

Provost Perspectives

A newsletter from the Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs



Our efforts to reimagine support services for students and faculty at the U will take another step forward this month as Dr. Peter Trapa assumes his new role as the inaugural vice provost and senior dean of the Colleges and Schools of Liberal Arts and Sciences (LAS).

Dr. Trapa, who currently serves as dean of the College of Science, will begin serving in this new post on March 15, and I'm eager for him to get started. As I said in the [story announcing his selection](#), Dr. Trapa is a strategic leader who understands how the liberal arts and sciences advance student success and the university's research enterprise. He led the merger of the College of Science and the College of Mines and Earth Sciences, showing his ability to manage complex institutional change with vision and inclusivity.

I'm also impressed with his eagerness to collaborate with the LAS deans in the College of Humanities, College of Science, College of Social and Behavioral Science and the School for Cultural & Social Transformation. I'm asking them to develop plans that will allow the four units to work together to advance interdisciplinary education, strengthen research opportunities and amplify the university's impact.

Dr. Trapa will also play a key role in rethinking how we manage our resources to ensure that students and faculty in these units have the support they need to thrive. As we've described on [the website](#) for our academic affairs reorganization project, we want to ensure equitable access to high-quality services across the LAS units without merging colleges and while remaining committed to shared governance.

I'm excited about the start of this new era, and I'm confident that the innovative solutions developed by Dr. Trapa and the faculty and staff in the LAS units will help the U move into the future with creativity and a sharp focus on student success.

— Mitzi M. Montoya

[Read more](#)

Student Success

Student Affairs Launches Pillar Events

At the University of Utah, students have endless opportunities to connect, learn and thrive through campus events. However, with so many options, it's easy to feel overwhelmed or lost in the crowd. To simplify and enhance the student experience, [Student Affairs](#) is excited to introduce pillar events—large-scale, thoughtfully curated events designed to serve as cornerstones of the college experience.

According to a recent [post on the Student Affairs blog](#), pillar events were created in response to Student Affairs' [Revitalize Engagement and Belonging strategic initiative](#). This initiative focuses on reimagining events, programs, traditions and services to foster meaningful connections, encourage personal growth and create welcoming environments where students can thrive.

"Being part of a community is a foundational component of the university experience," said Jason Ramirez, associate vice president and dean of students, in the blog post. "Pillar events are where students discover their passions, find their purpose, and connect with people. The memories they create during these moments are the ones they'll look back on fondly when they remember their time at the U."

Through pillar events, Student Affairs aims to provide students with experiences that go beyond casual pastimes. These events are intentionally designed to support student success by helping them build connections, find communities, and deepen their sense of belonging—key factors for both academic achievement and personal growth.

[Read more](#)



Erin Mason Appointed to Position on National Student Clearinghouse Advisory Committee

University of Utah Registrar Erin Mason has been appointed to serve as a member of the National Student Clearinghouse Advisory Committee from October 2025 through April 2028.

The Advisory Committee includes a select group of institutions that represent a cross-section of the postsecondary schools the National Student Clearinghouse supports. This team plays a fundamental role in informing the organization's strategy, customer experience and evolution of the products and services it delivers to the higher education community.

The [National Student Clearinghouse](#), a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization formed in 1993, is a provider of higher education verifications and electronic education record exchanges. Besides working with nearly 3,600 postsecondary institutions in meeting their compliance needs, the Clearinghouse also provides thousands of high schools and districts with continuing collegiate enrollment, progression and completion statistics on their alumni.

Congratulations to Erin on this prestigious appointment!

Research Excellence

Undergraduates Show Their Projects during Research Day on the Hill

Dozens of University of Utah undergraduate researchers displayed their efforts in the Utah State Capitol on Feb. 20 as part of the 25th annual [Research Day on the Hill](#).

"This event allows us to share with the public and our leaders the positive impact research has on society," said Annie Fukushima, director of the U's [Office of Undergraduate Research](#), in an [@theU article](#) about the event. "It also fosters a deeper connection between students and their governmental representatives."

In [partnership with Utah State University](#), Research Day highlights the innovative work of the state's two [Carnegie-designated R1 institutions](#) and gives students a chance to discuss their work with Utah lawmakers.

"My degree has been primarily focused on health and policy," Dayttn Barschi, a senior at the U who presented at Research Day about reducing stigma towards people experiencing homelessness, said in the article. "Being able to focus on a health-related issue and then bring it to decision-makers really rounds out my experience."

This year's event coincided with executive orders that could have a significant impact on U.S. research efforts. Utah Gov. Spencer Cox issued a declaration supporting undergraduate research in honor of Research Day.

"Participating in undergraduate research prepares students to enter the workforce, acquire advanced degrees, and equips them with the necessary skills to contribute to our state," Cox wrote in the declaration. "Research is influential in informing policymakers on specific issues and topics pertinent to them."

[Read more](#)



RAC Grand Challenge will Showcase New Innovations

Imagine a portable intelligent robot arm that combat medics can use for emergency medical assistance, or a wearable temperature monitoring system for frostbite prevention and research. These are just a few examples of innovations from the minds of University of Utah investigators with the goal to help those living or working in remote, rural and austere conditions.

U researchers will once again showcase these kinds of innovations during the second annual [Remote and Austere Conditions \(RAC\) Grand Challenge](#), scheduled for Friday, March 7, in the Cleone Peterson Eccles Alumni House. According to a [post from the Office of the Vice President for Research](#), the challenge is a research competition where teams propose innovative research solutions for problems faced by rural communities and military personnel in remote or isolated conditions.

The event showcases investigative teams' innovations in a highly competitive environment. This year, 17 teams will be competing, up from 16 at [last year's event](#). Thirteen judges from national security, academia, industry, medicine and engineering will decide which teams will receive seed grants of up to \$250,000.

"The RAC Grand Challenge — and importantly, the University of Utah — is a venue where science comes to life for others to see and believe in, to bear witness to the value that research provides to our modern world, and to understand how solutions to problems unfold in academic settings," Dr. Jim McDonough, executive director of the Department of Defense Research at the U, said in the VPR post. "Our use-inspired research stance here in Utah recognizes the unique environment we're part of every day, and how science interacts with that to improve lives fundamental to the university's DNA."

[Read more](#)

Celebrating U

Celebrate Women's History Month with Resources from the Library

March is Women's History Month, and if you're looking for resources to help you celebrate, the Marriott Library can help.

Here is just a sampling of what's available among library collections and resources highlighting the historic achievements and remarkable lives of Utah women.

[A Hymn for Women's Rights, Statehood, and Polygamy](#)

[Aileen H. Clyde 20th Century Women's Legacy Archive](#)

[League of Women Voters of Utah](#)

[Mormon Women's Voices Oral History Project](#)

[Women in the National Archives](#)

[Gale's Women's Study Initiative](#)

[Women's Magazine Online](#)

[Women's Studies International](#)

[Network Magazine Records](#)

[League of Women Voters of Utah](#)

For more resources, check out the [full list here](#).

[Read more](#)

Events Planned for Neurodiversity Awareness Week

The Center for Disability and Access has planned several activities to celebrate Neurodiversity & Disability Awareness Week March 17-21.

Events include a virtual panel event where students with disabilities share their experiences, challenges and triumphs at the university; a presentation on practical strategies to make content more inclusive and reach a wider audience; and a networking event.

Details can be found on Campus Connect or at <https://disability.utah.edu/events.php>.

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.