

UW Announces First Recipients of Stewart Family Serviceship Awards

1) Ashleigh Pilkerton, Ph.D. student in the Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit in the Department of Zoology and Physiology for **COWGIRLS in STEM: Computational Outreach for Wyoming Girls in STEM.**

2) Tina Nirk and Rachel Ratliff who are doctoral students in the Counselor Education & Supervision PhD program in the College of Education for **Project-Checkpoint: Creating Effective Care Transitions and Safety Plans for Persons Vulnerable to Suicide.**

COWGIRLS in STEM: Computational Outreach for Wyoming Girls in STEM is a project led by second year graduate student Ashleigh Pilkerton from the Department of Zoology and Physiology. COWGIRLS in STEM (Computational Outreach for Wyoming Girls in STEM) addresses the ongoing challenge that despite the high demand for STEM talent in the workforce, and despite widespread efforts to increase women's representation in the science, technology, engineering, and mathematics fields (STEM), women hold only 1 of every 4 STEM jobs nationally. This project provides an innovative computer science experience for young girls in afterschool programs across the state of Wyoming aiming to revolutionize how women experience STEM by facilitating interactive learning in female led environments and bridging the STEM gap through relationships. In partnership with the University of Wyoming Science Initiative Program and the Wyoming Afterschool Alliance, a Priority Fund of the Wyoming Community Foundation, Pilkerton will utilize foundational connections in Wyoming to increase the involvement of young women in STEM by bringing learning computer science to life, enriching young women's experiences by connecting lessons to their communities, and demonstrating that females are capable of, and belong in STEM.

Ashleigh Pilkerton Bio: Ashleigh received Bachelor of Science degrees in Bioinformatics and Biology from Pacific University, Oregon. During her undergraduate years, Ashleigh conducted computational chemistry research and taught computer science to 7th and 8th grade girls. Her subsequent experiences in marine and estuarine ecology shaped her current interest in water quality research and the long-term implications of anthropogenic disturbances on aquatic ecosystems. Before joining the Wyoming Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit as a PhD graduate student in the Department of Zoology and Physiology, Ashleigh conducted field and laboratory research in aquatic ecosystems studying plankton communities and harmful algal blooms, juvenile sea star growth rates, long term trends in estuaries and eelgrass beds, and was actively involved in science communication and education. Ashleigh is an avid outdoors woman and particularly enjoys backpacking to alpine lakes and the mountains. She plays classical and jazz trumpet and finds joy in STEM education and outreach.

Project-Checkpoint: Creating Effective Care Transitions and Safety Plans for Persons Vulnerable to Suicide is led by Tina Nirk and Rachel Ratliff who are doctoral students at the University of Wyoming in the Counselor Education &

Supervision PhD program in the College of Education. Their project proposes to address the heavy mission of preventing the loss of life to suicide - a problem in which Wyoming ranks number 2 in the nation. Their project address an important gap following the period of time after a patient discharges from the hospital and before follow up with community aftercare. They believe care transitions could be an important time to check in with a patient to ensure their safety plan is relevant to their needs as they move between levels of care. The project will design and pilot technology-based Tele-Mental Health Services counseling assistance for those persons who need assistance during this care transition. The COVID-19 pandemic galvanized the use of web-based services and now they intend to use this forum to follow-up with the patient until the connection to their desired service provider is optimal from the patient's perspective. They also hope to provide a forum for patient voices to be heard as consumers of services if they choose to speak about their care. Through a partnership with Ivinson Memorial Hospital, the Albany County Mental Health Board and the University of Wyoming, they seek to gain vital information and experience to address the mental health needs of our community. Project-Checkpoint will provide case management and logistical support towards connecting the patient to their desired service provider.

Rachel Ratliff Bio: Ratliff grew up in Riverton, Wyoming and upon high school graduation attended Cottey College where she received her Associate of Arts degree and transferred to the University of Wyoming to complete her Bachelor of Arts degree in Elementary Education with a Creative Arts Specialization. While at UW she was a College of Education Senator for ASUW and a McNair Scholar. Upon graduation Ratliff was accepted into the Teach for America program as a Greater New Orleans Corps member and taught elementary school in St James the Baptist Parish School District. After teaching for over a decade Ratliff returned to the University of Wyoming to get her Master's degree in Mental Health Counseling and continued in the PhD program. During her time at the University she has been an active member of the UW community as president of CSI, the counseling honor society, president of the non-traditional student council, and an active member of the reconstituted Black Student Alliance. Besides her graduate assistance at the university, Ratliff also works at Ivinson Memorial Hospital as a counselor on the Behavioral Health Unit and an Albany County Mental Health Examiner. Ratliff has many hobbies outside of school including competing in pageantry, with her current title being Ms All World Beauties US 2019/2020, and all things crafty with her own online shop called Queens Dazzle.

Tina Nirk Bio: Nirk is currently in the third year of her PhD program in Counselor Education and Supervision at the University of Wyoming. She earned her master's degree within the same counseling program while starting a family in Laramie. The Master's program in Counselor Education and the Laramie community have given her a rich career experience. Her Bachelor's degree in Psychology was also at the University of Wyoming. Tina worked as a local mental health clinician and program developer for two decades and in that time was given perspectives and understandings of human suffering especially in mental health and substance abuse problems. Now years later, with her

children ages 25, 24, and 17, she chooses to focus on giving back in the form of educating new counselors. Tina's dream is to help new counselors prepare for the complexity of human problems. She is the Chi Sigma Iota Doctoral Representative of the Mu Nu Tau Chapter. She currently works at Ivinson Memorial Hospital, Behavioral Health Services (BHS). She has served as an Albany County Mental Health Examiner for almost six years.