

SUMMER 2026

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UNIVERSITY
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QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

Vol. 7, Issue 2

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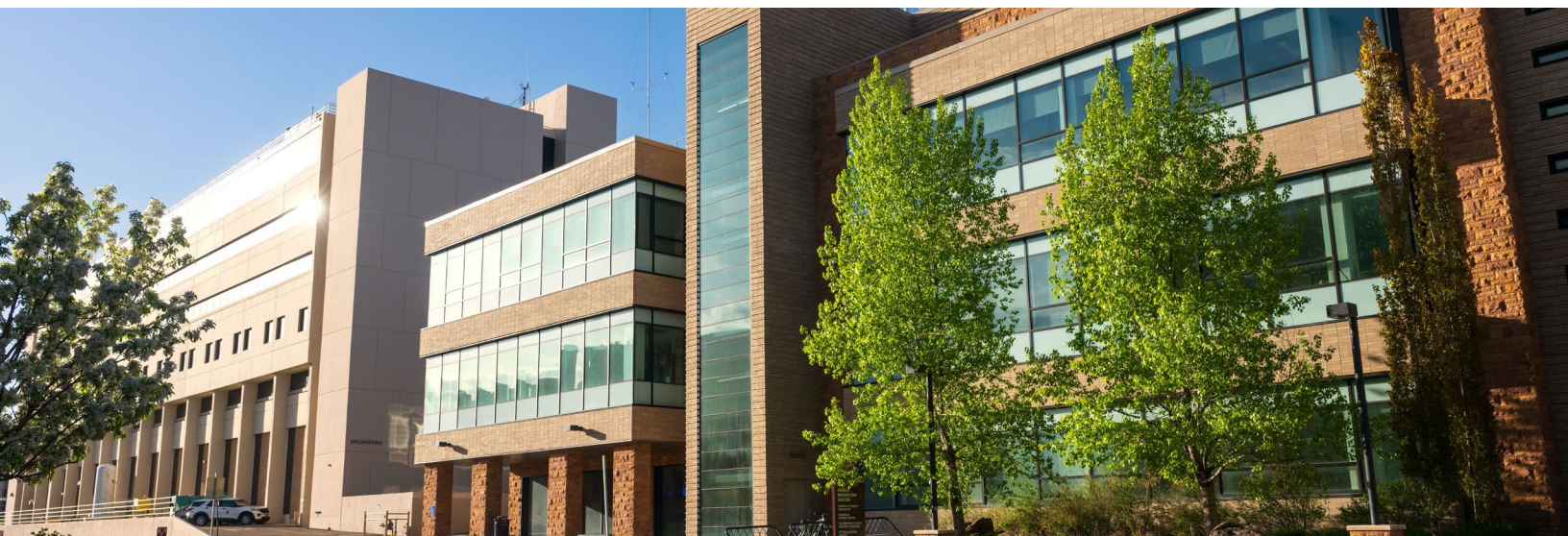


ABOUT THE SCHOOL OF ENERGY RESOURCES

The University of Wyoming (UW) School of Energy Resources (SER) was created in 2006 to enhance the University's energy-related education, research, and engagement. SER directs and funds cutting-edge energy research and technology development. It further bridges the gap between academics and industry through targeted engagement efforts. The partnerships formed between academics and industry ensure programs are relevant, current, and deliver impact and high value to stakeholders and the state.

Since its inception, SER has maintained flexibility in its focus and structure to meet the changing needs of Wyoming's energy industries and the State's economy—which is now more critical than ever.

This quarterly newsletter highlights SER's significant achievements from May through July 2026, in academics, research, newly emerging areas of focus, and engagement to keep UW and Wyoming at the forefront of the energy sector.



SER ACTING EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Scott Quillinan

CONTACT US

University of Wyoming
School of Energy Resources
1000 E. University Ave.
Dept. 3012
Laramie, Wyoming 82071

Energy Innovation Center
11th and Lewis
Laramie, Wyoming

(307) 766-6897
serforum@uwyo.edu
uwyo.edu/SER

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SER LEADERSHIP

UW Names Obermueller to Lead UW School of Energy Resources

The University of Wyoming has named **Pete Obermueller** as the new executive director of the School of Energy Resources.

Obermueller, currently the president and chief executive officer of the Petroleum Association of Wyoming, is a leading voice and policy leader for the state's oil and gas industry.

Obermueller's appointment was approved by the UW Board of Trustees and the UW Energy Resources Council (ERC), the two governing bodies for SER. Obermueller was selected following a national search conducted by the ERC and Spencer Stuart, a leading global executive search and leadership consulting firm.

With more than two decades of experience in legislative affairs, natural resource and energy policy, and community relations, Obermueller has championed major initiatives to advance Wyoming's economy and reduce regulatory burdens, including cultivating research partnerships with UW.

Before leading PAW, Obermueller was executive director of the Wyoming County Commissioners Association, coordinating policy for all 23 Wyoming counties. His experience in Washington, D.C., includes serving as executive director of the Congressional Western Caucus and working as legislative director for **U.S. Rep. Cynthia Lummis**, R-Wyo., where he was a principal adviser on energy, environmental and public lands issues. He also served as a legislative assistant for **U.S. Rep. Barbara Cubin**, R-Wyo.

He holds a master's degree in public policy from the Hubert H. Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs and a bachelor's degree in public policy from Concordia University. A Wyoming native, he is a graduate of Natrona County High School in Casper.

Scheduled to start at UW Aug. 31, Obermueller will take the helm from Acting Executive Director Scott Quillinan, who has served in the role following the departure of Holly Krutka in late 2025.



Pete Obermueller

Transitional Leadership Recognition

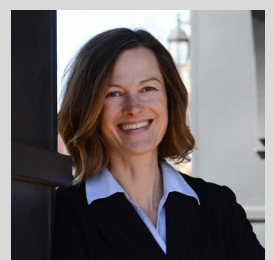
With the formal onboarding of **Pete Obermueller** as Executive Director of SER, the University extends its sincere appreciation to **Scott Quillinan** and **Erin Phillips** for their exemplary leadership over the past nine months.

Serving as Acting Executive Director and Acting Senior Director of Research, respectively, Quillinan and Phillips provided crucial organizational stability and operational continuity during this transitional period. Beyond maintaining daily administrative and research operations, their stewardship sustained the institution's commitment to academic and professional excellence.

Following the conclusion of their interim appointments, Quillinan resumes his role as Senior Director of Research, while Dr. Phillips returns to her position as Director of Cross-Cutting Programs. The School recognizes both leaders for their distinguished service, administrative vision, and continued dedication to advancing energy research and outreach for the state of Wyoming.



Scott Quillinan



Erin Phillips

ACADEMICS

School of Energy Resources Celebrates Class of 2026 at Spring Commencement Ceremony

The School of Energy Resources celebrated the graduation of seventeen students in the spring 2026 commencement ceremony at the University of Wyoming on May 16.

Festivities acknowledged the achievements of students completing a Bachelor of Science degree in Energy Resource Management and Development (ERMD), a minor in Energy Resource Management, as well as students who have earned a certificate in Land Administration.

Created in 2012, the ERMD bachelor's degree is an interdisciplinary program designed to meet the needs of the energy industry and to prepare students for careers in all types of energy development while addressing environmental considerations and working collaboratively with energy lawyers and policymakers.

Ryan Fogg, David Meraz Ordonez, Cassidy Lolley, Dylan Salgado and **Keaton Wood** earned their Energy Resource Management and Development degrees in the Professional Land Management concentration.

Darren Ferguson and **Harper Pollock** earned their Energy Resource Management and Development degree in the Energy and Environmental Systems concentration.

Students in other UW degree programs picking up a minor in Energy Resource Management included **David Gordon, Matalin Mohr, Alexander Nichols, Gabriel Russell, Kyler Russow, Gracilynn Ward,** and **Tristan Troftgruben.**

Working professionals or students in other UW degree programs picking up a certificate in Land Administration included **Michael Johnsen, Byron Taylor,** and **Blake Houser.**



Dylan Salgado, Ryan Fogg, David Meraz Ordonez, Keaton Wood, Acting Executive Director Scott Quillinan, Darren Ferguson, Harper Pollock, Cassidy Lolley, Senior Assistant Dean Kami Danaei

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ACADEMICS

UW SER Leads Energy Study-Abroad Field Course in Norway

The University of Wyoming School of Energy Resources led its inaugural study-abroad field course in Norway to explore energy synergies between Norway and Wyoming.

Co-led by **Erin Phillips**, SER's acting senior director of research; **Selena Gerace**, program manager of the energy education, leadership and careers group; and **Madeleine Lewis**, an associate research scientist in the jurisprudence of underground law and energy group, the course focused on the interdisciplinary social, economic, technical, legal and policy frameworks that bear on the development of new energy industries and technologies in Norway. The course also highlighted the varied energy sectors in the country.

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Participants in the recent UW study-abroad course in Norway were, from left: back row, Xavier Waltman, Liam Devine, Alexandru Ispas, James Gallegos, Austin Quillinan, Kolten Harmsen, Anna Nielsen, Madeleine Lewis and Libby Krugerud; front row, Selena Gerace, Seth Needham, Cassidy Lolley, Christine Longnecker, Erin Phillips and Matalin Mohr.

Grana Wins Ellbogen Meritorious Classroom Teaching Award

Dario Grana, an SER Professor of Geology and Geophysics and Wyoming Excellence Chair, was named as the recipient of the prestigious 2026 John P. Ellbogen Meritorious Classroom Teaching Award.

The award recognizes excellence in classroom teaching, rewarding faculty members who demonstrate an exceptional commitment to student learning, innovative instructional methods, and profound impact on the academic community at UW.

Grana, an internationally recognized expert in geophysics and reservoir characterization, was selected for his ability to transform complex, quantitative scientific concepts into accessible, engaging, and deeply impactful classroom experiences.

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Academics Highlights

- Energy Resource Management and Development students **Cadence Vollman** and **Austin Quillinan** were accepted into the 2026-2027 UW Leadership Academy.
- SER Senior Assistant Dean **Kami Danaei**, Academic Program Coordinator **Heather Chandler**, and Professional Land Management students **Libby Krugerud** and **Rozie Sanford** attended the AAPL - American Association of Professional Landmen's 72nd Annual Meeting.



- Multiple SER-affiliated professors were recognized by **President Seidel** with Presidential Scholarly Achievement Awards. The awards recognize faculty members who have demonstrated high achievement in scholarship in both the tenured and early-career faculty categories.



- Dario Grana**, SER professor of geology and geophysics and Wyoming Excellence Chair, Department of Geology and Geophysics
- John Kaszuba**, SER professor of geology and geophysics and the John and Jane Wold Distinguished Centennial Chair in Energy, Department of Geology and Geophysics
- Temple Stoellinger**, associate dean and Wyoming Excellence Chair, Haub School of Environment and Natural Resources and SER adjunct professor
- Bryan Leonard**, associate professor and SER chair, Haub School of Environment and Natural Resources and School of Energy Resources
- Liane Moreau**, assistant professor, Department of Chemistry, nuclear faculty fellow, SER Nuclear Energy Research Center

RESEARCH

Center for Economic Geology Research

UW SER Critical Minerals AI Proposal Selected to Build Wyoming-Idaho-Nevada Coalition

A collaborative team – representing the University of Wyoming, the University of Nevada-Reno and the University of Idaho – was selected for funding under the Intermountain Critical Minerals Research Launchpad (ICMRL) to advance technologies across the critical minerals supply chain by applying artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML).

The partnership established the ICMRL to build on momentum generated at an AI and ML in critical materials workshop, which took place in March. The program provides seed funding to interdisciplinary teams whose work spans all three institutions and directly addresses the role of AI/ML in advancing technologies across the critical minerals supply chain.

The project, titled “Critical Mineral Intelligent Data Observatory (CM-IDO),” will build a federated knowledge base that performs optical character recognition, catalogs, extracts, structures, links and exhibits most available critical mineral documents and data from Idaho, Wyoming and Nevada in an AI-ready form.

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3D Visualization Center

UW’s 3D Visualization Center Wins Grant to Expand Drone-Based Capabilities

The 3D Visualization Center in the University of Wyoming’s School of Energy Resources has been selected for a Seed Translational Acceleration of Research (STAR) Project award.

Administered by UW’s Research and Economic Development Division, STAR awards support applied research with high translational or commercialization potential. The program is part of the university’s National Science Foundation (NSF) Accelerating Research Translation (ART) initiative.

The 3D Visualization Center will use the award to expand its drone-based hyperspectral imaging capabilities.

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SER Associate Research Professional James Amato conducting hyperspectral scanning field work

Hydrogen Energy Research Center

UW Research Group Publishes Two Articles on Hydrogen Infrastructure

A University of Wyoming research group led by **Chengyi “Charlie” Zhang**, an associate professor in the Department of Civil and Architectural Engineering and Construction Management, recently published two comprehensive academic articles about mitigating risks and analyzing safety compliance for the rapidly evolving hydrogen energy sector.

Saksham Timalaina, a native of Sindhupalchowk, Nepal, served as lead author of both articles alongside Zhang. Key research and writing contributions were provided by graduate research assistants **Uttam Pal**, of Chainpur, Nepal; **Shristi Neupane**, of Butwal, Nepal; and **Merina Giri**, of Itahari, Nepal, all representing the UW Construction Research and Innovation Lab.

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UW Releases New Publication Exploring Production of Low-Carbon Hydrogen from Wyoming Coal

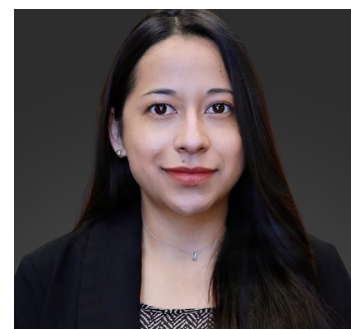
Researchers at the University of Wyoming have published a new modeling study exploring the production of low-carbon hydrogen by using Wyoming's coal resources.

Published in the peer-reviewed journal *Energy Conversion and Management*, the article, titled "Unlocking Wyoming's coal resources for low-carbon hydrogen production," finds that supercritical water gasification of coal with carbon capture can produce low-carbon hydrogen at a competitive cost, with the Powder River and Green River basins as the strongest candidate sites.

Gisella Mena Terán, a UW Ph.D. student in chemical and biomedical engineering, was the lead author of the piece, along with UW authors **Haibo Zhai**, the Roy and Caryl Cline Distinguished Chair in Engineering and a Wyoming Excellence Chair in the Department of Civil and Architectural Engineering and Construction Management; **Randolph Pfeiffer**, a professor of practice in the Department of Chemical and Biomedical Engineering; and Occidental Chair in Energy and Environmental Technologies **Saman Aryana**, who serves as associate dean for the College of Engineering and Physical Sciences and a professor in the Department of Chemical and Biomedical Engineering.

Bryan Medina-Rodriguez of Yachay Tech University in Ecuador also contributed to the study.

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Gisella Mena Terán

Jurisprudence of Underground Law and Energy Research Group

UW SER Research Team Publishes Analysis of Nuclear Facility Licensing

A newly published legal article by the University of Wyoming School of Energy Resources' Jurisprudence of Underground Law and Energy (JOULE) research group examines the state and federal procedures through which new nuclear utilization facilities are licensed.

Published in the *Ohio State Law Journal*, a top-ranked national flagship U.S. law review, the article is titled "Just Nuclear." It evaluates the licensing and siting processes for advanced nuclear facilities through the lens of procedural justice.

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UW SER Releases New Story Map Explaining Pore Space Leasing Practices

Researchers at the University of Wyoming School of Energy Resources, Haub School of Environment and Natural Resources, and College of Law have published a new story map that explains pore space leasing practices and makes example agreements publicly available.

The rapid growth of carbon capture, utilization and storage (CCUS) technology over the past two decades has prompted courts to refine the nature of property ownership within reservoir systems and has created a new market for contracts granting reservoir access and rights of injection and storage. Unlike house and oil and gas lease prices, however, there is little information on how reservoir rights are valued.

This new story map represents the first step in consolidating existing information and making it publicly accessible.

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Center for Carbon Capture and Conversion

UW Receives DOE Award to Improve Wastewater Management in Coal-Based Power Plants

The University of Wyoming has been selected to negotiate a nearly \$400,000 award from the U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE) Hydrocarbon and Geothermal Energy Office. The project aims to improve water efficiency and reduce the volume of wastewater requiring management at coal-based power plants.

The funding is part of a broader federal initiative to refurbish and modernize the nation's existing coal power plants. The DOE effort is intended to support practical, high-impact projects that improve the efficiency, lifetimes and performance of coal and natural gas infrastructure.

UW's project was one of nine selected nationwide spanning three different topic areas. The project is co-led by **Erica Belmont**, an associate professor of mechanical engineering and adjunct professor for UW's School of Energy Resources, alongside **Trina Igelsrud-Pfeiffer**, director of the Center for Carbon Capture and Conversion (CCCC) in SER.

The project, titled "Thermal Bottom Ash Drying to Reduce Water Burdens and Facilitate Critical Mineral Recovery and CCUS Integration," will evaluate the technical, environmental and economic viability of applying advanced thermal drying technology to bottom ash transport water.

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Research Highlights

- The collaborative team of **Kam Ng**, **Shaun Wulff**, both in the College of Engineering and Physical Sciences, along with **Tyler Brown** and **Davin Bagdonas** in SER's Center for Economic Geology Research (CEGR) were awarded an Engineering Interdisciplinary-Collaborative Seed Grant for their proposal, "Transforming Residues of Critical Minerals and Materials into Construction Products through Experimental Study and Artificial Intelligence."
- Minerals Program Manager **Tyler Brown** in CEGR was featured in a new promotional video released by the Office of Research and Economic Development to highlight the Accelerating Research Translation (ART) program at UW. Brown leads an ART award with Wyoming Rare to examine the tailings and byproducts resulting from rare earth element extraction at Halleck Creek.



WATCH VIDEO >

- SER will host the second Critical Minerals Leadership Academy (CMLA) Sept. 15-23 in Laramie. Sponsored by the U.S. Department of Energy's National Energy Technology Laboratory (NETL), the CMLA assembles future leaders with diverse backgrounds to build a strong domestic critical minerals network and contribute to the buildout of critical minerals industries.
- Ph.D. Student **Ifeanyi Nwankwo** in the Energy and Petroleum Engineering Department, along with Associate Professor of Energy and Petroleum Engineering **Morteza Dejam**, published an article, "Insight into Mowry Shale of Rocky Mountain Basins, USA," in the journal *Marine Geoscience and Energy Resources*. The study compiles all existing information/data on the Mowry Shale of the Rocky Mountain Basins in the United States and can potentially serve as a reference for future research on its development.

The paper is the result of an SER-led initiative to consolidate multidisciplinary expertise at UW; all focused on unlocking the potential of Wyoming's Mowry Shale Petroleum System.

DOWNLOAD PAPER >



OUTREACH

UW, State of Wyoming Sign New Agreements with Entities in Taiwan, Japan

The University of Wyoming and the state of Wyoming have strengthened partnerships with several entities in Taiwan and Japan through formalized collaboration agreements.

As part of a follow-up trade mission led by **Gov. Mark Gordon**, a delegation of UW and state officials traveled to Taiwan and Japan to sign four separate memoranda of understanding (MOU) with National Central University, the National Atomic Research Institute, Industrial Technology Research Institute and Japan Coal Frontier Organization. The delegation included SER Acting Executive Director **Scott Quillinan**.



UW and Wyoming delegation at Taiwan's National Central University

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School of Energy Resources 20th Anniversary Celebration

Since its inception in 2006, the School of Energy Resources has served as a cornerstone for academic excellence and industry collaboration. Marking 20 years of dedication to Wyoming, we take pride in two decades of advancing groundbreaking energy research, cultivating vital partnerships, and delivering solutions that benefit the state's vital energy sector and economy.

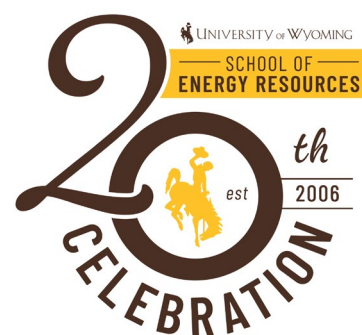
Join us for a six-week celebration honoring 20 years of energy leadership at the University of Wyoming. The School of Energy Resources invites students, faculty, alumni, and community partners to a robust series of anniversary events running throughout the fall.

Beginning with a lively lineup of events around Energy Day, this celebration highlights the campus-wide partnerships and research driving Wyoming forward.

The series concludes with the marquee Wyoming's Energy Future Symposium and a special Distinguished Speaker address by former Governor Dave Freudenthal. Attendees will also have the opportunity to see the expansive growth of energy research across campus through guided facility and lab tours.

Throughout the six weeks, alongside our regularly scheduled events, attendees can look forward to trivia, prizes, and numerous opportunities to engage with SER.

Mark your calendars and celebrate this 20-year milestone with us!

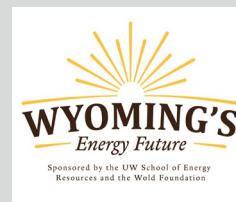
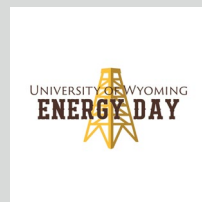


Outreach Highlights

- Please stay up to date on our upcoming events by checking the [EVENTS CALENDAR >](#)



Upcoming Fall Events:



Looking for ways to stay connected to SER?

Contact SER Director of Outreach Christine Reed at christine.reed@uwyo.edu

PHILANTHROPIC SUPPORT

New Charitable Gift for Student Support Enhances UW School of Energy Resources

The University of Wyoming School of Energy Resources is the recipient of a key gift dedicated to support student success in educational or enrichment opportunities inside and outside the classroom.

The newly established **J. Todd and Morgan Creeger Enrichment Fund** in the School of Energy Resources will support student scholarships and hands-on learning experiences, including research opportunities, conference participation, study abroad, and conference-related expenses.

SER offers a multidisciplinary academic program designed to bridge the gap between technical expertise and industry leadership. By integrating energy, business, law, and policy, SER prepares students to navigate the complexities of modern resource management. Key offerings include a B.S. in Energy Resource Management, with specialized concentrations in Professional Land Management and Energy and Environmental Systems, alongside targeted certificates in emerging fields such as Nuclear Energy Science and Subsurface Energy. Through a strategic partnership with the UW College of Law, SER also provides an accelerated 3+3 pathway, streamlining the transition from undergraduate study to legal practice.

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Todd and Morgan Creeger

Donor Spotlight: Rocky Mountain Power Foundation

The Rocky Mountain Power Foundation has once again demonstrated its dedicated support for the University of Wyoming with a \$50,000 gift, allocating \$20,000 directly to SER.

This contribution will support SER's Wind Energy Research Center, Nuclear Energy Research Center, Center for Energy Regulation and Policy Analysis, and academic outreach initiatives. Past foundation investments have been instrumental in building capacity across these key programs, and this latest gift ensures SER continues to drive energy innovation, policy analysis, and workforce development across the region.



Angela Ver Ploeg

Senior Director of Corporate Engagement, UW Foundation
Office of Industry and Strategic Partnerships
307-766-1939
angela.verploeg@uwyo.edu

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CONTACT THE UW FOUNDATION



Teddi Freedman

Director of Development, UW Foundation
307-766-6300
teddi.freedman@uwyo.edu



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