
UTAH
STATE
VICE PRESIDENT
RESEARCH AND INNOVATION
STATE
UtahStateUniversity



Utah State University (USU) invites applications and nominations for the position of Vice President for Research and Innovation.

Utah State University seeks a Vice President for Research and Innovation (VPRI) with the drive and vision to grow our nationally competitive research enterprise built upon the extraordinary foundation of our strong faculty, R1 university standing, and statewide land-grant reach. With a research portfolio that already exceeds $521 million, the opportunity for the next VPRI is to develop a larger network and strategic vision to propel the next phase of advancing knowledge, building partnerships, and turning discovery into impact at USU. The VPRI will do this by making innovation, cross-sector collaboration, and new approaches to inquiry central to USU's research future.

The VPRI will sustain and advance the university's government-funded research enterprise while building durable relationships with prominent global corporations, industrial research laboratories, product-development organizations, state and regional partners, and other universities. The leader will connect fundamental discovery with applied research, commercialization, entrepreneurship, public benefit, and student opportunity, while continuing to support the institution's commitment to scholarship and creative work across all disciplines.

Working with the president, cabinet, deans, faculty, and external stakeholders, the VPRI will align priorities with USU's strategic plan, strengthen its R1 research culture, modernize research support, expand graduate research capacity, and further position USU as a sought-after partner across public and private sectors.



Nominations and Application Process

For full consideration, applications should be received by January 6, 2027. Candidates should provide the following:

- Letter of interest addressing how the candidate's experiences match the position requirements.
- A curriculum vitae/resume.
- Contact information for five references to be contacted at a later date with candidate's permission.

Applications should be in PDF format and submitted through the AGB Search portal at:
VP Research and Innovation - Utah State University

Nominations, expressions of interest, and/or inquiries may be submitted to:
UtahStateVPRI@agbsearch.com

AGB Search is assisting with this search. Our Search Team includes:

Laura Woodworth-Ney, Ph.D., Principal
laura.woodworth-ney@agbsearch.com

Jerome A. "Jerry" Gilbert, Ph.D. - Executive Search Consultant
Jerry.gilbert@agbsearch.com

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Susan.puryear@agbsearch.com

AGB SEARCH



STRATEGIC OPPORTUNITIES FOR LEADERSHIP

Reimagine innovation and mobilize interdisciplinary discovery.

Establish an institution-wide innovation agenda encompassing fundamental and applied research, entrepreneurship, technology transfer, creative scholarship, and societal impact. Connect faculty across sciences, engineering, agriculture, social sciences, humanities, and the arts; explore appropriate recognition of innovation and external engagement in faculty evaluation; and build on faculty readiness for change.

Diversify funding and forge consequential external partnerships.

Sustain and grow USU's competitive federal and government-sponsored research portfolio while developing sustained collaborations with leading global corporations, industrial laboratories, product-development organizations, other universities, and state initiatives. Expand industry-sponsored research, contracts, start-up generation, internships, and/or commercialization pathways, supported by stronger intellectual property, licensing, and entrepreneurial capabilities.

Continue to position USU as a research engine for Utah and beyond.

Leverage the land-grant mission, Extension network, and Intermountain West strengths to address emerging environmental, scientific, economic, demographic, and community needs. Align investments with the university's strategic plan; strengthen relationships with policymakers and government affairs partners; and elevate the visibility, influence, and public value of USU research nationally and internationally.

Grow talent and sustain an ambitious R1 research culture.

Deepen research excellence, productivity, and competitiveness through support of faculty research. Work with the provost and deans to build additional pathways from USU's strong undergraduate research program into graduate study. Expand research-linked experiential learning and build the university's aspiration of an internship opportunity for every student.

Modernize research support and invest in responsible growth.

Transform the Office of Research into a responsive, faculty-enabling partner by simplifying proposal development, pre- and post-award processes, grant administration, and industry contracting. Balance research integrity and compliance with thoughtful risk-taking and flexibility; assess staffing, laboratories, facilities, infrastructure, and faculty start-up needs; and direct constrained resources strategically to support new funding models and sustainable growth.







POSITION SUMMARY & RESPONSIBILITIES

The Vice President for Research & Innovation serves as the university's senior research officer and provides executive leadership for the vision, growth, integrity, and strategic direction of USU's Office of Research and the overall research and innovation infrastructure of the institution. Working across colleges, institutes, centers, Extension, and statewide campuses, the vice president connects areas of institutional strength and distinction, establishes university-wide research and innovation priorities, catalyzes multidisciplinary initiatives, and aligns investments and infrastructure to position USU for significant opportunities and impact.

The vice president serves as the external champion for USU research and innovation, building strategic relationships with federal agencies, congressional offices, state and local government, national laboratories, industry, foundations, and other partners. The vice president elevates USU's research priorities, anticipates emerging funding and policy opportunities, expands sponsored research and strategic partnerships, and strengthens technology transfer, commercialization, industry engagement, entrepreneurship, and pathways that move university discoveries and innovations into practical application and economic and societal impact.

The vice president retains executive accountability for the integrity and responsible stewardship of the research at USU. Working with the Office of Research and Innovation leadership team, designated institutional officials, compliance officers, faculty committees, and other university leaders, the vice president ensures that appropriate systems, authorities, resources, and organizational structures are in place to meet applicable regulatory, sponsor, accreditation, assurance, and institutional requirements; preserve the authority and independence of required oversight functions; address significant research-related risks; and maintain continuity of regulated and accredited research programs.

Primary Responsibilities

- Provide strategic leadership for USU's research and innovation infrastructure, establishing an ambitious long-term strategy to increase research activity, external funding, national competitiveness, impact, and reputation.
- Build and diversify USU's research funding portfolio by strengthening relationships with federal agencies, national laboratories, foundations, industry, and other external partners and positioning the university for large-scale, multidisciplinary funding opportunities.
- Accelerate the translation of research and discovery into real-world impact by strengthening pathways for technology commercialization, licensing, entrepreneurship, startup formation, industry-sponsored research, and other forms of knowledge transfer.
- Build an integrated innovation ecosystem that connects faculty expertise and university research assets with industry, government, investors, entrepreneurs, economic development organizations, and communities to generate partnerships, investment, jobs, and economic and societal impact.
- Strengthen faculty research success and institutional capacity by recruiting and retaining outstanding researchers, developing interdisciplinary teams, pursuing major center-scale opportunities, and strategically investing in research priorities, facilities, institutes, core facilities, and shared infrastructure.
- Maintain executive accountability for the integrity and effective stewardship of the research infrastructure, including research compliance, security, sponsored-project administration, institutional assurances, and regulatory obligations, while ensuring appropriate authority, independence, resources, and institutional support for research oversight functions.
- Serve as USU's senior external and institutional voice for research and innovation, advising the president and cabinet and representing the university with government, industry, national laboratories, foundations, research partners, and economic development leaders while aligning research and innovation with Utah's workforce, economic, natural-resource, and quality-of-life needs.



QUALIFICATIONS & ATTRIBUTES

Required Qualifications:

- Research and innovation vision. A compelling vision for growing a nationally competitive research and innovation enterprise.
- Research and scholarly achievement. A distinguished record of externally funded research and scholarly achievement.
- Strategic partnerships. Demonstrated success building relationships with federal agencies, government, industry, national laboratories, and other strategic partners.
- Multidisciplinary research leadership. Experience leading large-scale, multidisciplinary research initiatives and connecting strengths across colleges and disciplines.
- Experience developing and implementing a strategic plan for research and innovation, including cross-disciplinary and external collaborations.
- Collaborative and entrepreneurial leadership. A collaborative, entrepreneurial leadership style, with the ability to build institutional alignment and represent and advocate effectively for the university externally.
- Research leadership experience. Progressively responsible leadership in a research-intensive academic or comparable research setting, with demonstrated understanding of R1 research development, research funding, and the needs of active investigators.
- Enterprise management. Substantial knowledge of research administration, including sponsored funding, research infrastructure and facilities, pre- and post-award operations, budgets, and organizational leadership.

Preferred Qualifications:

- An earned doctorate or other terminal degree appropriate to the candidate's field is strongly preferred; exceptional candidates with equivalent research and innovation leadership experience may be considered.
- Experience at a land-grant university and/or an R1 research university; preference for a tenured or previously tenured faculty member from an R1 institution.
- National recognition for scholarship, such as fellowship in a professional society, a national research or scholarship award, or leadership in a national professional organization.
- Prior employment in, or substantive collaborations with, industry, particularly in innovation, sponsored research, technology transfer, intellectual property, and commercialization.
- Commercialization and entrepreneurship. Demonstrated success advancing technology transfer, commercialization, entrepreneurship, and industry partnerships.
- Demonstrated fiscal acumen, including budget stewardship, strategic resource allocation, research infrastructure investments, and planning and management of faculty startup packages.
- Exceptional written and verbal communication skills, with the ability to advocate persuasively for research and innovation with faculty, university leadership, government, corporate partners, and the public.
- Experience mentoring academic and research leaders, strengthening graduate education, and integrating undergraduate and graduate students into faculty research.
- Experience with research compliance and oversight, and working with review boards.

Key Skills and Leadership Attributes:

- Entrepreneurial vision with disciplined execution. Anticipates emerging research opportunities of relevance to Utah, the nation, and the world; converts a compelling innovation agenda into realistic plans, partnerships, investments, and outcomes.
- Collaborative, faculty-centered leadership. Leads as a service-oriented partner, earns faculty trust, mentors deans and research leaders, assembles interdisciplinary teams, and removes unnecessary barriers to discovery.
- Change leadership and sound judgment. Shifts institutional culture toward opportunity, responsible experimentation, and agile service while upholding research integrity, compliance, and fiscal accountability.
- External fluency and persuasive communication. Builds relationships across federal and state government, corporations, research organizations, and communities; communicates research value clearly and advocates effectively with the president, cabinet, policymakers, and partners.
- Commitment to inclusive scholarly excellence.



RESEARCH AT UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY

Utah State's Distinctive Research Strengths

The vice president will provide leadership that advances Utah State's research platform in the areas that define the university's distinctive strengths and statewide impact:

- Water and land
- Food, agriculture, and veterinary medicine
- Energy, engineering, and advanced manufacturing
- Space, defense, and aerospace innovation
- Strong communities through Extension, education, health, and workforce development

Research in the Strategic Plan

Research is one of the four pillars of USU's strategic plan, alongside Utah Statewide Impact, Student Success & Value, and Civic-Mindedness. The research pillar, Discovery with Purpose, aims to foster a scholarly research environment that builds on USU's core strengths while expanding emerging priorities of strategic importance. It's our goal is to address real-world challenges and identify innovative solutions that advance Utah and the nation.

USU's Research Roadmap

USU is building its research future with a purpose while leveraging emerging technologies, including artificial intelligence, that enhance research, innovation, and economic competitiveness. Decisions will be transparent and strategically justified, so faculty, partners, and the public can see where USU is headed and why. The university will also measure what its research delivers: funding leverage, partnerships, workforce development, and economic contribution. And because USU's land-grant mission reaches well past Logan, the plan sets out to define how research connects with communities across Utah through Extension and our Statewide Campuses.

Year 1 of the roadmap focuses on four initiatives: designing a life cycle for strategic research initiatives, telling USU's research story to the public and within the university, growing doctoral enrollment and graduate support, and building a single, user-friendly faculty activity database.

Year 2 turns to pre- and post-award support, interdisciplinary teaming, faculty hiring, research development, and research analytics, including aligning faculty role statements and tenure and promotion practices with the initiative portfolio.

The Strategic Plan Role of the Vice President

For the next Vice President, the strategic plan pillar defines the work ahead: turning an already strong research enterprise into a focused, well-supported and clearly communicated portfolio. Doing so means fostering cross-disciplinary research collaboration between the colleges, as well as between the colleges and Extension, while delivering measurable outcomes for the state.

By the Numbers	
Classification	Carnegie R1 institution
Research funding	$521.9M
Institutes and centers	50+
Goldwater Scholars	40 + 15 honorable mentions
Undergraduate researchers	1,000+ per year
Graduate degrees	130+ master's and doctoral
Inventions disclosed (FY22-26)	156
Patents (FY20-26)	77
Experiments sent to space	430+ since 1959



INSTITUTIONAL OVERVIEW

Since 1888, USU has successfully fulfilled its threefold land-grant by providing access to higher education for Utahns, conducting research on critical issues affecting the state and region, and advancing outreach and engagement with Utah communities and families.

With over 32,286 students across 30 locations throughout the state, including three residential campuses in Logan, Price, and Blanding, five regional campuses and 22 statewide education centers, USU proudly calls itself "Utah's state university." Students attend from all 50 states and more than 80 countries. For over 100 years, USU Extension has served and engaged Utahns in all 29 counties, connecting university expertise with community needs. USU is uniquely suited to meet students where they are in life, geographically, socially and economically, and help them become successful.

The university was ranked the top public institution in Utah in Washington Monthly's 2025 Best Colleges for Your Tuition and Tax Dollars ranking, which evaluates institutions based on access, affordability, and student outcomes. In fall 2025, USU welcomed its largest first-year class of in-state students and maintained strong enrollment across its statewide campuses, especially among first-time and transfer students. Notably, approximately 20 percent of undergraduate degrees and certificates were earned by first-generation college students.

As a top-tier R1 university, USU research makes significant positive impacts in Utah, the nation, and throughout the world. Researchers address complex challenges in areas such as space transportation; climate; land, water, and air; education; and health and well-being. USU students can participate in world-class research activities as early as their first year, and the university's 50-year-old undergraduate research program is the second oldest in the nation and has been recognized as a national leader in providing high-quality research experiences to students.

USU plays a significant role in Utah's economy. According to 2023 data from the Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute, the university generates approximately $2.2 billion in annual economic output. USU is the seventh-largest employer in the state of Utah, supporting both directly and indirectly over 17,000 jobs.

USU fosters a community where individuals feel respected, valued, and supported. USU is known for its thriving campus life, beloved traditions, and the "Aggie family," which includes anyone who has had a relationship with the university. With a strongly connected network of more than 187,000 alumni around the globe, Aggies are everywhere, working to make a positive impact in the world.

Academics

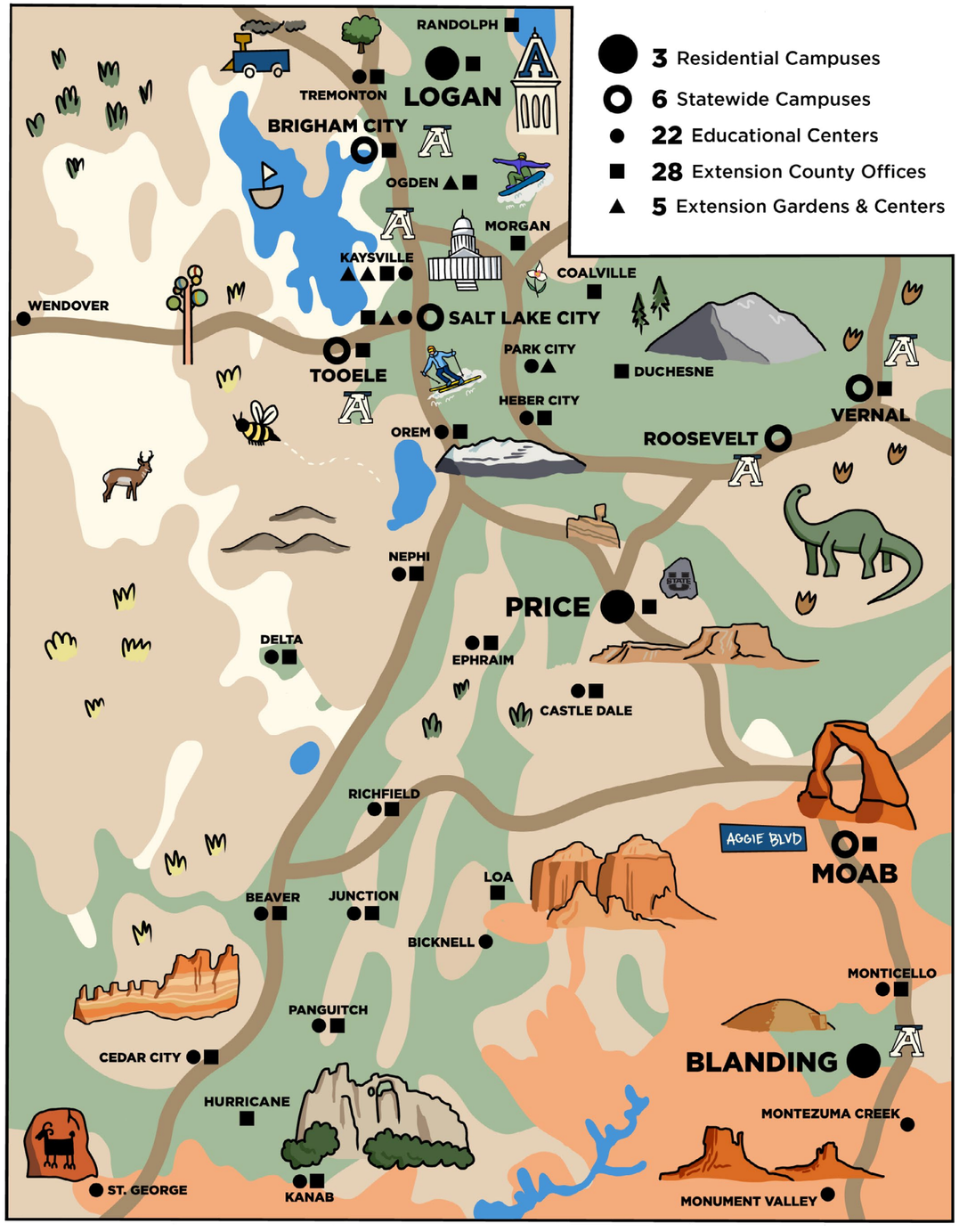
USU offers more than 140 undergraduate degrees, 95 master's degrees, and 35 doctoral degrees. In 2021, USU tied for the best undergraduate research program in the U.S., and in 2024, USU Online was ranked in the top 10% in the nation for online bachelor's programs. Including 2024 award recipients, USU boasts 40 Goldwater Scholars and 15 honorable-mention recipients since 1998.

Schools and Colleges

Effective July 1, 2025, Utah State restructured its nine academic colleges into a total of six:

- College of Arts and Sciences
- S.J. and Jesse E. Quinney College of Agriculture and Natural Resources
- Jon M. Huntsman School of Business
- Emma Eccles Jones College of Education, Health, and Human Services
- College of Engineering
- College of Veterinary Medicine

The colleges of the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, and Science have merged to form a new College of Arts and Sciences. Embedded within the new college is the Caine School of the Arts. USU's new Center for Civic Excellence, housed in the Provost's Office and supported by ongoing dollars from the Utah Legislature, will work with the College of Arts and Sciences in advancing a revision to the university's general education program.



Statewide Campuses

In addition to the Logan campus, USU has Statewide Campuses: Blanding, Brigham City, Eastern, Moab, Salt Lake City, Tooele, and Uintah Basin (Roosevelt and Vernal), as well as 22 statewide education centers. These statewide locations use an innovative technology delivery model to provide access to academic degrees and programs across the system, serving more than 8,000 USU students, fueling local economies, and empowering communities and residents with programs that range from career and technical certificates to doctoral degrees.

Statewide Extension

Founded in 1914 as part of the Smith-Lever Act, USU Extension provides research-based programs and resources with the goal of improving the lives of individuals, families, and communities throughout Utah. It plays a primary role in helping Utah State University fulfill its mission as a land-grant institution that serves Utahns and impacts communities across the state. USU Extension supports all 29 counties and hosts five Small Business Development Centers. It offers expertise to support Utah families in areas including home, finance, and relationships; food, health, and wellness; agriculture and natural resources; business and community; gardening; and 4-H and youth programming.

Enrollment

USU's enrollment strategy reflects its land-grant mission, with a strong focus on access, innovation, and student success. Building on its last five-year Strategic Enrollment Management Plan, USU continues to expand pathways for a broad range of students, including first-generation students. Recent efforts include the Aggie Advantage Grant, statewide Next Step Nights to support admitted students and their families, and the rollout of OneUSU, an AI-enabled customer relationship management (CRM) system that strengthens engagement from recruitment through graduation. These initiatives have contributed to an increase in total enrollment and are designed to support sustainable enrollment growth through both recruitment and retention.

Space Dynamics Lab

Headquartered on Utah State University's Innovation Campus in North Logan, Space Dynamics Lab (SDL) is an independent nonprofit corporation owned by USU. It employs 1,400 engineers, scientists, technicians, and business professionals who solve technical challenges faced by the military, science community, and industry and support NASA's vision to explore the secrets of the universe for the benefit of all. SDL has field offices in Albuquerque, New Mexico; Chantilly, Virginia; Huntsville, Alabama; Ogden, Utah; and Stafford, Virginia. As one of 15 Department of Defense University Affiliated Research Centers, SDL is both a trusted advisor to the U.S. Government and a specialist in its area of expertise, rapidly developing government-owned solutions to nationally significant challenges.





Aggie Bull Statue in USU Uintah Basin

University Leadership

Brad Mortensen ’95 serves as the 18th president of Utah State University, returning to his alma mater with deep gratitude and a lifelong belief in the transformative power of higher education.



Pres. Brad Mortensen

President Mortensen brings more than two decades of higher education leadership, most recently as president of Weber State University. Over twenty-one years at Weber State, including nearly seven as president, he advanced initiatives that expanded access, strengthened student success, and removed unnecessary barriers that often stand between students and their goals. His leadership championed innovative enrollment pathways, strengthened partnerships with industry and communities, and elevated affordable, workforce-aligned opportunities for students across Utah.

At Utah State, President Mortensen believes universities must continually challenge institution-first practices to better serve students, families, and communities. Guided by values of integrity, transparency, and shared governance, he works along faculty, staff, students, and statewide partners to ensure Utah State continues to thrive as a premier Research 1 institution.

President Mortensen’s background includes service in the Utah System of Higher Education and the Governor’s Office of Planning and Budget. President Mortensen also holds a Ph.D. in educational leadership and policy from the University of Utah, a master’s degree in public administration from Syracuse University’s Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, and a bachelor’s in political science from Utah State.

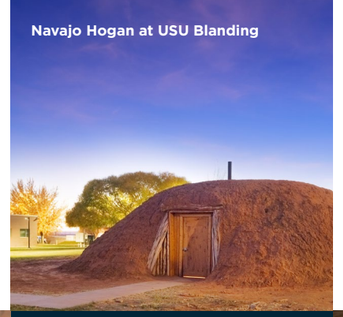
Athletics

The Utah State University Aggies compete at the NCAA Division I level in 16 sports. The Aggies joined the Pac-12 Conference on July 1, 2026, after 13 years in the Mountain West Conference. They have won ten conference championships over the past five years in football, men’s basketball, men’s cross country, women’s volleyball, and men’s tennis, as well as winning the Mountain Rim Gymnastics Conference title in women’s gymnastics. In 2024-2025, Utah State student-athletes combined to earn a school-record 481 total academic awards, ranking as the second-most in the Mountain West.

At Utah State Eastern in Price, 10 teams compete in the Scenic West Athletic Conference at the NJCAA level. The women’s volleyball team placed 10th in the NJCAA National Tournament in 2022.



3 RESIDENTIAL CAMPUSES + 30 STATEWIDE CAMPUSES


Navajo Hogan at USU Blanding

17,743 UNDERGRADUATES IN LOGAN


First-year Student Luminary

32,286 TOTAL ENROLLMENT





3,240 GRADUATE STUDENTS





10,136 UNDERGRADUATES STATEWIDE



9,097 CONCURRENT STUDENTS



22% OF UNDERGRADS ARE FIRST-GENERATION STUDENTS




Jaynee Chee, First Generation Student, USU Blanding



$2.2 BILLION IN ECONOMIC OUTPUT

(Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute)



12,680 WORKFORCE



$529.1 MILLION IN SPONSORED AWARDS (FY25)



TOP 10% IN THE NATION FOR ONLINE BACHELOR'S

(U.S. News & World Report, 2024)


Undergraduate Biological Engineering Lab

2ND OLDEST RESEARCH UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAM IN THE NATION

(Since 1975)

LOGAN & THE CACHE VALLEY



Downtown Logan, Utah

Cache Valley sits between the Wellsville Mountains and the Bear River Mountain Range 80 miles northeast of Salt Lake City. While the valley stretches from northeastern Utah into southeast Idaho, the term “Cache Valley” is often used to describe the Logan metropolitan area, a fast-growing region that has gained national attention in recent years for its economic vitality.

Logan and Cache Valley have long been known as ideal destinations for outdoor enthusiasts, with year-round natural beauty and an incredible variety of recreation opportunities. Northern Utah boasts the “greatest snow on Earth,” and there are two ski resorts less than an hour from campus, plus miles of trails for hiking and mountain biking.

The 40-mile drive on the Logan Canyon Scenic Byway winds along the Logan River through dramatic cliffs, thick forests, and open meadows before arriving at Bear Lake, known throughout the West for its Caribbean-blue waters. And the local scenery is just the beginning: Logan is within a day’s drive of six national parks, from the deserts of Arches and Zion to the mountains of Yellowstone and Grand Teton.

Utah State University is central to the community of Logan and plays an important role in shaping the region’s cultural and economic landscape. Logan’s downtown hosts art and music events, a seasonal farmers market and family-focused activities.

Historic downtown theatres produce plays, musicals and operas year-round, and galleries and concerts contribute to a strong arts presence.

The Logan metropolitan area has consistently maintained unemployment rates below national averages and continues to demonstrate steady employment growth. The region is home to a diverse economy that includes healthcare, educational services, high-tech manufacturing and research, food processing and business services. The metropolitan area of nearly 155,000 residents includes dozens of communities that contribute to a stable and expanding regional workforce.

The Logan metro area claimed the #8 spot in the Milken Institute’s 2026 ranking for best performing small cities in the nation.



NOTICE OF NON-DISCRIMINATION

In its programs and activities, including in admissions and employment, Utah State University does not discriminate or tolerate discrimination, including harassment, based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, genetic information, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, status as a protected veteran, or any other status protected by University policy, Title IX, or any other federal, state, or local law.

Utah State University is an equal opportunity employer and does not discriminate or tolerate discrimination including harassment in employment including in hiring, promotion, transfer, or termination based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, genetic information, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, status as a protected veteran, or any other status protected by University policy or any other federal, state, or local law.

Utah State University does not discriminate in its housing offerings and will treat all persons fairly and equally without regard to race, color, religion, sex, familial status, disability, national origin, source of income, sexual orientation, or gender identity. Additionally, the University endeavors to provide reasonable accommodations when necessary and to ensure equal access to qualified persons with disabilities.

Utah State University complies with applicable state and federal laws governing sex-segregated facilities and spaces, as well as legally permitted sex-based distinctions in programs and activities.

The following individuals have been designated to handle inquiries regarding the application of Title IX and its implementing regulations and/or USU's non-discrimination policies:

Executive Director
Civil Rights & Title IX Office
titleix@usu.edu
435.797.1266
Old Main Rm. 401D
1475 Old Main Hill,
Logan, UT 84322

Title IX Coordinator
titleix@usu.edu
435.797.1266
Old Main Rm. 402D
1475 Old Main Hill
Logan, UT 84322

For further information regarding non-discrimination, please visit crtix.usu.edu or contact:

U.S. Department of Education
Office of Assistant Secretary
for Civil Rights
800.421.3481
OCR@ed.gov

U.S. Department of Education
Denver Regional Office
303.844.5695
OCR.Denver@ed.gov



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