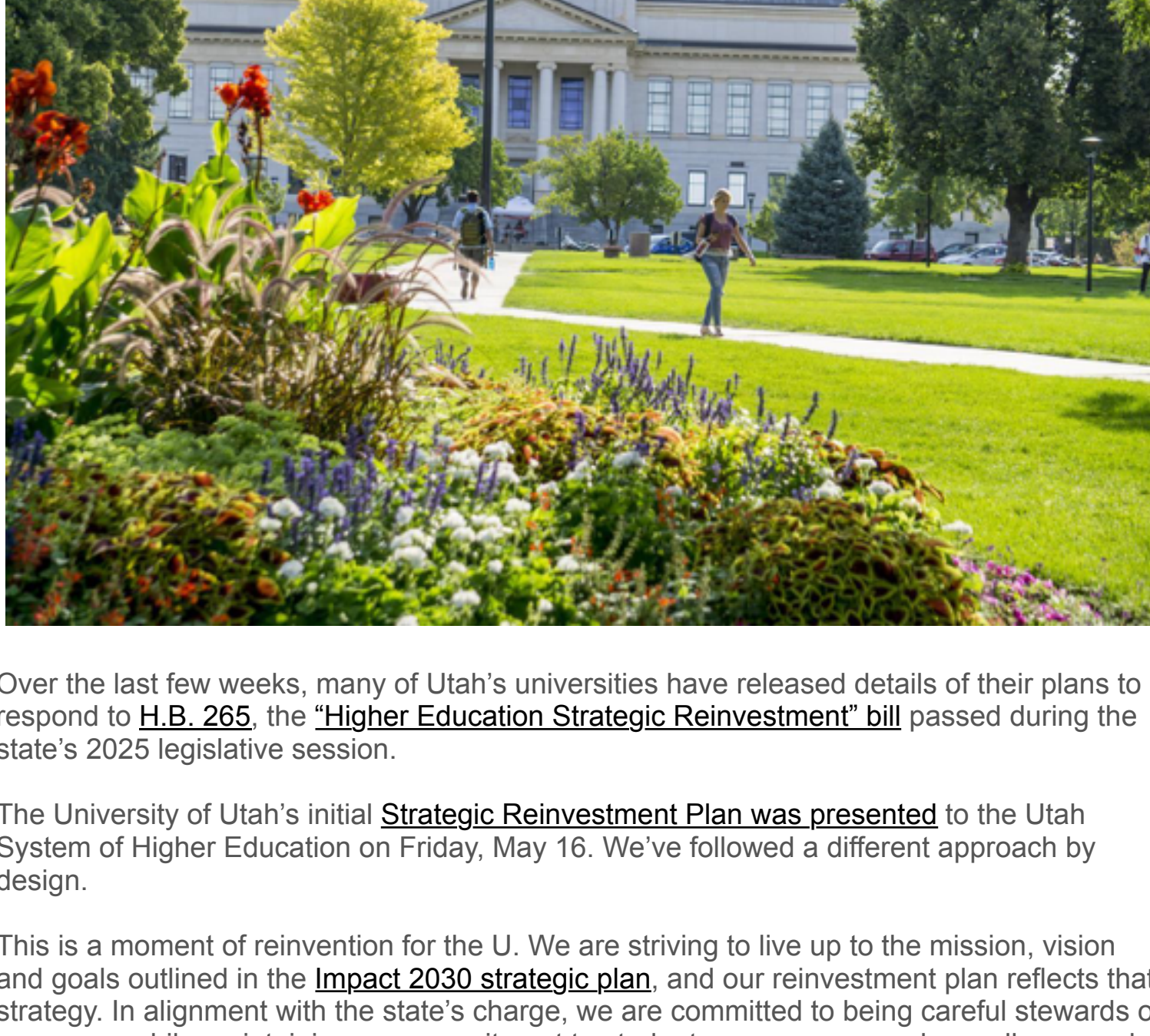


Provost Perspectives

A newsletter from the
Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs



Over the last few weeks, many of Utah's universities have released details of their plans to respond to [H.B. 265](#), the "[Higher Education Strategic Reinvestment](#)" bill passed during the state's 2025 legislative session.

The University of Utah's initial [Strategic Reinvestment Plan](#) was [presented](#) to the Utah System of Higher Education on Friday, May 16. We've followed a different approach by design.

This is a moment of reinvention for the U. We are striving to live up to the mission, vision and goals outlined in the [Impact 2030 strategic plan](#), and our reinvestment plan reflects that strategy. In alignment with the state's charge, we are committed to being careful stewards of resources while maintaining our commitment to student success, research excellence and community engagement. Our guiding principles regarding H.B. 265 implementation are transparency, accountability and innovation. This is an opportunity for us to lead and deepen the partnership between the U and the state.

Many of you are familiar with—or have been directly involved in—the annual university budget and planning processes within your departments and colleges. In Academic Affairs (AA), we are actively engaged in a process we are now calling Mission-Aligned Planning, or MAP. You'll hear more about MAP in the months to come, but its primary focus is to ensure AA planning efforts and resource allocation decisions are tightly aligned with the U's mission and strategic goals.

The work we are doing is not easy, but we're ready for this moment due to our efforts to instill systemic and intentional approaches to planning in the AA units.

For example, in 2023, we launched the redesigned [University Analytics and Institutional Reporting \(UAIR\)](#), which was essential to provide the data we need for our planning endeavors. We also kicked off the annual Academic Enterprise Planning (AEP) process. That process engages AA leaders and their teams in integrated planning, ensuring that all resources—human, financial, physical and technological—are aligned in a data-informed way and in relation to the mission and priorities of the university and the individual units.

We continued our momentum last year, when we acquired the Gray DI tools, providing access to information on student demand and program competition, as well as wages, skills and jobs associated with academic programs. We kicked off a series of Activate projects in response to the National Institute of Student Success audit and recommendations. We also expanded our development of coordinated services for advising, finance, HR and advancement. And we brought together the colleges of Humanities, Science, Social and Behavioral Science and School for Cultural and Social Transformation under the umbrella of the new [Colleges and Schools of Liberal Arts and Sciences](#) to further improve how we deliver critical support services to faculty and students. We are already realizing additional benefits of this reorganization in the form of new interdisciplinary projects and collaborations.

Every school, college and service unit has been involved in the new MAP planning processes, and I want to thank AA leaders for working with their teams, engaging in tough conversations and making difficult decisions. Because of our persistent efforts, we have been able to consider and respond to the mandates and spirit of H.B. 265 in a deliberate and painful way.

To be clear, the impact of H.B. 265 is significant. The U's portion of the higher ed budget cuts required by H.B. 265 is about \$19.6 million. We must identify strategies to reduce and reallocate the full amount over the next three years. During this first year, we are required to show about \$5.9 million in cuts as an institution. The numbers rise to \$13.7 million next year and the full amount in year three. We also need to indicate how we will redistribute those funds to meet legislative priorities.

The AA units are shouldering the largest portion of this year's cuts, at 69%, or about \$4.1 million. While these numbers may seem daunting, we were prepared thanks to our MAP processes and hard work over the past two years. When we started hearing in fall 2024 about probable budget cuts from the legislature, we asked our campus leaders to engage in a budgeting reduction exercise planning for a 10% to 25% reduction. Each AA unit submitted detailed recommendations, thus ensuring we would be ready to respond to potential legislation.

State officials also asked that we focus on low-enrollment programs. In response the AA academic units provided detailed and thoughtful recommendations for how low-enrollment programs could be redesigned, marketed in new ways to improve enrollment, consolidated or potentially eliminated.

In addition, each of the AA leaders completed the AEP process for the year, and our normal university budget analysis and evaluation process is currently underway. The budget process will wrap up June 4, when our AA budget is due to the President, and budget letters should be sent to all AA units before the department mass update ends on June 20. That budget will include our recommendations for budget cuts and strategic reinvestments. Because we are focused on planning carefully and emphasizing consistent MAP processes across all AA units, our budget will reflect cuts in all our units, as well as reinvestments that are aligned with H.B. 265 and with Impact 2030.

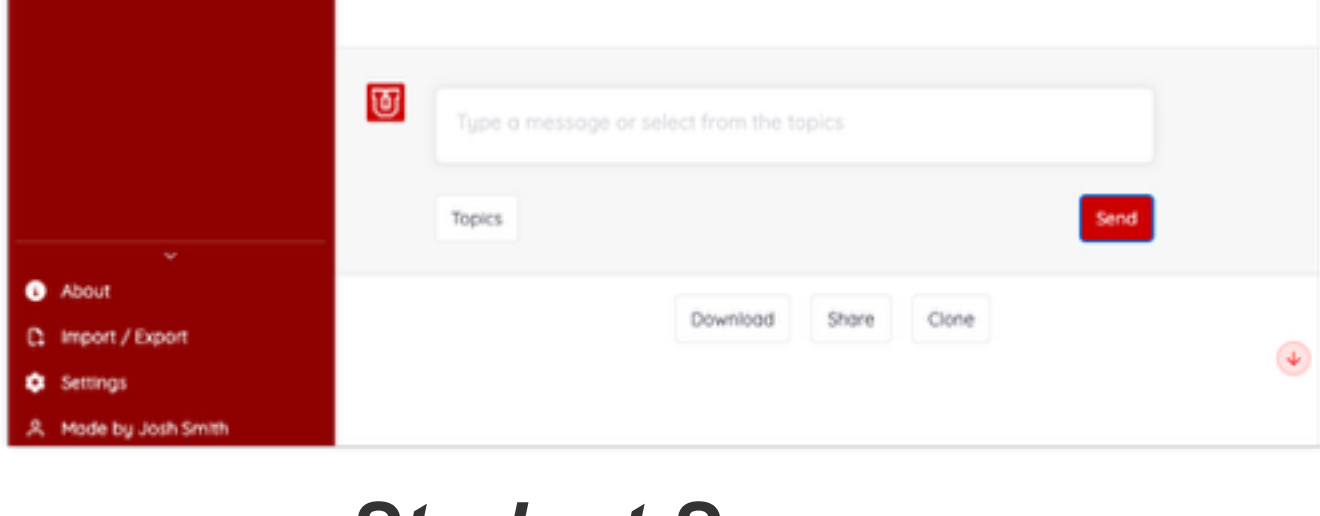
It's important to remember that all strategic reinvestment plans are considered draft and tentative until they receive final approval by the state legislature. The U, which faces the largest share of systemwide reallocations, is working closely with USHE to allow for adjustments during this review period. The Utah Board of Higher Education will consider and approve strategic reinvestment plans on June 6, after which the U's final numbers will be released. The state legislature's Higher Education Appropriations Subcommittee will review the reinvestment plan on August 19, and the Executive Appropriations Committee is scheduled to consider and approve plans on September 15.

We will share additional information about Academic Affairs impacts as we move through this process. We also anticipate providing opportunities for everyone to learn more about the MAP processes and tools as we begin the new academic year.

For now, I want to thank all of you who have worked so hard these last few years, and especially the last few months, to prepare us for this opportunity to lead as we reinvent ourselves to become the university envisioned in our Impact 2030 plan. The U is strong and growing. Through the steps we have already taken and the actions we will continue to pursue, we can ensure that growth continues for years to come.

— Mitzi M. Montoya

[Read more](#)



Student Success

UBot Transforms Tutoring with AI

During his undergraduate career, Joshua Smith found many opportunities to gain experience in programming and data analytics. These experiences and his fascination with AI led him to begin developing UBot as a student. Now, as a professional, he continues to refine it.

Smith graduated from the U in 2023 with a degree in mathematics and an emphasis in computation. He is now working as a software engineer at the Office of Undergraduate Studies' Academic Innovation and Intelligence Lab, where he combines his background in mathematics and passion for artificial intelligence to transform campus tutoring, according to an [article from the Lassonde Entrepreneur Institute](#).

UBot isn't just another chatbot; it is a virtual tutor that redefines the academic support experience. Instead of giving answers outright, it guides students through a Socratic dialogue, encouraging them to arrive at solutions on their own and strengthening their critical thinking skills. Built on state-of-the-art large language models, UBot embeds into each course that opts in by integrating with class syllabi, lectures and assignments to offer targeted support.

A key feature of [UBot](#) is its 24/7 availability, which is particularly beneficial for students studying late into the night outside of traditional tutoring resource windows. Data has shown that UBot experiences peak utilization from 10 p.m. to 2 a.m., filling a crucial gap in student support.

As part of the [Academic Recovery Project](#), [UBot](#) is being deployed in courses with historically high failure rates, providing targeted assistance to improve academic outcomes.

[Read more](#)

Research Excellence

Utah Energy Week Scheduled for September 15-18

The Office of the Vice President for Research has announced that [Utah Energy Week](#) will be Sept. 15-18 at the University of Utah.

Utah Energy Week will create a unique opportunity to address the full spectrum of energy opportunities that incorporate goals for the economy and the environment.

Attended by the full array of stakeholders, Energy Week encourages a comprehensive energy discussion, the exchange of ideas around key issues, learning and networking. Plenary sessions and breakout sessions will cover energy topics that incorporate discussions around advanced energy systems and resilience, the investment landscape, supply chain and the importance of critical materials, workforce development, environmental objectives and management, economic drivers and much more.

[Read more](#)

Celebrating U

U Programs Receive Top Marks in Recent Rankings

With the spring semester behind us, rankings season is in full swing. As noted in a recent [theU article](#), the U.S. News & World Report's 2025 "[Best Graduate Schools](#)" and the Princeton Review's 2025 "Top Game Design" rankings are out.

Where does the University of Utah rank?

For the second year in a row, the Princeton Review has ranked the U's Division of Games program No. 1 in the world among public institutions for undergraduate game design and No. 2 for graduate programs.

U.S. News & World Report's annual rankings look at professional university programs in business, education, engineering, law, medicine and nursing, including specialties found in each college.

Of note, this year the U's Physician Assistant (PA) Program ranked No. 3; the College of Education jumped from No. 99 to No. 73; the Nursing-Midwifery Program ranked No. 6; and the Online Master of Science in Nursing Program jumped to No. 12 from No. 49.

Click on the button below for a full list of this year's rankings.

[Read more](#)

Applications Open for Research Fellowship Grant

The [Floyd O'Neil Marriott Library Research Fellowship](#), offered annually by the J. Willard Marriott Library's Special Collections Department, offers a \$3,500 grant to support scholarly pursuits. Named after Dr. Floyd A. O'Neil, former director of the American West Center, this fellowship aims to spark curiosity and foster meaningful research within the Special Collections.

With access to an array of resources, from manuscripts to rare books and multimedia collections, researchers can explore an expansive variety of narratives spanning Utah, the American West and beyond.

Deadline for applications is June 1, 2025. Awardees will be notified by June 20, and the project start date is July 1. [To apply, click here](#) and navigate to the second tab titled "Floyd O'Neil Marriott Library Research Fellowship."

[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.