

Leaders and Creators

DISA TECHNOLOGIES, INC.

From launching their own businesses to leading companies and nonprofits, College of Business graduates play a key role in the state's economy.

One of the exciting companies to grow out of the College of Business is Disa Technologies Inc. based in Casper. Disa has six patents for its high-pressure slurry ablation technology for mineral processing and remediation, which allows the company to separate valuable minerals from waste material.

"It saves a lot of money in the mineral processing space, and in remediation, you can isolate the materials you want removed in a much more efficient manner," explains CEO and President Greyson Buckingham, who earned his joint J.D. and energy management MBA degrees from UW in 2018. "We're primarily focused on cleaning up abandoned uranium mines throughout the West. There are 15,000 abandoned uranium mines. There was no solution other than disposing of 100 percent of the material. We have a technology that can effectively address that problem and be up to 90 percent more cost effective. Then we can help convert a liability into an asset by removing the uranium and other minerals from the waste material."

In addition to uranium, the company is working with a phosphate mine. Fellow energy management MBA graduate John Lee serves as Disa's chief operating officer. The two competed in the John P. Ellbogen \$50K Entrepreneurship Competition with a different business idea and then launched Disa in 2018. They garnered startup funding and support from the Wyoming Business Council's Kickstart program and IMPACT 307's Casper Start-Up Challenge, as well as seed and angel investments. Disa currently employs 14, and it plans to add 20 employees in the next year. The company especially loves hiring UW graduates, whom its leaders find skilled and hard-working.

"One of our goals is to have 100 employees in Wyoming," Buckingham says.

The company's first investor was a UW professor who adamantly believed in the concept. Buckingham says he uses both his degrees equally, and they help him navigate complex issues, such as making sure the technology is regulated fairly under the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

Currently, the U.S. imports 50 percent or more of 50 critical minerals, often from nations including China and Russia, Buckingham says. Disa can help the U.S. recover more of these minerals right here at home.

"From a national security standpoint, our company helps recover critical minerals, which is extremely important," Buckingham says. "With the move toward nuclear power, we have enough uranium sitting on the surface of these abandoned mines to power the U.S. reactor fleet for two decades. How awesome would it be to clean up these sites and at the same time provide carbon-neutral fuel supplies instead of getting it from places like Russia?"

Buckingham always knew he wanted to stay and work in Wyoming and found a supportive community ready to help. "Without exaggeration, we've saved over half a million dollars just by people in Wyoming being so generous," he says. This has included folks lending equipment and warehouse space. He adds, "I think the state is doing a great job positioning itself in a way that will diversify the economy and provide jobs for younger generations."

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