



UW

Research and
Economic Development

CELEBRATION OF EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH & INNOVATION

January 22, 2026

5:30 Reception

6:15 Dinner & Program

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

PROGRAM

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

INNOVATION

Jared Bushman

Associate Professor,

School of Pharmacy

&

&

Matt Kauffman

Lead Scientist,

WY Migration Initiative

Wildlife Biologist,

U.S. Geological Survey

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 Shearer

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.



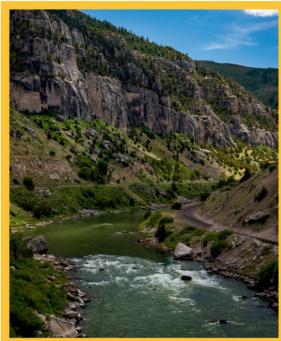
UW Distinguished Innovator

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-yrs 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

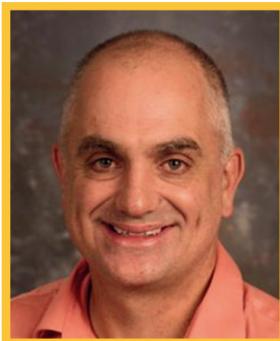
Dr. Christine McKibbin is a Professor in the Department of Psychology in the **College of Arts & Sciences** and Director of the Wyoming Center on Aging. She received her Ph.D. from the University of North Texas and joined UW in 2007. Dr. McKibbin's research focuses on improving health and outcomes for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