

Provost Perspectives

A newsletter from the Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs



“Strategic reinvestment.” We’re all hearing and thinking about these words frequently as U faculty, department chairs, deans and other leaders navigate the state [Legislature’s action](#) on higher education budgets for the 2025-2026 academic year.

While we have significant work ahead of us to refine and execute a plan for meeting this budget challenge, I believe we are in a solid position to weather the storm.

First, we saw this coming. In early 2024, Utah System of Higher Education degree-granting institutions received an ongoing 1.5% cut to begin on July 1, 2025, and we planned for that. We started hearing about the possibility of additional cuts to the state’s higher education institutions later in the year, so we asked our campus leaders to engage in a budgeting exercise that would anticipate a 10% reduction. Thanks to all the time and effort they put into that planning, we are prepared to respond in a thoughtful and suitable way in the weeks to come.

During this planning process, we have been gathering and analyzing data and proactively working to document planned cuts and other savings.

Second, as we know, the state is now focused on low-enrollment programs as part of their attention to budget. Fortunately, because we have good data available, we know that we don’t have that many low-enrollment programs. Our campus leaders and faculty are actively seeking ways to modify or grow smaller programs, as well as to explain the value of our majors, minors and general education offerings. We are also using our data to build a picture of the contributions of our smaller programs. We can’t know what the outcome of this process will be, but we do know that we will continue to be committed to the full swath of disciplines that make an R1 institution such as ours strong and contribute to research advancement.

Third, and throughout all these processes, we continue to focus on improving the student experience and student outcomes, for example with our Navigate U projects, our pillar events led by Student Affairs and the expansion of career services for all students.

Fourth, the Office of the Vice President for Research is [facing head-on](#) the challenges before us, helping faculty navigate [federal transitions](#) and communicating the incredible impact of our research.

Achieving our ambitious goals for student success and research advancement will require us to make the best possible use of limited resources. Doing so during this time will not be easy. However, thanks to the planning and work everyone has done and continues to do, while holding student success and research advancement at the forefront of our minds, I am confident we will be able to turn this challenge into an opportunity to [reinvent the U](#) and make it even stronger.

— Mitzi M. Montoya

Keith Diaz Moore Leaving Associate Provost Position; Vahe Bandarian Named Associate Provost of Mission-Aligned Planning

Keith Diaz Moore has announced that he will leave his position as Associate Provost for Institutional Design and Strategy at the U. His last day will be May 15.

Keith was appointed to the associate provost role in June 2023 after serving as the Dean of the College of Architecture and Planning from 2014 to 2023. He will take an administrative leave starting May 16, after which he will return to lead the Design Institute for Health and Resilience in the College of Architecture and Planning.

I want to take a moment to express my sincere gratitude for Keith’s exceptional service as associate provost. His role as a thought leader and collaborator on campus has been truly inspiring. I deeply appreciate the thoughtful work he has done in initiating important projects and driving positive change.

Please join us in thanking Keith for his years of dedicated service and in wishing him all the best in his future endeavors.

Also in the Provost’s Office, Vahe Bandarian, who has extensive experience at the U in a range of academic and administrative roles, has been named as the new Associate Provost of Mission-Aligned Planning.

This appointment comes at a time when we need to develop new tools and resources to make planning processes more strategic, streamlined and aligned. This work—formerly referred to as Academic Resource Management (ARM)—will be called Mission-Aligned Planning (MAP) moving forward. MAP is a name that better reflects the purpose of the effort: to ensure planning efforts and resource decisions are tightly aligned with the U’s mission and strategic goals. In his new role, Vahe will work closely with campus leaders to develop the MAP pilot and ensure that institutional planning efforts are deeply rooted in that mission and strategy.

In the Department of Chemistry, Vahe served as Director of Graduate Studies and later as Associate Chair for Undergraduate Studies before becoming Associate Dean for Student Affairs in the College of Science. He has also led a robust, extramurally funded research program and co-founded a biotechnology startup based on research from his lab.

Please join us in welcoming Vahe to his new role.

— Mitzi M. Montoya

Student Success



CCE Holds April Cultural Celebrations

April is [Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander \(AANHPI\) Heritage Month](#) at the U. The month celebrates the traditions of Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders who bring richness to campus through their sharing of familial unity, according to [an @theU article](#).

The new [Center for Community and Cultural Engagement \(CCE\)](#) developed programming to highlight the cultural contributions of the individual communities as well as the values they share.

“The national theme for AAPI Heritage Month is leadership and resilience,” said Lei’oni Allan McLaughlin, CCE director, in the article. “We are working with campus student organizations to do a panel discussion with the students to examine the cultural aspects of leadership and resilience within Asian, Pacific Islander and Native Hawaiian cultures.”

Another event earlier this month was a workshop with the Pacifica community to talk about the historical and cultural significance of lei making. Participants learned to make leis for their friends and family who are graduating.

“Since this is the CCE’s first year, the center is gathering feedback from everyone across campus on how they would like their history and heritage preserved, celebrated and highlighted,” McLaughlin said.

[Read more](#)

Research Excellence

OVPR Launches New National Laboratory and Security Office

To facilitate increased collaboration with national laboratories and agencies in the national intelligence program, the Office of the Vice President for Research (OVPR) has launched the National Laboratory and Security Office (NLSO).

The NLSO oversees relationships between the university and agencies dedicated to energy and security, according to [a post](#) on the [VPR website](#). It works with labs and agencies to develop contracts; MOUs and agreements; establish research connections; support researcher and student placement; and align the university with national strategy.

The NLSO is led by Dr. Marian Rice. Researchers working with or interested in working with national labs should contact [Dr. Rice](#). The new office also has [a website](#) and an [informational flyer](#).

[Read more](#)

Celebrating U



Student Commencement Speaker to Share Her Unexpected Educational Journey

Tracie Yellowman Tséyiniłtsó, a Diné Bit’ah’níł woman and the 2025 student commencement speaker for the U, will carry the strength of her ancestors with her on May 1 when she addresses the audience at the Jon M. Huntsman Center.

“I come from a lineage of warriors, in particular my many times great-grandfather Hastín K’aayéłiili, whose resilience is instilled within me today and has given me the strength to survive and thrive in not only my everyday life but in my educational journey,” Yellowman Tséyiniłtsó said in [an @theU article](#). “That spirit is alive within me and guides me in every step I take.”

As a non-traditional student, Yellowman Tséyiniłtsó’s educational journey took many unexpected steps. A foster care alumna from Diwóózhi Bikóh’, Utah, she earned her associate degree immediately after high school at the local community college in Blanding. She then transferred to Utah State University to study engineering. Though she completed almost all her coursework, she took a break due to unforeseen circumstances.

“My dad was in the industrial construction trade, so I started working for him, which led to my profession as a skilled pipe welder,” Yellowman Tséyiniłtsó said.

After several years away, she decided to enroll in the U to study health education and promotion when the university began offering the Native Student Scholarship for Indigenous students enrolled in full-time coursework.

For more information on Yellowman Tséyiniłtsó’s journey, [read her story](#) online or attend Commencement on May 1.

Faculty Invited to Join in Commencement Celebration

University of Utah faculty members have spent years teaching, leading and guiding the students who make up the Class of 2025. Now, they have an opportunity to come together and celebrate these students’ accomplishments.

Faculty are invited to join the university Commencement celebration at the Jon M. Huntsman Center on Thursday, May 1. Those who wish to participate should plan to meet at 5 p.m. in the *Artworks for Kids Auditorium*, Room 1151, of the Beverley Taylor Sorenson Arts and Education Complex for a light dinner buffet. At approximately 5:40 p.m., they will be escorted from the Sorenson Complex to the Huntsman Center to join the procession. The Commencement program will begin at 6:30 p.m.

Most college convocations will take place on Thursday, May 1, and Friday, May 2. David Eccles School of Business convocations will be Saturday, May 3. The full schedule is available at <https://commencement.utah.edu/convocations.php>.

[Read more](#)

Library Offers List of U Resources for Earth Day

With Earth Day less than a week away, it’s a perfect time to acquaint yourself with resources to learn about positive change and support for environmental protection at the University of Utah and in the state of Utah.

The library has put together a helpful [resource list](#) that will guide you to information on everything from the [Sustainability Office](#) to the [Everett L. Cooley Oral History Project](#). Be sure to take a look as you make your plans for Earth Day on April 22 and all of Earth Month 2025.

[Read more](#)

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.