

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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Whitney Benefits Gift Creates UW Agriculture Degree Opportunity at Sheridan College

SHERIDAN, Wyo.- A \$1.25 million gift from Whitney Benefits Inc. to Sheridan College will enable the University of Wyoming to strengthen the agriculture curriculum at SC. UW's College of Agriculture will partner with SC to develop a horticulture option to the B.S. degree in agroecology now offered by the university.

The state of Wyoming will match Whitney's gift to create the E.A. Whitney Professorship in Agriculture. The Whitney Endowed Professor will implement at Sheridan College an enhanced degree completion program within UW's agroecology curriculum and will teach selected courses each semester. The agroecology program is shared between the College of Agriculture's Department of Plant Sciences and the Department of Renewable Resources. Graduates in the program have had 100-percent placement.

An on-site professor both teaching and advising will better meet the needs of students wishing to pursue the bachelor's degree, says Frank Galey, dean of the UW College of Agriculture.

"This agreement will strengthen our long-time partnership with Sheridan College. Not only will it provide new higher education opportunities for students in northeast Wyoming, it will also provide residents of Sheridan and Campbell counties with a local resource for the latest information on rangeland ecology and restoration of lands disturbed by energy development," says UW President Tom Buchanan. "This is the kind of instructional, research, and service outreach effort that we plan to foster at Sheridan and the other Wyoming community colleges."

"This is a truly transformational gift to the college from Whitney Benefits," Sheridan College President, Kevin Drumm, says. "Agricultural science has advanced dramatically, so we are excited about the opportunity to expand our agriculture offerings to the next level with this gift."

The endowed professor, a UW College of Agriculture faculty member, will be based at UW's Sheridan Research and Extension Center (SREC). The professor will develop course work and research on agriculture and environment and natural resource issues in northeastern Wyoming to enhance usage of available and natural resources.

"The ability to offer a bachelor's degree in agriculture at Sheridan College is paramount," says Jim Bennage, SC Dean of Ag and Technical Programs. He says the program will help meet a strong demand for well-trained professionals in horticulture and agriculture.

Whitney Benefits Board of Directors President Tom Kinnison notes that "The Whitney Board is pleased to play a role in this joint project. Our focus is enhancing educational opportunities for the citizens in our area and a partnership such as this one demonstrates innovation and a true willingness to work together for our students. Mr. Whitney would be delighted to see his gift continue to assist Sheridan College, the students, and the community residents."

"We sincerely thank the Whitney Benefits Board of Directors and the Wyoming State Legislators for their support," said Mike Nickel, Sheridan College Board Chair.

SREC already contributes to academics at Sheridan College. Justin Moss, SREC director, has taught turf grass management, landscape management, woody plant material, herbaceous perennials and introduction to soils courses.

Services at SREC include crop and plant evaluation for their adaptability to northern Wyoming's climate and soils, turf and native grass research, coalbed methane- produced water reclamation, and providing technical assistance to Sheridan County gardeners, ranchers and agribusinesses.

Through the vision and generosity of the late Edward A. Whitney, Whitney Benefits has played a pivotal role in establishing and helping grow the Sheridan College campus and its programs. This includes the first gift of land on which the campus is built and which now encompasses 120 acres - all given by Whitney Benefits. In total, Whitney Benefits' unmatched generosity and unparalleled gifts to Sheridan College exceed \$23 million.

Within the past 10 years alone, Whitney Benefits has generously funded a dozen campus projects including updating the SC Master Plan, the Watt Agricultural Center, the SC Technical Center, the Health Science Programs, and the new student dormitories. Whitney is a private, non-profit educational foundation located in Sheridan. Whitney Benefits was created under the Last Will and Testament of Edward A. Whitney, a Sheridan County resident, who passed away in 1917.

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