

Provost Perspectives

A newsletter from the **Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs**



Artificial intelligence is rapidly growing in its impact on higher education—and every other human endeavor. At the U, we're determined to be leaders in AI, which is why I'm excited to [announce the appointment](#) of Dr. [Manish Parashar](#) as the U's inaugural Chief Artificial Intelligence Officer.

Dr. Parashar is Director of the [Scientific Computing and Imaging \(SCI\) Institute](#), Chair in Computational Science and Engineering and Presidential Professor in the Kalhert School of Computing. Under his leadership, the U launched its [Responsible AI Initiative](#) (One-U RAI) in October 2023 [with a \\$100 million investment](#) and a goal to support AI research with real-world impact in three areas where the university has deep expertise: the [environment](#), [health care and wellness](#) and [teaching and learning](#).

The One-U RAI initiative brings together faculty members from departments across campus to serve in working groups to help define priorities and develop a blueprint for each thrust area. After making its first Faculty Fellow, Postdoctoral Fellow and Distinguished Visitor awards last fall, the One-U RAI initiative is ready to begin faculty cluster hiring later in 2025 and in the years to come.

Under Dr. Parashar's leadership, the U is also building ties with other organizations throughout our community to enhance collaborative work on responsible AI. As he said in a recent [opinion piece in the Deseret News](#), "We want to leverage other AI efforts, both public and private, and create a movement where the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. We want a system where anyone across the state can learn about, contribute to and benefit from AI."

Dr. Parashar will advise the president and senior leadership in his new role. I am looking forward to working with him to further the U's efforts in this vital area. As he builds and implements our AI strategy, I'm confident we will see growth in our research and establish our leadership in the ethical and responsible use of AI.

— Mitzi M. Montoya

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Student Success

Academic Senate Approves Change in Grading Deadline

A Registrar's Office proposal to limit the grading period to five days after final exams conclude was approved by the Academic Senate on Feb. 3. Effective in fall 2025, students will now be able to see their grades within days of taking their final exam rather than weeks later in some cases.

In their presentation to the Academic Senate, Registrar's Office representatives noted that the current practice of allowing 10-12 days for the grading period increases institutional risk and has negative impacts on student success. By switching to five calendar days, the U is moving in line with its Utah System of Higher Education counterparts and drawing closer to alignment with peer and aspirant institutions in the Big 12 and AAU.

This change is expected to contribute to higher student retention and success rates. It will give students more time to address issues with scholarships and financial aid; provide more time for them to meet with advisors and faculty to discuss impacts of final grades on graduation plans; and reduce the stress and anxiety students feel while waiting for grades.

Thanks to the Registrar's Office for seeking this change and to the Academic Senate for approving it as we continue to focus on student success.

[Read more](#)



Zions Bancorporation Chairman and CEO Shows Support for Liberal Arts Education

Harris Simmons was an economics major at the University of Utah in the mid-1970s, but some of his most memorable moments at the U had nothing to do with numbers or business.

Simmons, now chairman and CEO of Salt Lake-based Zions Bancorporation, fondly remembers courses in architecture and music, as well as some German. He also recalls attending an event in Kingsbury Hall focused on the work of poet Robert Frost and his connections to New England.

"That was maybe the night I fell in love with Robert Frost's work," Simmons said. "It absolutely impacted who I am as a person."

The impacts of a broad university education are profound to Simmons, and as a debate over the value of general education courses and programs has [swept across Utah and the nation](#), he decided to make his feelings clear. In late January, Simmons sent an email to all Utah legislators emphasizing the importance of the liberal arts in higher education.

Simmons is well-acquainted with the Utah System of Higher Education, having served 10 years on the state's Board of Regents/Board of Higher Education. "I'm a big believer that, number one, we shouldn't try to channel students," he said. "We live in a very free society, and we should try to keep it that way. ... We need engineers. We need nurses. I totally get that. But there are some kids who don't want to be nurses or engineers."

To read more about the ideas Simmons shared with legislators, see [this @theU article](#).

[Read more](#)



Commencement Speaker Named; Deadline to Order Regalia is March 7

During these cold winter months, it may seem like May will never come, but the truth is that spring and Commencement are right around the corner.

The U will celebrate Commencement at 6 p.m. Thursday, May 1, at the Jon M. Huntsman Center. Planning for the event is already well underway, and more information is available on the [Commencement website](#). In-person, college-specific convocations will also be held in Kingsbury Hall, the Jon M. Huntsman Center and the Olpin Student Union.

Holly Rowe, longtime ESPN commentator and University of Utah alum, will [give the keynote address](#) for Commencement this year. Rowe is one of ABC/ESPN's most versatile announcers, covering the College Football National Championship, the Women's Final Four, WNBA Championship, Softball World Series and many more. She is the first woman to speak at the General Commencement in several years and follows university impact scholars and corporate executives in the role.

Faculty are also reminded that the deadline to order regalia for Commencement is Friday, March 7. To order your regalia, please visit the University of Utah Bookstore site at <https://www.store.utah.edu/graduation/regalia/faculty-regalia>.

[Read more](#)

Research Excellence

1U4U Symposium Shows Impacts of Collaborative Research

Researchers from 28 cross-disciplinary, cross-campus teams will come together Thursday afternoon to celebrate the results of the 1U4U projects they started in 2023.

The 28 projects were selected from among dozens of proposals and each received grants of \$15,000 or \$30,000, adding up to a total of \$855,000 in funding. Posters outlining the accomplishments of these researchers and the lessons they learned will be displayed during the 1U4U Symposium at 3 p.m. February 20 in the Cleone Peterson Eccles Alumni House Ballroom.

With a theme of "Ideas are Sprouting," the 2023 1U4U program was designed to seed multidisciplinary faculty/student collaborations in areas of mutual research interest and opportunity. The initiative seeks innovative projects aimed at campus, education, engagement, research and scholarship that are not subject to traditional peer review. To receive funding priority, a project needed to have the potential of leading to external funding, have societal impact and be a collaboration between health sciences and main campus.

The 1U4U program started with seed funding from the Senior Vice Presidents of Academic Affairs and Health Sciences and collaboration across colleges. The initiative has now moved to the office of the Vice President for Research to support further collaboration. Applications for the 2025 round of the program, with the theme "Women Across the Lifespan: Health, Technology, and Society," are due on Feb. 27. For more information about this round, [go to this link](#).

For more information about 1U4U, go to <https://1u4u.utah.edu/>.

[Read more](#)

Celebrating U

Film Series Features David Eccles School of Business

The U's David Eccles School of Business is one of the featured institutions in "Leader Generation," a new branded content online series presented by the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) and produced by BBC StoryWorks Commercial Productions.

The 18-part online series illustrates the role business schools and educators can play in addressing the world's economic, social and environmental issues through responsible leadership.

The [Eccles School episode](#) focuses on the curriculum, resources, programming and services offered to students to address mental health and well-being more broadly. "By addressing the basic needs of our students, we aim to eliminate barriers that may impede their academic achievement and well-being," said Abbey Salamera, a program coordinator for Student Engagement & Belonging.

[Read more](#)

Share Your Ideas for Provost Perspectives

If you have an upcoming event or information item you'd like to publicize in Provost Perspectives, please send it to Greg Kratz at greg.kratz@utah.edu.