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Research and  
Economic Development

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# CELEBRATION OF EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH & INNOVATION

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January 22, 2026

5:30 Reception

6:15 Dinner & Program

Marian H. Rochelle Gateway Center  
222 S 22nd St, Laramie

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# PROGRAM

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## OPENING

VICE PRESIDENT PARAG CHITNIS

## WELCOME

PRESIDENT EDWARD SEIDEL

## REMARKS

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

VICE CHAIR MICHELLE SULLIVAN

## RESEARCH & INNOVATION IN 2025

VICE PRESIDENT PARAG CHITNIS

## HONOREES & AWARDS

VICE PRESIDENT PARAG CHITNIS

INTERIM PROVOST ANNE ALEXANDER

PROFESSOR KEN SIMS

## RECEPTION MUSIC - FLUTE DUET

JULIA GRINER - CASPER, WY - MUSIC PERFORMANCE

KARINA SCHOESSLER - CODY, WY - MUSIC PERFORMANCE

# AWARDS

## UW DISTINGUISHED RESEARCHER

Thomas Boothby

*Associate Professor, Molecular Biology*

## UW DISTINGUISHED INNOVATOR

Mohammad Piri

*Professor, Petroleum Engineering*

## UW EXEMPLARY RESEARCH CULTURE

Wyoming Cooperative

Fish & Wildlife Research Unit

Accepted by Director Matt Kauffman

## UW DISTINGUISHED RESEARCH SERVICE

Shawna McBride

*Senior Director, Research Development & EPSCoR-IDEA Office*

*Co-Director, Wyoming NASA Space Grant & NASA EPSCoR*

Qian-Quan Sun

*Professor, Zoology & Physiology*

*Director, Wyoming Sensory Biology Center*

## HONOREES

### RESEARCH

David Fay

*Professor,  
Molecular Biology*



Matt Kauffman

*Lead Scientist,  
WY Migration Initiative  
Wildlife Biologist,  
U.S. Geological Survey*

### INNOVATION

Jared Bushman

*Associate Professor,  
School of Pharmacy*



Mark Gomelsky

*Professor,  
Molecular Biology*

# COLLEGE HONOREES

**Melissa Alexander**

*Carl M. Williams Professor of  
Law & Ethics  
LAW*

**Davin Bagdonas**

*Senior Research Professional  
SER*

**Bledar Bisha**

*Associate Professor, Food  
Microbiology & Department Head,  
Animal Science  
CALSNR*

**Jonathan Brant**

*Professor, Civil & Architectural  
Engineering & Construction  
Mgmt.  
CEPS*

**Jeff Covin**

*Professor, Management  
COB*

**Joe Holbrook**

*Associate Professor, Carnivore  
and Habitat Ecology  
HAUB*

**Meridith Joyce**

*Assistant Professor, SOC &  
Physics & Astronomy  
SOC*

**Christine McKibbin**

*Professor, Psychology  
A&S*

**Eric Moody**

*Associate Director, WIND  
CHS*

**Shane Murphy**

*Professor, Atmospheric Science  
CEPS*

**Grace Shearrer**

*Assistant Professor, Family &  
Consumer Sciences  
CALSNR*

**Ling Zhang**

*Assistant Professor, Special  
Education  
COE*

# CAREER AWARD WINNERS

**Lauren Shoemaker**

*Associate Professor,  
Botany*

&

**Ryan Webb**

*Assistant Professor,  
Civil and Architectural  
Engineering*



# DISTINGUISHED AWARDS



## **UW Distinguished Researcher Thomas Boothby**

Associate Professor, Molecular Biology  
His research focuses on how organisms survive extreme environments and how we can make practical use of this knowledge for elevating some of society's most pressing problems, such as increasing access to medicine and food security especially in rural and

underserved communities. Outside of this academic research, Dr. Boothby is an officer of the Biophysical Society, a founder of the Water and Life Interface Institute, and the founder of LifeGlass, LLC.

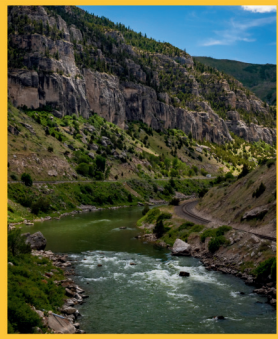


## **UW Distinguished Innovator Mohammad Piri**

Professor, Petroleum Engineering  
Dr. Mohammad Piri is the Founder and Director of the Center of Innovation for Flow Through Porous Media. He holds the Wyoming Excellence Chair in Petroleum Engineering and the Thomas and Shelley Botts Endowed Chair in Unconventional Reservoirs. He earned his PhD in Petroleum Engineering from Imperial College London

in 2004 and served as a postdoctoral research associate at Princeton. His research advances the understanding of the atomic-, nano-, micro-, and macro-scale physics of flow and transport in man-made and naturally-occurring porous media with applications in energy and the environment, including unconventional reservoirs. He has secured more than \$150 million in external research funding and leads major initiatives such as the WGI Initiative and a strategic partnership with Thermo Fisher Scientific. He has commercialized research innovations through two spinoff companies, Piri Technologies, LLC and Digital Pore Solution, LLC, contributing to economic diversification and workforce development for the University and Wyoming at-large. He currently holds 10 US patents.

# DISTINGUISHED AWARDS



## **UW Exemplary Research Culture Wyoming Cooperative Fish & Wildlife Research Unit**

Accepted by Matt Kauffman

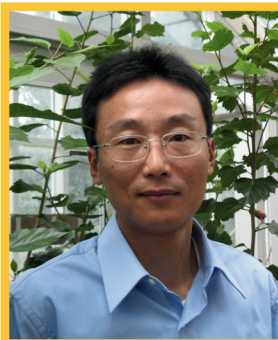
The Wyoming Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit is currently one of 43 USGS Cooperative Research Units nationwide. Their offices, programs, and personnel are embedded within the Dept. of Zoology and Physiology. They collaborate with the Wyoming Game and Fish Department, federal land and wildlife managers, the Wind River Indian Reservation, private entities, and nonprofit partners to provide actionable scientific information for wildlife and fisheries management.



## **UW Distinguished Research Service Shawna McBride**

EPSCoR/IDeA Office

Dr. Shawna McBride leads research development and STEM capacity-building initiatives as Senior Director of the Research Development & Wyoming EPSCoR-IDeA Office and Co-Director of the Wyoming NASA Space Grant Consortium and NASA EPSCoR Program.



## **UW Distinguished Research Service Qian-Quan Sun**

Professor, Zoology & Physiology  
Director, WY Sensory Biology Center  
Over the past 24 years at the University of Wyoming, Dr Sun's lab has received continuous NIH funding. He led the establishment of a COBRE Phase I center and its successful competitive renewal for Phase II.

# HONOREES IN EXCELLENCE

## RESEARCH



### **David Fay**

Professor, Molecular Biology

David Fay has been a professor of Molecular Biology since 2001. He's the Director of the Wyoming NIH-INBRE that supports biomedical research, student training, and infrastructure throughout Wyoming. Fay's own research in molecular genetics, cell biology, and development has been continuously funded by the NIH.



### **Matt Kauffman**

Wildlife Biologist, U.S. Geological Survey

Lead Scientist at the Wyoming Migration Initiative  
Since 2006, Matt has been a USGS scientist with the Wyoming Cooperative Fish & Wildlife Research Unit at UW and he leads the Wyoming Migration Initiative.

## INNOVATION



### **Jared Bushman**

Associate Professor, School of Pharmacy

Dr. Bushman earned his PhD in Biomedical Genetics studying neurodegenerative disease and neuroimmunology. His lab receives funding from the US Department of Defense, NIH, Foundations and Industrial Partners to work on both basic and translational science in spinal cord injury, peripheral nerve injury and Alzheimer's disease. He currently holds 6 US patents.



### **Mark Gomelsky**

Professor, Molecular Biology

Mark Gomelsky is the Microbiology Program Director and a leader in bacterial signaling, synthetic biology, and optogenetics. He is a top 1% life scientist (ScholarGPS), AAAS Fellow, and biotech entrepreneur. He currently holds 7 US patents.



# COLLEGE HONOREES



## **Melissa Alexander**

Melissa Ballengee Alexander serves as the Carl M. Williams Professor of Law & Ethics in the University of Wyoming **College of Law**. She is a graduate of the University of Virginia School of Law and Yale University.



## **Davin Bagdonas**

Davin is a Senior Research Professional in the Center for Economic Geology Research in the **School of Energy Resources**. He earned his master's degree in 2014, focusing on igneous rocks and uranium provenance mineralogy. His area of expertise is related to coal and rare earth elements.



## **Bledar Bisha**

Dr. Bledar Bisha is an Associate Professor in Food Microbiology and Department head of Animal Sciences in the **College of Agriculture, Life Sciences, & Natural Resources**. His interests lie in conducting applied and basic research in food safety microbiology benefiting general consumers, public health, and the food industry.

# COLLEGE HONOREES



## **Jonathan Brant**

Jonathan is Professor in Civil & Architectural Engineering & Construction Management in the **College of Engineering & Physical Sciences**. Jon has over 15-yr's of experience as a consulting water treatment engineer and researcher scientist. His area of expertise is physicochemical separation processes with an emphasis on membrane processes.



## **Jeffrey Covin**

Jeffrey Covin is a Wyoming Excellence Chair and he currently holds the Pat Rile Chair of Entrepreneurship in the Department of Management and Marketing, **College of Business**. Dr. Covin is a teacher and researcher in the areas of corporate entrepreneurship, strategic management, and technology management.



## **Joe Holbrook**

Joe is an Associate Professor, Carnivore and Habitat Ecology in the **Haub School of Environment & Natural Resources**. Joe has at least 6 published peer-reviewed manuscripts in 2025 and obtained more than \$250K in new extramural funding this year with grants from previous years that tallied \$585K.

# COLLEGE HONOREES



## **Meridith Joyce**

Meridith is an Assistant Professor in the **School of Computing**. Meridith earned her Ph.D. in computational stellar structure and evolution from Dartmouth College, conducting part of her doctoral work at the South African Astronomical Observatory. Her research expertise centers on theoretical stellar evolution, precision stellar modeling, and large-scale computational methods.



## **Christine McKibbin**

Dr. Christine McKibbin is a Professor in the Department of Psychology in the **College of Arts & Sciences** and Director of the Wyoming Center on Aging. She received her Ph.D. from the University of North Texas and joined UW in 2007. Dr. McKibbin's research focuses on improving health and outcomes for rural older adults and family care partners.



## **Eric Moody**

In 2018, Dr. Moody joined the University of Wyoming **College of Health Sciences**, as the Director of Research and Evaluation for WIND, and in 2022 was named Co-Associate Director of WIND. In his role at WIND, Dr. Moody oversees all research and evaluation activities.

# COLLEGE HONOREES



## **Shane Murphy**

Dr. Shane Murphy is a Professor of Atmospheric Science in the **College of Engineering & Physical Sciences** and the Director of the Center of Air Quality in the School of Energy Resources. He specializes in making novel field measurements using cutting edge technology to advance the science of atmospheric chemistry,



## **Grace Shearrer**

Dr. Grace Shearrer is an Assistant Professor in the **College of Agriculture, Life Sciences, & Natural Resources**. Over the past decade, Dr. Shearrer's research portfolio has focused on how non-physiological systems - brain based hedonic behaviors - alter the physiological motivation to eat and weight regulation homeostasis before obesity onset.



## **Ling Zhang**

Dr. Zhang is an Assistant Professor in Special Education in the **College of Education**. She received her doctoral degree in special education with a focus on Instructional Design, Technology, and Innovation from the University of Kansas. Her research focuses on leveraging learning theories to create personalized learning environments that promote a sense of belonging for all learners.





# U.S. National Science Foundation

The Faculty Early Career Development (CAREER) Program is a Foundation-wide activity that offers the National Science Foundation's most prestigious awards in support of early-career faculty who have the potential to serve as academic role models in research and education and to lead advances in the mission of their department or organization. Activities pursued by early-career faculty build a firm foundation for a lifetime of leadership in integrating education and research. NSF encourages submission of CAREER proposals from early-career faculty at all CAREER-eligible organizations.

## CAREER AWARD WINNERS



### **Lauren Shoemaker**

Dr. Shoemaker is an Associate Professor in the Botany Department, and is also affiliated with the Program in Ecology and Evolution and School of Computing. Lauren Shoemaker received a five-year, \$875,000 grant for her project, titled "Impacts of Environmental Filtering vs Species Interactions on Persistence and Coexistence in a Warming World."



### **Ryan Webb**

Dr. Webb is an Assistant Professor in Civil and Architectural Engineering and Construction Management. He leads the UW Mountain Hydrology group. Ryan Webb received a five-year \$738,196 grant for his project, titled "CAREER: Defining the Role of Snow in Storing and Transmitting Liquid Water to Generate Streamflow."





# **PRESIDENT'S DISTINGUISHED INNOVATION FELLOWS**

**Maohong Fan**

*Professor, Chemical & Biomedical Engineering*

**Kam Ng**

*Professor, Civil & Architectural Engineering &  
Construction Management*

**Whit Stewart**

*Associate Professor, Animal Science*

**Ben Koger**

*Assistant Professor, School of Computing*

**Mark Peterson**

*Professor, Management and Marketing*

**Amy Shane-Nichols**

*Assistant Professor, Family & Consumer Sciences*

# REDD RECOGNITION

## Pre-Award Services

### Charli Ruess

*Research Services Coordinator*

Certified Pre-Award Research  
Administrator

### Evelyn Kelley

*Award Management Asst. Dir.*

Accepted into WY Bar

### Kayleigh Edgar

*Research Services Coordinator*

RACC's the Pat Buennemeyer  
Scholarship

## EPSCoR/IDeA & RDO

### Liz Nysson

*Associate Dir. EPSCoR/IDeA*

Tip of the Cap a Mortar  
Board Award

## SBDC

### Devan Costa-Cargill

*Regional Dir. for NW WY*

WY SBDC Network State Star

### Jim Drever

*Associate State Dir.*

Certificate in Ethical Hacking

### Kyle Trumble

*Regional Dir. for W Central WY*

Certificate in Ethical Hacking, &  
Graduate of the Cyber Readiness  
Program

### Monica Jo Patten

*Regional Director*

Graduate Certificate in AI for  
Business Leaders

### P.J. Burns

*Regional Dir. for NE WY*

Cybersecurity Business Counselor  
Registered Appr. Program

### Robert Condie

*Regional Dir. for SW WY*

QuickBooks Pro Certification

## AIU Certified AI For SBDC Advisors:

### Kayley Achi

*Market Research Program Mgr.*

### Robert Condie

*Regional Dir. for SW WY*

### Kenny Overby

*Regional Dir. for SE WY*

### Kyle Trumble

*Regional Dir. for W Central WY*

## SI

### Tessa Livingston

*Graduate Student*

Best paper at the 11th World  
Congress on Electrical Engineering  
and Computer Systems and  
Science

## TTO

### Owen Funk

*Licensing Manager*

2026 Howard Bremer Scholarship

## WORTH

### Dan McCoy

*Director of WORTH*

The US Department of State  
Speaker Program and won the  
Promoting Intellectual  
Engagement (PIE) Award

### Hailey Sorg

*Extension Educator*

JR Broadbent Newer Extension  
Employee Recognition Award

**These individuals will be  
honored at a division meeting  
later in the year.**

# RESEARCH EXCELLENCE

## PUBLICATIONS & CREATIVE WORKS

Name	Book/Creative Work
Steven Barrett	Arduino VI: Bioinstrumentation
Catherine Hartmann	Making the Invisible Real: Practices of Seeing in Tibetan Pilgrimage
Renee Laegreid	Mari Sandoz and the Battle of the Little Bighorn
Bryan Leonard	Why the Rush? The Institutional Economic History of Homesteading and the Settlement of the West
Madeline Lewis	The Laramie Anorthosite Complex and the Sherman Batholith. One of the Most Accessible and Best Studied Anorthosite and Ferroan Granite Complexes in the World
Jeffrey Lockwood	The Art of Quitting: Manifestations, Meaning, and Mastery
Paula Martin	Navigating Disability in the Academic Library Workplace
Bethann Merkle	Teaching and Mentoring Writers in the Sciences An Evidence-Based Approach
Tracey Patton	A Nation's Undesirables: Mixed Race Children and Whiteness in the Post-Nazi Era
Bradley Rettler	Resistance Money: A Philosophical Case for Bitcoin
Ryan Williamson	Nationalized Politics: Evaluating Electoral Politics Across Time
Joe Carver	Presented at the European Association for Music in Schools Summer Conference & Western Thunder Marching Band appearance in the 2025 Tournament of Roses Parade in Pasadena, CA.
Magdalena Wór	Featured presenter at the MTNA National Conference & several US and international performances, including performances with the National Philharmonic.



UNIVERSITY  
OF WYOMING