business Finance at the Wyoming Business Council where he administered the Challenge Loan Program, underwrote bond issues purchased by the State Treasurer’s office, launched the Wyoming Small Business Investment Credit Program and assisted companies in finding seed and venture capital. Mike has owned several real estate developments. He received a B.S. in Finance from the University of Wyoming and an M.B.A. with Honors from Regis University. He serves as an adjunct professor of entrepreneurship for Laramie County Community College and is a guest lecturer for both undergraduate and master’s classes at the University of Wyoming, College of Business.

Mike is active in many community organizations currently serving as vice chairman of the board for the Wyoming Community Development Authority and is a board member for Cheyenne Frontier Days (CFD). Mike was previously a member of the board for the CFD Memorial Foundation. Mike served as CFD’s Public Relations Committee Chairman from 2017-2019. He and his wife Kelley have four daughters whose diverse interests keep them busy. In his spare time, he enjoys golf, hiking and biking.
Conor McCracken-Flesher, Administrative Associate and Project Manager

WyCEI’s Administrative Associate Conor McCracken-Flesher is a Wyoming native, born and raised in Laramie and a 2015 graduate of Laramie High School. After gaining a BA in History and a BFA in Musicology from Boston University, Conor spent a year in Jerusalem working at the W.F. Albright Institute for Archaeological Research and completing a graduate certificate in Near Eastern Languages with a focus in Arabic and Hebrew at Polis, the Jerusalem Institute for Languages and Humanities.

He also holds an MA in Conflict Resolution and Coexistence and Near Eastern and Judaic Studies from Brandeis University.
Conor has significant experience working with non-profits, NGOs, and civil society in Wyoming and the Middle East, including American Friends of Combatants for Peace and the Center for Defending Freedom of Journalists. His skills include grantwriting, communication with partners and stakeholders across cultures, and planning, implementing, and monitoring programs.

At the Wyoming Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation, Conor works to coordinate and carry out programs between the CEI and the schools on campus to bring entrepreneurship skills and a culture of innovation to students in all disciplines. Conor spends his free time taking care of his Jordanian transplant kitten, finding novel ways to practice his languages, and biking around town.
WyCEI Director Penelope Shihab visited Sisecam Mining, Simplot Phosphates Inc., KelTec Firearms, and Western Wyoming Community College in Rock Springs, WY.
The WyCEI represented the University of Wyoming, partnering with Laramie County Community College and other higher education institutes, at the Governor’s Proclamation of Entrepreneurship Week. Entrepreneurship Week will occur February 12th-18th.
Participated in the Japan-Wyoming Business Forum

WyCEI Director Penelope Shihab and Program Manager, Conor McCracken-Flesher joined a dinner hosted by Consul-General of Japan, Yoichi Mikami.
Visited Railspur, a marketing firm turned restaurant in Cheyenne.
Visited Dominion Energy

The WyCEI would like to thank Todd Redmon, Supervisor of Region Operations at the Dominion Energy facility in Rock Springs, for hosting WyCEI Director Penelope Shihab at their operations center.

Dominion Energy employs over 17,000 people in 16 states, providing reliable, affordable, and clean energy to nearly 7 million customers. They are a leader in the clean energy transition, with a clear strategy to achieve Net Zero carbon and methane emissions. Although headquartered in Virginia, they provide natural gas distribution service to nearly 28,000 customers in southwestern Wyoming.
Toured Wyoming Public Radio

Members of the WyCEI team toured Wyoming Public Radio to check out their amenities and services. Pictured here, from left to right, Program Manager, Conor McCracken-Flesher, Intern, Kaden Redding, Director, Penelope Shihab, and Intern, Logan Raper.
For more updates and news about the WyCEI and WyCEI activities, visit our website at: www.uwyo.edu/innovation/

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