

MCCLURE CENTER

JULY 2021 NEWSLETTER



University of Idaho

McClure Center for
Public Policy Research

*Dear Friends
of the McClure
Center,*

We are incredibly excited to share with you a few of the many accomplishments of the Idaho Science & Technology Policy Fellowship (ISTPF) inaugural fellows and introduce you to the ISTPF's second cohort.

The **ISTPF** perpetuates Senator McClure's legacy of supporting the creation of policy that is well researched, evidence-based and rooted in science.

What is the ISTPF?

The ISTPF is a nonpartisan program that connects science with policy by fostering a network of science, social science and engineering leaders who understand government and policymaking and are prepared to develop and implement solutions to address societal challenges.

Idaho's research universities—University of Idaho (U of I), Boise State University (BSU) and Idaho State University (ISU)—partnered to create the ISTPF. The McClure Center serves as the lead in this partnership.

The ISTPF is guided by an advisory board comprised of a diverse group of leaders in business, nonprofit, state agencies, economic development, engineering, technology, health care and education and includes members of the Idaho legislature and the Governor's Office. The ISTPF advisory board was created to provide oversight and members meet twice annually.

The ISTPF is similar to a program started nearly 50 years ago by the **American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS)**, which places scientists and engineers in fellowships to support Congress, executive branch agencies and the judiciary. Idaho is one of six states with such a fellowship program; an additional 16 states have programs in development.

What does the ISTPF do?

The ISTPF brings engineers, scientists and social scientists who hold advanced degrees into state agencies to serve as nonpartisan resources that help policymakers address some of Idaho's most pressing challenges. The ISTPF endeavors to keep Idaho talent in Idaho and bring Idaho talent back to our state.

Following a robust, weeklong orientation to policy, ISTP fellows spend their fellowship year embedded in a state agency, providing Idaho decision makers with information that is well researched and evidence-based and translates dense, technical details into a form that nontechnical audiences can understand and use. By applying science, engineering and technical expertise to public policy issues, ISTP fellows help state agencies and the legislature understand the consequences and benefits of policies and policy implementation.

The opportunities for ISTP fellows are vast and varied, with widespread benefits across Idaho. Idaho welcomed the inaugural ISTPF cohort in August 2020; the ISTP fellows are spending their fellowship year in the Governor's Office of Species Conservation and the Governor's Office of Energy and Mineral Resources. Examples of potential future placements include the

Idaho Department of Agriculture, Idaho Department of Environmental Quality, Idaho Department of Health and Welfare, Idaho Department of Lands, Idaho Department of Labor, Idaho Department of Transportation and Idaho STEM Action Center.

Building a science policy ecosystem in Idaho

Science policy training is rarely offered. While other science and technology policy programs limit their trainings and professional development to the fellows that are selected to participate, the ISTPF provides advanced graduate and professional students, postdocs, faculty, administrators and affiliates at the Center for Advanced Energy Studies (CAES) the opportunity to earn micro-credentials or certificates in science policy. Specifically, those interested in science policy are invited to participate in the week-long orientation and monthly professional development seminars that are cornerstones of the ISTPF. Expanding participation in this manner greatly increases the impact of the ISTPF, as more Idaho scientists, social scientists and engineers understand the intricacies of and connections between science and policymaking.

Meet the first cohort of ISTP fellows

Sarah Hendricks, Ph.D.

Sarah Hendricks earned a Ph.D. in bioinformatics and computation biology at the University of Idaho, M.S. in ecology and systematic biology at San Francisco State University and B.S. in biological sciences and women's & gender studies at DePaul University. Before becoming an ISTP fellow, Hendricks served as a postdoctoral bioinformatics researcher at the University of Idaho.

“Coming from a hunting and fishing family, I have always been a nature lover and intentionally directed my career toward the pursuit of solving systemic environmental and wildlife health issues. Working with the Idaho Governor’s Office of Species Conservation (OSC) as an ISTP fellow could not have been a better fit for me. OSC is dedicated to planning, coordinating and implementing the state’s actions to preserve, protect and restore species listed under the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA). For me, this fellowship is a unique opportunity for a direct education in policymaking and active participation in the policy

planning required to address pressing challenges facing Idaho.

“As part of my responsibilities at OSC, I prepared a report to the Idaho legislature recommending a plan for state conservation assessments and strategies for rare and declining species in Idaho. Rare and declining species are defined as those species that are naturally rare or are experiencing a downward trend in populations or habitats and that without additional management might be listed as threatened or endangered species under the ESA in the future. The report provides the history of fish and wildlife management in Idaho and future recommendations. The recommendations reflect the common goal of preserving Idaho’s native fish, wildlife and plants and preventing future ESA listings that would affect Idahoans and the economic vitality of the state.

“In addition to working on rare and declining species, I am assisting with recovery programs for several species of salmon and steelhead. As juveniles, salmon and steelhead travel from their native rivers and creeks to the Pacific Ocean to grow and mature. They return to their native rivers and creeks to produce offspring and continue their life cycle. Many salmon and steelhead populations are declining due to predation, ocean conditions, habitat degradation, water pollution, lack of access to historic habitat and other factors.



Sarah Hendricks, Ph.D.

Because some of these causes are outside of Idaho's land, Idaho cannot solely fix the causes affecting these fish. In October 2020, Idaho, Montana, Oregon and Washington signed an agreement to work together and with others in the region, including federal partners, co-manager tribes and interested stakeholders. This group, the Columbia Basin Collaborative, is defining a collaborative framework to recover and conserve salmon and steelhead populations for the enjoyment and benefit of current and future generations.”

Veronika Vazhnik, Ph.D.

Veronika Vazhnik holds a Ph.D. in biorenewable systems with a minor in operations research from Pennsylvania State University and a B.Sc. in earth and environmental sciences from University College Freiburg at the Albert-Ludwigs University in Germany. Before becoming the 2020-2021 ISTP CAES fellow, Vazhnik was a graduate fellow at Idaho National Laboratory, conducting bioenergy and landscape design decision-making research.

“I have spent this past year as the ISTP Center for Advanced Energy Studies (CAES) fellow in the Governor’s Office of Energy and Mineral Resources. The focus of my work has been leading the update of



Veronika Vazhnik, Ph.D.

Idaho’s Energy Assurance Plan. This kind of planning answers questions like: How do we ensure that Idaho keeps having energy for everyone who needs it? For example, if there is extreme heat, like this summer, how do we make sure that we give access to electricity for those who need air conditioning? Or, how do we avoid panic buying fuel, like we saw on the East Coast because of the ransomware attack on a petroleum pipeline?

“Preventing such crises is a result of planning together with other state agencies, the private sector and regional/national counterparts. As the ISTP CAES fellow, I have been working to ‘connect the dots’ or map who does what to share information on the energy system, as well as who plans and responds to energy disruptions.

“For me, the ISTP CAES fellowship is a way to connect the methods and expertise that I have gained through my research training to day-to-day decisions that support Idaho. The fellowship both allows me to give back the knowledge from science, but also helps me understand the diversity of motives and priorities that policymakers have to consider to make a complex decision. In a way, my journey as a scientist in policy has been a journey of having less judgment for the process. Often as a researcher – an outsider from a policy issue – I think I see a clear path forward. But being on the other side of the boat of the poli-sea now gives me an understanding how challenging policy decisions are and how many people are doing their best to improve the lives around them.”

Welcome the second cohort of ISTP fellows

In August, two new fellows begin their fellowship year. The ISTPF is so pleased to welcome Jared Talley, Ph.D. and Samantha Werth, Ph.D.

Jared Talley earned a Ph.D. in philosophy from Michigan State University; his research focused on collaboration, natural resources and environmental governance in the American West. He holds a MPA in Public Administration, summa cum laude, from Boise State University; a BA in philosophy, magna cum laude, from Boise State University and an associate’s degree in liberal arts from the College of Western Idaho. Most recently, Talley was a faculty instructor in environmental studies at Boise State University.

Samantha Werth is an expert in environmental and economic impacts of ground beef and plant-based meat, food supply chains and beef production. She

received a Ph.D. in animal biology, a MS in animal biology and BS in animal science, all from the University of California, Davis. Until recently, Werth was a graduate researcher at the University of California, Davis. She will be the second ISTP CAES fellow.

Learn more about the ISTPF

ISTPF advisory board members:

- Idaho Business for Education
- Idaho Commission for Libraries
- Idaho Department of Agriculture
- Idaho Department of Environmental Quality
- Idaho Department of Fish and Game
- Idaho Department of Health and Welfare
- Idaho Department of Lands
- Idaho STEM Action Center
- Idaho Technology Council
- Micron Foundation
- St. Luke's Health System
- STEM for Idaho Consulting

Ex officio advisory board members:

- Governor
- Lieutenant governor
- Speaker of the House
- Senate President Pro Tempore
- House minority leader
- Senate minority leader
- Legislative Services Office director

To stay connected follow the ISTPF on

 [@Scienceldaho](https://twitter.com/Scienceldaho)

Or visit the webpage at <http://www.uidaho.edu/ISTPF>

The ISTPF is made possible by the support of these generous contributors:

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- Idaho STEM Action Center
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- POWER Engineers, Inc.
- Private (anonymous donor)
- Simons Foundation

ISTPF featured on a podcast

McClure Center director Katherine Himes, Ph.D. discussed the McClure Center, collaborative processes and the ISTPF on the ***When Science Speaks*** podcast. The ISTPF is described just over 23 minutes into the podcast.

Warmest wishes,



Katherine Himes, Ph.D.

Director, James A. and Louise McClure Center for Public Policy Research

To stay current, we encourage you to follow us on

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Based in Boise, the University of Idaho's James A. and Louise McClure Center for Public Policy Research conducts nonpartisan public policy research, informs public dialogue and policy and engages students in learning about public policymaking. The Center's approach to addressing society's complex issues sustains Senator McClure's legacy of thoughtfully pursuing bipartisan collaboration and sound public policy.