



WIND Advisory Committee Meeting Booklet

April 8th, 2025



The Wyoming Institute for Disabilities (WIND) assists and supports individuals with developmental and other disabilities, their families, and their networks by promoting full community inclusion, independence, cultural competence and social participation.

Our work is guided by values of service, dignity, collaboration, and innovation.



UNIVERSITY
OF WYOMING

College of Health Sciences
Wyoming Institute
for Disabilities

WIND Advisory Committee and Consumer Advisory Council Collaborative Function

- 1 Connect WIND to key individuals in the university and in the state who can assist in carrying out WIND's education, research, and service missions;
- 2 Help WIND expand its resource base;
- 3 Increase WIND's visibility within the university and within the state to assist WIND in becoming more integrated in both;
- 4 Advise WIND on overall annual program goals; and
- 5 Increase disability awareness on campus and throughout the state.

Background

The Wyoming Institute for Disabilities is a University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities and an academic unit in the College of Health Sciences, University of Wyoming. Established in 1994, the Wyoming Institute for Disabilities demonstrates excellence in providing interdisciplinary, pre-service education, continuing education, community training, technical assistance, and services as they relate to individuals with developmental and other disabilities.

Mission

The Wyoming Institute for Disabilities (WIND) assists and supports individuals with developmental and other disabilities, their families, and their networks by promoting full community inclusion, independence, cultural competence and social participation.

Our work is guided by values of service, dignity, collaboration, and innovation.

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Meeting Details

The WIND Consumer Advisory Council meeting and the WIND Advisory Committee Meeting will be held in person on April 8, 2025, at the Marian H. Rochelle Gateway Center Salon A, located at 222 S. 22nd St. in Laramie (located on the corner of 22nd and Grand).



9:30 a.m. - 12:00p.m. - Consumer Advisory Council Meeting



12:00 p.m. - 1:00p.m. - Lunch with Consumer Advisory Council and WIND staff



1:00 p.m. - 3:30 p.m. - WIND Advisory Committee Meeting



Consumer Advisory Council Meeting
To join remotely, scan the QR code or
visit the following link:
<https://uwyo.zoom.us/j/97245427165>



WIND Advisory Committee Meeting
To join remotely, scan the QR code or
visit the following link:
<https://uwyo.zoom.us/j/92915573501>

WIND Consumer Advisory Council Meeting Agenda

April 8, 2025

Marian H. Rochelle Gateway Center,
Salon A

- 9:00 p.m. Coffee and pastries available
- 9:30 a.m. Sandy Thiel, WIND CAC Chairperson
- Welcome and Introductions
 - Roll Call of CAC Members
 - Approval of the meeting agenda
 - Approval of October 8, 2024 meeting minutes
 - Introduction of new members
- 9:45 a.m. Michelle Jarman, Ph.D., WIND Executive Director
- Wyoming Institute for Disabilities update
- 10:00 a.m. Eric Moody, Ph.D., WIND Associate Director
- Robert's Rules of Order presentation
- 10:15 p.m. Sandy Thiel
- Bylaws review process
- Sandy Hubert, CAC Coordinator
- CAC secretary position information
- Sandy Thiel, Five-Year Plan Update
- Leo Levensgood: Transportation
 - Sandy Thiel: Marriage Equality Act update
- CAC Project Discussion
- 11:00 p.m. CAC Meeting with Scott Turpen, Ph.D., Interim Provost and Patrick Hardigan Ph.D., Dean of the College of Health Sciences
- 12:00 p.m. Adjourn and break for lunch with the WIND Advisory Committee
- 1:00 p.m. WIND CAC will join the meeting with the WIND Advisory Committee

Next meeting Tuesday, October 7, 2025, UW Conference Center, Laramie

WIND Advisory Committee Meeting Agenda

April 8, 2025

Marian H. Rochelle Gateway Center,
Salon A

- 12:00 p.m. Lunch with WIND Consumer Advisory Council and WIND staff
- 1:00 p.m. Convene meeting, Patrick Hardigan, Dean, College of Health Sciences
- Welcome
 - Introductions, all
 - Approval of agenda
 - Approval of October 2024 meeting notes
- 1:20 p.m. Meeting orientation and booklet review, Michelle Jarman
- 1:30 p.m. WIND Consumer Advisory Council Updates, Sandy Thiel, Chair
- 1:40 p.m. College of Health Sciences updates, Dean Hardigan
- 1:50 p.m. WIND Highlights
- WIND Updates, Michelle Jarman
 - 5-Year Plan Timeline, Eric Moody
 - FASI Report, Eric Moody
 - ECHO Superhub: 10 Years, Canyon Hardesty
- 2:20 p.m. Brief Break
- 2:30 p.m. Small Group Discussion: Statewide and Community Concerns
- Prompts based on shared concerns
 - Action items
 - Opportunities/ Important questions for communities
- 3:10 p.m. Agency and member updates, all
- 3:30 p.m. Adjourn

Next meeting Tuesday, October 7, 2025, UW Conference Center, Laramie

Advisory Committee Meeting Notes

October 8, 2024

UW Conference Center,
Salon C, Laramie, WY

In attendance, members:

- Christina McDonald
- Kayla Green (for Shannon Buller)
- Amy Burns
- Nicky Harper
- Sand Thiel
- Sammy Andrew
- Leo Levensgood
- Michelle Hillaire
- Chele Porter
- Tiffany Hunt
- Abe Lentner
- Aleyta Zimmerman
- Josh Bellamy
- Valerie Thompson-Ebanks
- Kayc DeMaranville
- Jeff Gardner (Online)

In attendance, WIND:

- Sandy Hubert
- Amy Rieser
- Michelle Jarman
- Canyon Hardesty
- Eric Moody
- Emily Kirsch
- Jim Warne, guest

Meeting called to order at 1:02 by Michelle Hilaire, CHS Interim Dean. April 2024 agenda approved, Sandy Thiel motioned, Abe Lentner seconded, no opposition. April 2024 meeting minutes approved: Chele Porter motioned, Abe Lentner seconded, no opposition.

Introductions and Logistics, Michelle Jarman

- Introductions from all members present
- Michelle Jarman provided an overview of the booklet, updated contact information for each member, abstract of 5-year plan, introduction of new staff

Overview of conversation that Jim Warne and Melvin Arthur had with the WIND team leads in the morning

Amy Rieser summarized earlier discussion of WIND collaborative efforts with Wind River Cares. Melvin Arthur, who is Northern Arapaho, does work with education excellence in the Wind River Cares healthcare system. Amy has been working closely with Mel and others to open opportunities over the past few years. Recently, the Eastern Shoshoni purchased the hospital in Riverton as a community healthcare setting. Mel discussed how WIND could supplement or complement current work. It will be important to bring

WIND staff to the reservation, show up consistently and be there to build relationships. Prioritize 3-4 programs WIND could bring instead of everything. We have been proving that we are building our cultural competency, especially by not coming to “fix” anything, and stressing that we are not there in a hierarchical way. We have developed reciprocal relationships and now can be invited into those conversations that we’ve been wanting to have. Actual next steps would be an opportunity to go, adjust language, bring selected programs to collaboratively discuss what might work, what doesn’t work, and how to move beyond mental block of “that’s not for me.”

Introduction From Jim Warne and Overview of His Work

Jim Warne presented keynote for WIND 30th Anniversary the evening before this meeting. Warne has been at San Diego State for 22 years. Through his home university and the UCEDD at the University of South Dakota, he established the Oyate Circle. As he has worked more with the UCEDD network, he has also worked closely with the Arizona Sonoran Center for Disabilities. Warne has a background in the NFL, Hollywood (acting and now producing films), and academia. He highlighted the overlap of native culture and disability culture: both have long been misidentified, marginalized, and forced to rely on federal intervention for self-determination. In public addresses, he explains the native/disability linkages in terms of the root cause of disability, asking why Indian people have higher rates of disability. Warne came to this work because of his family, his dad specifically, and he emphasized the importance of vocational rehab because it empowers individuals and provides opportunity. In native languages, the word “disability” doesn’t exist, so how do we communicate that concept to a culture that doesn’t recognize it? That’s why Jim’s programs are called “Oyate Circle,” “Finds Their Way,” or “Indigenous Empowerment.” They don’t focus on disability until later in the conversation, which empowers individuals to accept (or engage with) their labels, understand the opportunities available to them, and make use of services like Vocational Rehab. More training is needed, especially business training and ensuring native students are receiving education while addressing the legacy and trauma of boarding schools. Jim has visited over 53 tribal vocational rehabilitation programs. Finally, Warne expressed his appreciation of the opportunity to visit Wyoming, and hopes to work with Mel and WIND more, and emphasized that the work WIND does is important because it allows people to succeed.

Michelle Hilarie Provided College of Health Sciences Update

Provost Kevin Carman has stepped down. Dr. Todd Guth is the new WWAMI Director. College is still searching for PA Program Director.

Enrollment: down 120 graduate students this year. From 2022-2024, we are down 420 students, 2.5% decrease every year, and looking at potentially 11% decrease at universities, and 38% decrease at community colleges. By contrast, graduate student enrollment has increased by 23 students.

WIND Positions: Michelle Jarman is in negotiations and will be named as Executive Director. There will be CHS support of Associate Directors for admin duties, and they have secured tenure track position going forward -- college is funding it this year, university will fund it going forward. The university does not realize everything WIND does. Everything is recognized in the state, across nation, but not at the university. It will be Michelle Hilarie's goal and next Dean's goal to improve recognition of WIND.

College Dean position: have had 8 interviews via Zoom, projection is for a new dean as early as January.

Sandy Theil CAC Meeting Update

CAC is in the process of revising bylaws to have a written track record, looking at having a formal secretary position-voting on that next meeting. A goal in the 5-year plan is transportation. The success of Leo Levensgood's Alliance Disability Transport Services in Cheyenne is showing there is a need. The CAC wants to do whatever is necessary to help it grow statewide. Extensive discussions around WIND and the reorganization and some of the things that need to happen due to things that have happened this year. CAC was awarded Bright Star Award from the WY Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities. They also received national award which will be accepted by Sandy Thiel in DC at AUCD conference in November. In addition, they will be celebrating Sandy Root-Elledge getting lifetime achievement award at AUCD.

Update from Leo Levensgood on rides in Cheyenne

We gave our first ride on July 17. In July, we gave 52 rides, in August, 220, and September, 340. As of this morning, we had 145 riders, 699 rides, and 217 cancelations.

WIND Staff/Faculty Updates

Michelle will be moving forward assuming role of Executive Director. Canyon was promoted to Senior Lecturer. Sandy Root-Elledge was granted Emeritus status at the university along with her other achievements.

Overall, WIND remains understaffed, especially the business manager position. For nearly

a year, the front office has been understaffed, which has caused pressure on the admin team and staff, so the focus is really on stabilizing the organization. We want to provide administrative support so we can stop pulling people from what they should be doing.

Annual Report Update

Funding

- 41 active projects (17% decrease year over year)
- 82% focused on capacity building. Reached 16,420 individuals served (12% increase year over year). Relatively consistent with what we have been accomplishing in recent years.
- Funding is at \$2.26 million, 47% drop from last year. Funding breakdown is 30% federal, 45% state, 25% other. Other includes contracts from foundations, fee for service, university support, donations, etc.

Project/Goal Updates

- **Goal 1: URLEND:** Canyon leading, 45 trainees in last round
- **Goal 2: Disability Studies:** Michelle leading, last year 17 graduates, 202 cumulative graduates since 2008. 15% drop from last year, but active student numbers remain consistent. 40% of students have a disability or a family member with a disability.
- **Goal 3: Community Education and Training:** Canyon leads, have had 155 separate trainings, 549 participants across the trainings, with over 1400 duplicate participants showing that people come back. Evaluations indicate knowledge increase.
- **Goal 4: Technical Assistance and Training:** Superhub trainings have conducted two partner launch trainings, 435 hours of TA provided (WyTN, WATR, supporting Leo, case managers and HCBS). Significant (77%) decrease mostly due to staffing loss.
- **Research and Evaluation:** Eric leads, current projects include FASI project, Title X, ASD screening/diagnosis, ESRN, publications, 5-year needs assessment, TAPDINTO STEM
- **Info Dissemination:** New coordinator-Rebecca Austin. 88% web satisfaction, 51 products, 150,847 recipients (35% drop YOY)
- **Business Operations:** Abe developed good framework, working on getting team back into place. Manager and admin assistant positions vacant.

Overall

Significant drops in funding but more flexibility since former Dean is gone; focusing on rebuilding, new collaborations, additional funding sources, pursuing new projects like Think College, TAPDINTOSTEM.

Updates from Advisory Board Member

No updates from Leo, Sammy, Julie, Sandy Theil, Valerie, Josh, and Abe.

Nicky H: Looking to continue collaboration in indigenous community, awarded \$10-million Innovation Fund grant over 5-year period. Will be working with select school districts, independent living centers to increase mental health services for our youth, as well as independent living services and exposure to employment. We already have a school district on the western side of the state, and hoping to have Albany County School District join us for this second year of the award. We purchased a virtual reality program to try different jobs, over 100 students went through the virtual reality experience at the Casper transition fair, tribal VR participated in training in Riverton.

Amy Burns: Next friendships and dating tentative dates in mid-February via Zoom. The 7th annual peer advocacy conference was in Casper; it was first live conference and 50 people attended. All presenters had lived experience with disability, everyone except keynote was from WY (keynote from MT). Independent living movement overall-concern is that the movement is getting a bit stagnant, bit of an inner crisis.

Kayla Green: Thanks to everyone who attended the DD conference and supported in various ways; upcoming virtual conference meeting will be November 11, 2024. Council is prepping for upcoming legislative session in January; they will have bill tracker on their website. 5-year plan starts October 2026, so they are in planning stages right now. Survey available on website. National disability employment awareness month is this month.

Christina McDonnel: Psychology is happy to support any of the initiatives discussed. Psych Center is always looking to expand clinical services, On the research side, she has lots of pilot data to discuss and possibly partner with regarding disability support services, reproductive health, pregnancy related topics for autistic adults, trauma focused interventions for autistic youth and adults. There are lots of ways to collaborate.

Kayc DeMaranville: ARK received ARPA money, and now they are almost fully staffed. Three years ago, got ARPA money to raise staff wages; rate increase isn't permanent, but the wages will be cut for providers unless something changes. This information isn't public possibly until cut happens or until governor's budget is released Jan 1st. She just returned from 6-state summit, all other states have supported increase to become permanent. CO just did a 50% increase in rates. Waiting list is being funded, much shorter

14-16 months compared to 3-5 years, but they are coming off list at very low amounts, not a lot of services. She is grateful for waiting list support but there are continued problems down the line and WY seems to be behind. Cost study went out to providers, but steering committee is going to recommend to not fund the cost study. 43% response rate from people getting services, only 6% of response from providers. At this point, it feels like church mice begging for money. We can no longer ask DSPs to live below the poverty level. Will be reaching out to people across the state to assist in heavy lifting to educate the appropriations committee, labor committee, and other representatives.

Tiffany Hunt: Special Education is going to have 5 faculty, 71 students in undergrad program, about 20 new grad students joined program. The Prepare Program is doing well and has 6 students.

Chele: Comment regarding student enrollment rates discussed by Michelle Hilaire—Chele knows a student with a disability who is not getting good advising or good support. The college might need to look into the support the students get when they get to the university to help enrollment rates.

Jeff Gardner (attending online): Comment regarding the cost study and rate rebasing that Kayc discussed: Sandy Root-Elledge and Jeff voted against suspending the cost study. Wyoming Community Service Providers (WCSP) had their 5th annual DSP awards banquet with good turnout.

Michelle J: Let us know how WIND and everyone can support educational work to support DSPs; it affects all of us.

Julie-motion to adjourn, Chele, second, all in favor.

Meeting adjourned at 3:13 pm.

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Wyoming Institute for Disabilities

Five Year Plan, 2022-2027

Abstract

The Wyoming Institute for Disabilities at the University of Wyoming will improve the education, early intervention, health and wellness, employment, and assistive technology outcomes of individuals with developmental disabilities and their families throughout the five-year project period, 2022-27. Our mission is to assist individuals with developmental and other disabilities and their families by promoting and supporting full community inclusion, community membership, independence, productivity, and social participation.

Project goals include

- 1) providing interdisciplinary, family curriculum in leadership;
- 2) educating undergraduate and graduate students in disability studies;
- 3) providing training to professionals and communities;
- 4) providing best-practices-based services;
- 5) conducting basic and applied research, and evaluation and/or public policy analysis;
- 6) disseminating knowledge-based and accessible information; and
- 7) ensuring our business practices support cultural competence and inclusion.

The anticipated outcomes related to the goals include increasing the percentage of URLEND and Disability Studies students from underrepresented populations, as well as enhancing the knowledge, attitudes, and skills of undergraduate, graduate, and post-graduate students. Additionally, the program aims to expand faculty engagement in the disability studies academic program and increase collaborations within Wyoming, other states, and globally. Another key outcome is improving the knowledge, skills, and use of best practices among professionals while fostering greater diversity among trainees. Efforts will also focus on strengthening telehealth capacity in Wyoming and expanding the number of topics for which technical assistance is provided. Furthermore, the program seeks to boost research proposals, funding awards, and the dissemination of findings, as well as deepen the engagement of the Consumer Advisory Council in program development, implementation, and evaluation. Increasing the number of accessible products produced and disseminated is also a priority, along with enhancing procurement opportunities and dollars awarded to contractors from underserved populations.

New WIND Staff



Chianne Behrend **Administrative Associate**

Chianne Behrend is the Administrative Associate for WIND. Chianne received an AAS in Business Management at Kirkwood Community College in Cedar Rapids, Iowa in 2021. She hopes to work towards her Bachelor of Business Administration soon. Chianne is originally from Iowa and has recently moved to the area to be closer to relatives. In her free time she enjoys reading, baking, dancing, playing with her cat, and camping in the mountains with family.

Kristen Glennie, M.S. **Project Coordinator, Senior**

Kristen is a western transplant, though sources claim she's been "Howdy"-ing at folks since the early 2000's. Originally from Maine, Kristen graduated from Clark University in 2018, with a B.A in Biology and Public Health. She entered the workforce in Boston, MA as a Research Associate at a small biotech company. Wanting to pivot her career towards public health, Kristen spent a year in Cheyenne as an AmeriCorps VISTA with the Wyoming Department of Health's Aging Division. In this role, she crisscrossed Wyoming several times, working on projects to develop and expand home modification services and engaging with senior center directors to address social isolation and depression. In 2024 she completed her master's degree in health and exercise science at Colorado State University, where her research focused on neurodegeneration and brain aging.



Lisa Lehman **Community Outreach Coordinator**

Prior to her work at WIND, Lisa has provided case management services to clients with intellectual disabilities and acquired brain injuries through the Wyoming Department of Health's Medicaid Waiver programs since 2008. Through this role, she has worked closely with multiple companies that serve clients with intellectual disabilities throughout Laramie. She attended the University of Wyoming to obtain her bachelor's in social work. She enjoys raising animals including Mini Australian Shepherds, Highland cattle and Baskir Curly Horses, and fainting goats.



Kathleen Madere, M.S. Administrative Associate

Kathy Madere is an Administrative Associate for WIND. Raising seven kids was her first big achievement... while at the same time founding a library in Texas. Later in life she returned to school to pursue her degrees – a bachelor's degree, (English/ Psych/Sociology) from Virginia Commonwealth University and a master's degree of Library Science from the University of North Texas. Because of Kathy's library experience, she is proficient at and enthusiastic about sharing information and resources. Although she was born and raised in Texas, Kathy has lived in several states before settling in Wyoming. A couple of her kids

are on the Autism spectrum, so she is dedicated to helping students who need assistance to be successful. She is an aficionado of British literature and movies, and she enjoys solving puzzles while relaxing in her front yard on the Laramie River.

Graduate Assistants & Practicum Students

Destiny Reed

Destiny is a MSW Practicum student working with us here at WIND primarily on the Inclusive Post Secondary Program and will continue until May of 2025. She recently received her B.S. in Psychology from the University of Wyoming in May of 2024 and plans to graduate with her Master of Social Work from the University of Wyoming in May of 2026. Destiny has worked with the disability population for nearly five years now and has had such phenomenal experiences that disabilities has become one of her social work interests. Outside of practicum, Destiny can be found enjoying time outdoors whether it's hiking with her dog or kayaking, or she can be found curled up inside with a good book or a crochet project.



Chrislyn Cool

Chrislyn is a graduate student in Mental Health Counseling and a graduate assistant at the Wyoming Institute for Disabilities (WIND). As part of WIND, she works on the PATHS (Public Access Telehealth Spaces) initiative, which aims to improve healthcare accessibility across Wyoming by expanding HIPAA-secure telehealth options in rural communities. Her academic and professional interests include culturally responsive counseling and increasing access to mental health services for underrepresented and underserved populations. With a passion for integrating expressive arts and community-centered approaches into counseling, Chrislyn works to spread

knowledge, love, and growth with any and all.



Kaitlyn Breitenfeldt (Also a LEND Trainee)

Kate Breitenfeldt is pursuing a doctoral degree in clinical psychology at the University of Wyoming, specializing in improving mental health care for autistic individuals across the lifespan. As a researcher with the Wyoming Institute for Disabilities (WIND), she has contributed to projects that organize and synthesize disability-related data in Wyoming to support grant initiatives and evaluate disability measures. She is involved in planning the ECHO for Families series, which connects families of children with developmental disabilities, autism, or special healthcare needs to professional support, evidence-based strategies, and peer networks. Within the ECHO for Families series, Kate has also presented on topics related to mental health, such as anxiety, emotion regulation, and suicide prevention. Additionally, as a Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental and Related Disabilities (LEND) trainee, she is strengthening her expertise in interdisciplinary collaboration, culturally responsive care, and disability advocacy—preparing her to be a more effective clinician, researcher, and mentor in the field.

LEND Trainees

Brynn Zwetzig

My name is Brynn Zwetzig, and I am a first-year graduate student in speech-language pathology at the University of Wyoming. Being a part of LEND has been an incredible experience, allowing me to engage in insightful seminars, learn from self-advocates and parents, and gain hands-on clinical experience at Primary Children's Hospital in Salt Lake City, Utah. Through LEND, I have developed a deep appreciation for interprofessional collaboration that is inclusive of family values and the importance of advocating for individuals with disabilities. My clinical experience at UDAC has reinforced my confidence in carrying over these skills, ensuring that I provide comprehensive and inclusive care. Following graduation in May of 2026, I plan to open my own private clinic while continuing to operate my equine-assisted therapy program as an additional opportunity for individuals seeking alternative therapeutic options. The knowledge and perspectives I have gained through LEND will be invaluable in shaping a client-centered, collaborative, and advocacy-driven practice.





Theresa Andrzejewski

My name is Theresa, and I am a 5th year clinical psychology PhD student in UW's psychology department studying how to better understand and support experiences of adversity, resilience, and trauma among Autistic individuals. I am in my last semester of study at UW, but I will be moving to Salt Lake City over the summer to complete my APA-required clinical internship at Primary Children's Hospital next year before graduating in May 2026. This internship site will be a wonderful way to circle back to some of my experiences as a Utah Regional LEND trainee - I was encouraged to apply to Primary Children's Hospital because one of my friends from the LEND Autism Enhanced (AE) track

matched there for her internship last year! I also completed some clinical rotations there as a LEND trainee in 2023, so I am very excited that I get to return to Salt Lake City and can hopefully reconnect with some familiar faces from LEND. The clinical trip to Salt Lake City in 2023 and the AE track clinical trip to Logan in 2024 were some of my favorite parts of the LEND experience because they were so hands-on and I got a chance to finally connect with other trainees in-person. Since I will be at Primary Children's for the next year, I am hoping I can build on my prior connections and hopefully stay involved in disability advocacy and leadership while I complete my clinical internship.

Disability Studies Minor Students

Katie Harmon

My name is Katie Harmon, and I am a lifelong resident of Laramie and recent UW graduate. I majored in History and had the wonderful opportunity to pursue a minor in Disability Studies. My WIND classes were some of my very favorites. I am the parent of a disabled child, and my minor studies taught me to view disability as desirable and powerful rather than unfortunate or tragic; that knowledge has forever changed my parenting for the better. In my last semester, I was privileged to gain invaluable real-world experience with emotional and psychiatric disabilities via a practicum placement at a local school, and loved every minute of it. I am now applying to UW's History MA program, where I plan to study how attitudes and understandings of disability have evolved over time, specifically within religious communities. I am so grateful for all I learned and the wonderful experiences I had during my time in the WIND program!





Heather Christensen

My name is Heather Christensen, and I am graduating May of 2025 with my Bachelor's in Speech, Language, and Hearing Sciences with minors in Spanish, Psychology, Disability Studies, and a Certificate in American Sign Language. This Fall I will be starting my Master's in Speech-Language Pathology at the University of Wyoming. I have had many wonderful experiences not only in my Disability Studies classes, but in my practicum placement at the Cooper Center for Creative Arts. Learning about the history of disability was a pivotal moment in my education as I had little to no knowledge of this

field prior. Disability Studies encourage us to question our privilege, what unintentional biases we may have, and how we can help foster more inclusive environments for all. At the Cooper Center, they provide education opportunities for adults with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities through traditional and art centered curriculum. Working with these individuals solidified my belief that given access and proper accommodations, individuals with disabilities can succeed in post-secondary education. In my future clinical placements, I will be able to support and advocate for my clients in all stages of life, according to their goals, instead of focusing on what others may want for them.

Jack O'Neil

My name is Jack O'Neil, I am a senior, graduating with a degree in journalism a minor in disability studies and as a member of the honors college. I came to Wyoming to swim on the Division I swim team and am happy to say I made it through four incredible years, and was elected captain my last two years. In addition to NCAA swimming, I have been on the USA swimming national team for the last 5 years and have competed across the world, including the 2024 Paralympics in Paris! The disability studies program has been incredible and I loved researching the lack of representation of disabled people in media. It was an incredible project that highlighted biases and where I predicted changes in response to an increase in representation. As a journalism major and person with a disability, I take this very seriously and hope to inspire change. I hope to travel the world as I broadcast sports and make people at home feel connected to the event they're watching. While I will also have the opportunity to show society a working person with a disability. I am excited for the future ahead and am so grateful for the knowledge and support I received in WIND!



Former WIND Executive Director and CAC honored with Prestigious Awards at AUCD Conference



WIND is proud to congratulate Sandra-Root Elledge, the former Executive Director for WIND, on being honored with the Lifetime Achievement Award for dedicating over 20 years of her career serving people with disabilities and their families. AUCD's highest award was given to Root-Elledge for her leadership and her "unwavering commitment to improving the lives of individuals with disabilities." Serving multiple roles throughout her career between 2004-2016, Root-Elledge served as WIND's Executive Director from 2016-2023. During this time, she also received regional, national, and international recognition for her work and leadership, creating a lasting impact in the field of developmental disabilities today. In December, 2024, Sandy Root-Elledge stepped in as the AUCD Interim Director to guide the National Organization's transition to new leadership.

WIND's very own CAC was also recognized at the AUCD conference with the Gordon Richins Award for Leadership and Advocacy. Through this award, AUCD recognizes individuals or groups for their exemplary leadership and advocacy, fostering inclusion and leadership opportunities for people with disabilities and their families within the AUCD Network and beyond. Upon receiving this honor, the Council Chair, Sandra Thiel, expressed deep gratitude on behalf of the entire CAC, stating, "I humbly accept this recognition with great gratitude. The advocacy that generated our nomination was for the instrumental role the Consumer Advisory Council played in amplifying the damage that was being done to the Wyoming Institute for Disabilities from within the institution." We appreciate the tremendous efforts of our Consumer Advisory Council and congratulate all of the council members on this significant honor.



WIND Project Directory

Addressing Bias in Gold-Standard Autism Assessments to Improve the Early Identification of Young Black and Latinx Children

Eric Moody, Brian Barger (GSU)

With the help and support of NIH and GSU, this initiative aims to tackle bias in gold-standard autism assessments. With a dedicated focus on improving early identification for young Black and Latinx children, the project strives to pave the way for more accurate, inclusive diagnostic practices, ensuring every child receives timely and equitable support on their developmental journey.

Disability Studies Program

Michelle Jarman, Vik Peer, and Jess Cowing (Part-Time Distance Instructors)

Disability studies is a diverse interdisciplinary field that investigates the nature, meanings, and consequences of disability from interrelated social, historical, cultural, and political perspectives. The undergraduate minor in disability studies examines disability issues from multiple theoretical frameworks. WIND is also developing a proposal for a graduate minor and online certificate programs in disability studies.

Early Childhood Vision Screening

Canyon Hardesty, Amy Rieser, Allyson Lehr

The Early Childhood Vision Screening is an ongoing collaboration with the Wyoming Department of Education to provide online training and virtual content support to early care providers. Content has been developed in collaboration with Wyoming pediatric providers. Core topics include introduction to screening, communication with families, recommended tools for young children, automatic referrals, and comprehensive resources.

Elevating Voices of Individuals with IDD in Research

Eric Moody, Tai Baker, Canyon Hardesty, Claire Barrile, Liberty Hicks

This PCORI funded project is designed to improve and address barriers for meaningful engagement, inclusion, and participation of individuals with disabilities in PCOR/CER. The project will convene key stakeholders including individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) and their families to promote discussion of the barriers and facilitators to conducting research in rural Wyoming as well as research topics, questions and engagement plans for patient centered outcomes research (PCOR) / comparative effectiveness research (CER). Using a process called a Stake Analysis, we interviewed a wide range of individuals who have a variety of stakes in supporting inclusive IDD research. This will lead to a research agenda to guide the research activities of the ESRN for the future.

Equality State Research Network (ESRN)

Eric Moody, Canyon Hardesty, Tai Baker, Amy Rieser, Liberty Hicks

The Equality State Research Network (ESRN) is a statewide network committed to engaging in community-based research to improve the overall health of Wyoming residents. The ESRN incorporates community engagement, quality improvement, and scientific inquiry.

Friendships and Dating

Canyon Hardesty, Amy Rieser, Emily Kirsch

WIND's Sexual and Reproductive Health Training for Individuals with Disabilities is designed to decrease rates of pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections (STI), and interpersonal relationship violence and measure changes in relationships and social networks among individuals with disabilities.

Functional Assessment of Standardized Items (FASI)

Eric Moody, Dawn Rudolph

The Wyoming Department of Health (WDH), Division of Healthcare Financing (DHCF), Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) Agency supports over 2,500 participants through three (3) HCBS Waivers. The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) requires the Agency to conduct initial and annual evaluations of all HCBS waiver participants to determine if individuals require institutional level of care. WIND is exploring the option of using the Functional Assessment of Standardized Items (FASI), identified by WDH as an assessment tool that may meet its primary needs in determining institutional level of care and resource allocation for HCBS waiver participants and NCF Residents.

iCan Connect

Terri Wofford

Wyoming's iCanConnect program provides communications technology free of charge to income eligible people of all ages who have combined vision and hearing loss. This program will distribute communications equipment to qualified individuals and provide equipment installation, training, and support to help recipients make the most of this technology.

Implementing Community Based Telehealth Infrastructure to Expand Healthcare to Vulnerable Populations

Canyon Hardesty, Tai Baker, Kristen Glennie

The project supports the establishment of eight (8) community telehealth access sites located at public libraries, UW extension offices, and a local detention center. The equipment purchased for this project will become the property of the community entity (e.g. library, extension office, detention center) where it is installed. Identified sites include three public libraries (Natrona, Park, Sheridan counties), four UW extension offices (Northeast, Southeast, Northwest, Southwest regions) and one detention center (Sweetwater County).

Improving Title X Services for People with Disabilities in Rural Communities

Eric Moody, Tai Baker, Canyon Hardesty

Improving Title X Services for People with Disabilities in Rural Communities is possible with the generous support of INBRE and UNLV. This initiative sets its sights on enhancing Title X services tailored specifically for individuals with disabilities residing in rural communities. With a commitment to inclusivity and accessibility, the project aims to forge pathways towards equitable healthcare access for all, bridging gaps and empowering marginalized populations.

Inventory of Client and Agency Planning (ICAP)

Dawn Rudolph, Lisa Lehman

The ICAP is a standardized measure used by the Wyoming Department of Health to assess adaptive functioning and behavior issues for eligibility in the Developmental Disabilities service system. The Developmental Disabilities Division contracts with WIND to conduct ICAP interviews throughout the state and is responsible for conducting initial, emergency, and continuing eligibility interviews.

Learn the Signs. Act Early -- Ambassador Project

Cari Glantz

The Act Early Ambassador project is designed to develop a network of state-level experts to improve early identification practices. Act Early Ambassadors serve as state liaisons to the “Learn the Signs. Act Early” initiative and work as community champions with programs that serve young children and their parents, such as Head Start and Early Head Start, WIC, home visiting, and others, and health care and childcare professionals to improve early identification of developmental delay and collaborate with state agencies and campaign partners to improve policy and programs for early identification.

Post-Secondary Program Planning - Connecting Pokes @ 7220

Canyon Hardesty, Michelle Jarman, Eric Moody, Stephanie Wodahl

The purpose of this project is to investigate the feasibility and develop an inclusive post-secondary program, in collaboration with post-secondary partners throughout Wyoming. Faculty and staff at Wyoming Institute for Disabilities (WIND) will lead the creation and facilitation of a statewide alliance that will guide the development of a program plan. The plan will be designed to meet the needs of students with ID, as well as be feasible within the institution(s) implementing this program. Planning support funding and collaboration comes from the North Dakota UCEDD.

Project SCOPE

Canyon Hardesty, Eric Moody, Tai Baker, Amy Rieser, Cari Glantz

Project SCOPE: Supporting Children of the Opioid Epidemic, aims to train providers nationwide in evidence-based practices for supporting children and families affected by opioid-related issues. WIND collaborates with the Nisonger Center at The Ohio State University and the University of Cincinnati Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities for this initiative. Collaborations continue with partners in Ohio and Kentucky.

Research and Evaluation

Eric Moody

At the Wyoming Institute for Disabilities, we are committed to the improvement of our programs through continuous evaluation as well as learning how to better improve the lives of those with disabilities through novel, empirical research. WIND's Research and Evaluation team examines important real-world issues through an interdisciplinary lens, combining applied psychological, statistical, educational, medical, and public health approaches to find solutions to these problems.

The Practical Impact of Inequitable Item Responding on the Diagnostic Accuracy of Screening Tools for Identifying Black and Hispanic Children with Autism

Brian Barger (GSU), Eric Moody

With the help and support of NIH and GSU, this project focuses on addressing disparities; this research endeavors to reshape diagnostic protocols for identifying autism in Black and Hispanic children.

TAPDINTO-STEM

Eric Moody, Canyon Hardesty, Stephanie Wodahl

The University of Wyoming, through WIND, has received a subaward from NAU via Auburn University, to provide support to STEM students at the University of Wyoming to include those students in data collection to expand efforts to widen pathways for students with disabilities to pursue education in STEM fields.

University of Wyoming ECHO

Canyon Hardesty, Eric Moody, Tai Baker, Cari Glantz, Emily Kirsch, Amy Rieser, Allyson Lehr, Brittany Brigham

UW ECHO networks are hub-and-spoke knowledge-sharing communities led by experienced teams using multi-point videoconferencing to conduct virtual sessions with stakeholders across the state. These virtual learning communities provide educators, service providers, case managers, administrators, families, and others access to expert advice from professionals throughout the state and country, building capacity in home communities to implement best practices and improve outcomes.

Utah Regional Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental and Other Disabilities (URLEND)

Canyon Hardesty

LEND is a nationally recognized group of trainees, gaining valuable experience in the disabilities field through participation in the program. URLEND at Wyoming Institute for Disabilities provides leadership and skill-building opportunities for Wyoming graduate- level pre-professionals and professionals. Each year, student and professional trainees from a variety of health-related disciplines participate in a training program to increase their knowledge and skills in providing services and support to children with neurodevelopmental disabilities and their families.

WIND Consumer Advisory Council

Sandy Hubert

Members of the WIND Consumer Advisory Council, over half of whom are individuals with a disability or family members, consult with the WIND Executive Director regarding the development of the UCEDD's five-year plan, reviews, and comments annually on WIND's progress in meeting the projected goals, and makes recommendations to the WIND Executive Director regarding proposed revisions to the five-year plan.

Wyoming Accessibility Center (WAC)

Canyon Hardesty, Terri Wofford

The Wyoming Accessibility Center (WAC) provides fee-for-services training, technical assistance, services, and assessments to improve the accessibility for individuals with disabilities.

Wyoming Accessible Education Materials (AEM) Clearinghouse

Canyon Hardesty, Shelby Kappler, Terri Wofford

The Wyoming AEM Clearinghouse works with school districts in Wyoming to provide accessible educational materials to students with print disabilities. We are a designated state-authorized user for a federally funded, national repository of accessible educational materials. The Wyoming AEM Clearinghouse can access the repository and provide the source files to districts.

Wyoming Assistive Technology Resources (WATR)

Terri Wofford, Gisele Knopf, Shelby Kappler, Krista Zwieg

Wyoming Assistive Technology Resources (WATR) is Wyoming's Assistive Technology Act program, established through the AT Act of 1998, as amended in 2004, to increase awareness and access to assistive technology. WATR provides assistive technology training and technical assistance, public awareness, device loans and device demonstrations.

Wyoming Family to Family Health Information Center (WY F2F HIC)

Canyon Hardesty, Eric Moody, Cari Glantz, Allyson Lehr

WY F2F HIC helps to provide access to evidence-based health information, support, and training for families of children and youth with special healthcare needs. Through partnerships between families and professionals, it empowers them to make informed health decisions, improving their quality of life and satisfaction with care.

Wyoming Developmental Disabilities Network

Michelle Jarman

The Governor's Planning Council on Developmental Disabilities, Protection & Advocacy System, Inc., and the Wyoming Institute for Disabilities (WIND) are sister organizations authorized under the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act. The Administration on Developmental Disabilities/Administration on Children and Families provides funding to each of these organizations. In Wyoming, the three agencies work together to provide a comprehensive array of support to people with developmental disabilities, family members, providers, and state agencies. Directors of the three agencies meet quarterly or more to identify and address state priorities, emerging needs, and immediate issues.

Wyoming Technology Access Program (WYTAP)

Terri Wofford, Gisele Knopf

WYTAP is a partnership among Wyoming Assistive Technology Resources (WATR), Wyoming Independent Living, Inc. (WIL), and First Interstate Bank of Laramie to provide a financial loan program for individuals to purchase assistive technology devices and services. WYTAP buys down the interest rate to lower than the current prime rate.

Wyoming Telehealth Network (WyTN)

Canyon Hardesty, Tai Baker, Kristen Glennie, Brittany Brigham

The Wyoming Telehealth Network supports healthcare entities, providers, and specialists to increase access to care and improve health outcomes for Wyoming residents, through professional development, collaboration, and leveraging of telecommunications technology.