

## Provost Perspectives

A newsletter from the Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs



Staying up to date on different projects and initiatives at the U may seem like a difficult task, but we're trying to make it easier with the [Academic Affairs website](#).

We've recently launched new webpages for our "[Advancing Honors](#)" and "[Wellbeing and Resilience](#)" projects, and I'm excited about the potential outcomes of both of these initiatives.

Elevating the Honors College to top-tier status will significantly contribute to the U's reputation, attract exceptional students and faculty and enhance research and educational outcomes. This project represents a critical step towards achieving these objectives by leveraging comparative insights and stakeholder perspectives to craft a robust strategy for excellence and innovation in the Honors College. We're already making excellent progress on this project, and you can read more about it in the [phase one report](#) posted online.

The Wellbeing and Resilience initiative is focused on elevating wellbeing efforts among faculty and staff across Academic Affairs. We hope to promote a thriving campus culture characterized by care, wellbeing and academic success. This initiative will build upon the efforts already underway for students through the Center for Campus Wellness and the Resiliency Center for the Health Sciences, involving other experts across campus. The webpage for this project includes [links to useful resources](#), as well as a general timeline and other recent updates.

I hope you'll check our site frequently for updates on these and other projects. If you have questions or comments, please email [SVPAA@utah.edu](mailto:SVPAA@utah.edu). I appreciate your feedback and insights, and I thank you for working with us on projects that will help us build a better U.

— Mitzi M. Montoya



### Faculty, Staff Work on Four-Year Degree Plans

University of Utah faculty and staff continue to make progress on several Navigate U projects.

The Activate project for [Developing and Maintaining Functional 4-Year Degree Plans](#) focuses on guiding students through their academic journeys. These plans are essential for ensuring timely degree completion; enhancing retention and persistence; supporting the transition to our new catalog system, Coursedog; and bringing the university into compliance with Utah System of Higher Education policy.

Faculty and staff at the university have worked diligently on this initiative, with 93% of programs submitting their plans before the Jan. 20 deadline. This project aims to provide clear and structured pathways to help students stay on track and successfully transition to life beyond the university.

[You can find more information on all the Navigate U projects online.](#)

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### Strike Team Notes Progress on Great Salt Lake

Low water levels at Great Salt Lake continue to threaten Utah's economic, ecological and human health, according to the recently released [2025 Great Salt Lake Data and Insights Summary](#) from the Great Salt Lake Strike Team.

The team was formed by Utah's research universities—the U and Utah State University—to provide policymakers scientific input as they address the economic, health and ecological challenges created by the low elevation levels of the lake. The analysis calls out the benefits of the lake, meaningful progress made in the last few years, the long-term nature of protecting the lake and Utah's plan to do so. The collaborative project is an excellent example of how Utah's research universities can have positive impact as partners working together to address regional environmental challenges.

"Low lake elevations created by rising temperatures and human water depletions continue to put at risk the benefits created by the lake," said William Anderegg, Strike Team co-chair and director of the Wilkes Center for Climate Science and Policy at the U. "Our review of the data confirms that with steady and deliberate actions we can first stabilize and then raise lake elevation to levels that protect the benefits provided by the lake."

The Strike Team's summary includes reporting on lake elevation, reservoir storage, salinity, streamflow, human water use, water rights and change applications and mineral extraction. Importantly, the report identifies over 30 major milestones from 2024.

In addition to Anderegg, other key U faculty involved in this work include Kevin Perry, professor of atmospheric sciences; Paul Brooks, professor of geology and geophysics; John Lin, professor of atmospheric sciences; and William Johnson, professor of geology and geophysics.

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### U, USU Provosts Note Impact of General Education on Students, Communities

Students need both major-specific and general education classes to become the state's next great leaders, managers, colleagues and people, according to a ["Voices" article in the Salt Lake Tribune](#) from U Provost Mitzi Montoya and Utah State University Provost Laurens Smith.

The two provosts came together to emphasize the impact on society of general education classes that help students by providing "what is likely a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to add far-ranging breadth to their learning."

The state's employers are looking for workers who can blend technical and subject-area proficiency with a broad understanding of the world. "By developing critical thinking, creativity, communication skills, cultural awareness, adaptability and ethical reasoning, a broad university education prepares students not only to fulfill their job roles, but also to thrive in them, adapting to the changes and challenges they face," the provosts said in the article.

"Universities play a vital role in helping students become the best versions of themselves. As our universities invest in students, offering both specific and general education, Utah will see a return on that investment in the form of happier, healthier residents; more successful businesses and institutions; and stronger communities."

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## Celebrating U

### Dean Trapa Featured on Episode of 'Cool Science Radio'

Peter E. Trapa, dean of the College of Science, talked about the U's position as a global leader in science and technology education, research and development during a recent episode of Cool Science Radio on KCPW.

To listen, [click here](#).

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### 30th Annual Stegner Center Symposium Set for March 20-21

The Wallace Stegner Center's 30th annual symposium will focus on one of Utah's greatest challenges: air pollution.

The symposium, "Breathing Easier: Air Pollution Challenges and Solutions," is scheduled for March 20-21 at the U's S.J. Quinney College of Law. It will consider air pollution's environmental and human health tolls—including the unequal burdens air pollution places on disadvantaged communities.

Despite gains in many places, air pollution remains a vexing problem across the nation. In Utah, winters bring inversions and particulate matter pollution, and summers deliver increased ground-level ozone pollution. The Wasatch Front regularly exceeds national ambient air quality standards, exacerbated by the region's unique geography and meteorology.

Finding solutions to these thorny problems becomes more vital with each passing year. By sharing potential solutions, including those that have been successful in other parts of the country, the symposium will convene experts who can help address challenges and improve quality of life in Utah.

See the [event website](#) for more information, or [click here to register](#).

### Share Your Ideas for Provost Perspectives

If you have an upcoming event or informational item you'd like to publicize in Provost Perspectives, please send it to Greg Kratz at [greg.kratz@utah.edu](mailto:greg.kratz@utah.edu).